Money and banking in Japan: The cash is big, the banks are very rigid, and everything we thought we knew about (consumer) banking had to be relearned in Japan, which does it in a completely different way.

**Transcript**

K: So, lately I’ve been thinking about banking and bill paying, which we kind off talked about – I want to say a month or two ago we were talking about cash versus credit society.

C: Yeah.

K: But I don’t think we went into the ins and outs of what it was like to set up our bank accounts.

C: I always like talking about money, so I’m happy to talk about setting up bank accounts and such.

K: (laughs) You do not like talking about money.

C: Not my money.

K: I think you like talking about money generally, but not specifically your money.

C: Exactly.

K: So, one of the things we thought was super, super ridiculous when – so, this is just digression straight out the gate. So, we went into a mall, and I was so excited we were preparing our first international trip, and so I – we – I bought us matching international wallets. And I was like – the money holder thing, it had two different money holders, and I thought, “this is so dramatic” because one of the pockets for holding money is the length of our passport. And that is the only pocket that our Japanese money fits in. Now, American money looks comically small to me.

C: American money is comically small. So, Irish money is

K: Like, the size of the individual bills, not the value.

C: Right.

K: The size of the individual bills, now it feels like the difference between an American dollar and a Monopoly dollar in size ratio for me now, emotionally.

C: But apparently Irish money, and I forget there’s two others, are huge.

K: Yeah. The British Pound, IK thought, was huge. I’m not sure.

C: So, the company that I work for makes wallets among other things, and it notes specifically that Irish money does not fit in the walle.t

K: (laughs) Ouch.

C: Yeah, you have to fold it up. But Japanese currency is much bigger than American currency.

K: It’s bigger, and it has braille on it.

C: It does. Holograms and – the braille is nice because you can feel it if you need that.

K: Yeah.

C: And… it’s higher denominations, too. Like, higher denominations are more usual.

K: And the coins – the coins go into ridiculously high denominations. So, there’s like the go hyaku en coin – the five-hundred-yen coin is really, really common. And, so, for me – I’m just going to do coin to dollars even though that’s not correct for the exchange

C: Yeah. It fluctuates, but yeah.

K: Yeah. Just for simplicity’s sake. So, there is the one-yen coin, there is a five-yen coin, there’s a ten-yen coin, a hundred-yen coin, and a five-hundred-yen coin.

C: And fifty yen.

K: Oh, yeah. And fifty-yen coin. So, in the United States, there is a one cent coin, a five-cent coin, a ten-cent coin, a twenty-five-cent coin, a fifty-cent coin, and a dollar coin.

C: And a two-dollar coin.

K: there is not a two-dollar coin. There’s a two-dollar bill, but not a two-dollar coin.

C: Okay, yeah, I think you’re right.

K: I used to work at a bank. I know I’m right.

C: Oh, okay.

K: (laughs) And there used to be a hay penny which used to be half cents.

C: Half-penny yeah.

K: But they did away with the half cent many, many years ago.

C: And the Japanese five-hundred-yen coin, depending on the exchange rate at any particular moment, is either the first or second most valuable coin in the world in terms of regular currency. I’m not talking about like… rare collections.

K: collector’s, yeah.

C: The other one being the five – I think it’s five Swiss francs. So, Switzerland has a high value coin as well.

K: And, so, something that – so I’m going to out you here – something that people don’t know about Chad that we’ve never talked about is Chad loves to collect change.

C: I do.

K: And, so, it has been the bane of my existence to get Chad to spend his change. And, in Japan, it was so bad – like his pants would be weighed down, literally be falling down to his hips, from the weight of the coins in his pocket.

C: You’ve got hope. I’ve got change.

K: Yes. Exactly. (laughs) So, now, we have a bucket, and we have a rule that Chad is to empty his coins into the bucket.

C: We have a bucket and we have a jar. So, I get to put my five hundred-yen coins in the jar.

K: Yes.

C: But I have to put my other coins in the bucket, and we try to keep the bucket empty.

K: Yes. Of coin as often as possible. And, so, that kind of segways into bill paying because, when we pay bills, it makes it really convenient because we can pay with exact coin.

C: Often, yes.

K: Yeah. So, when the bills come in. But I haven’t been doing my due diligence because life in the United States – here in Japan, I’m in charge of getting the mail and bill paying because that’s one of Chad’s weaker points. And my weaker point is taking out garbage, so I feel like it breaks even on that, so I don’t have any head-trips about it. So, please, don’t get any head-trips on my behalf. (laughs)

C: Yeah. She’s so burdened.

K: Yeah, no. And because you work from home, I leave the house regularly to go to work, so to me it just feels ridiculous to gra – to not grab the bills from the house. Because then I’m going to my work location and grabbing the bills for that, and it just feels simplest to do all of the bill paying from there because I work with our son who’s actually the person who physically takes the money to go pay the bills.

C: He doesn’t take the checks.

K: No, he does not take the checks. I have not written a check in 15 years.

C: That’s pretty good. I haven’t, either.

K: (laughs) You’re like, “that’s pretty good” like it’s some magic feat. They don’t accept checks. There are no checking accounts in Japan.

C: Yeah. We’ve talked about this before about how incredibly expensive checks are.

K: Yeah, so there’s no checking accounts. And there’s also no joint banking accounts. So,

C: Yeah, that was weird.

K: Yeah, that was really weird for us because we did joint everything. So, here’s the thing, as a therapist, I always advice people to do pre-nuptial agreements, which we did not do. Because you did not want to.

C: I didn’t.

K: And, to this day, I still think you’re a fool. Like, over twenty years of marriage, I still think you’re a fool for not having a pre-nup.

C: I was like, “I have all the money. You don’t. Why do you want a pre-nup?”

K: To protect you.

C: Yeah, I wasn’t interested in being protected.

K: To protect you.

C: My heart and my wallet were both open.

K: And now you don’t have all the money.

C: No. Most of

K: Now, our money is much more equal.

C: Yes.

K: And, so, now what are you going to do Mr. smarty pants?

C: I’m going to

K: Besides stay married.

C: Yeah, exactly.

(laughter)

C: That’s what I’m going to do.

K: But, like… you’re so unprotected. You’re just out there. Just, like… sorry people from Borneo, I say, “the wild man of Borneo” it’s a nickname. I’m like, “you’re the wild man of Borneo.” You’re just free-range money. Just running around everywhere.

C: Yup.

K: You don’t even know your rights.

C: I don’t.

K: Like, I randomly say – Chad and I are happily married. I totally don’t want a divorce, but I will randomly walk up to Chad and say, “what are your rights if we get divorced?” That aggressively, and he’s like, “what are you asking me? Are you asking me for a divorce?” “No. I’m proving a point. What are your rights?” So, now we’re going to do it on air. What are your rights if we get a divorce?

C: I get everything.

K: Oh my god. (laughs) That’s only because I yelled that at you the other day when we were talking about property. I was like, “no, it is” – you were like, “I have to sell the property, we divide it in half.” I was like, “no, you get the property because it’s in your name, and that’s what you should fight for.” (laughs) I like aggressively tell him to not give me stuff in a divorce that we are not having.

C: Yeah, so

K: I don’t know why I need to have – I randomly advocate for you. If we get a divorce, I just walk up to you, like, “if we get a divorce, this should be your strategy.”

C: Because bank accounts aren’t the only thing that you can’t do jointly. You can’t do property jointly, either. You can setup a corporation or an LLC or something to won it, then own shares in that, but you can’t directly own property jointly with somebody else.

K: Yes. And you and I have separate inkans that say the exact same thing.

C: Right.

K: So, we have identical but registered to you and registered to me. So, for the property that we currently live in, you also had to sign the crease of the paper.

C: Right.

K: And so, each of the corner, you signed with your initial and stamped with your inkan.

C: Yeah.

K: The crease of every page of the contract that’s written in Japanese that you could not read.

C: I could read it at the time.

K: Mmm. You’re being super generous with yourself.

C: I am generous with myself. I’m generous with everybody. That’s why no pre-nup.

K: (laughs) You could read it enough to know that you weren’t getting screwed, and that you actually owned the property.

C: Correct.

K: So, it wasn’t like you were completely illiterate.

C: And that was an issue because a lot of property here in Japan, the land is leased for a hundred years or things like that. That you don’t actually own. So, we don’t actually own the land that the property is on, but the condo

K: We specifically do not own the land, and we specifically do not own the building. We specifically do not own our front porch.

C: Right. But the condo association jointly owns that, and we have an ownership stake in that, so indirectly – but it means we just handle our taxes on property by paying through the condo association and everything.

K: Well, it also makes it easier because we don’t have to pay for power washing of the building. The condo association takes care of that. And

C: Things that would be expensive to get done individually but are not that expensive if everybody gets them done at the same time.

K: Yeah. And then I think we were really smart in the way that we did our balcony.

C: Yeah, I think so. But one of the things that I’ve noticed is different here than in the United Sates, for example, is we haven’t had – knock on wood, I’m going to knock on wood because I’m nervous about this one – we haven’t had a plumbing problem in twelve years, now.

K: Oh, for real knock on wood for that. I was just thinking that the other day, so here’s where it gets really scary. We don’t own a plunger.

C: right.

K: And we only have one toilet.

C: No toilet problems in almost thirteen years, now.

K: Now, I’m scared. I’m not knocking on wood again. That’s just crazy. You’re wild man of Borneo, saying that.

C: (laughs)

K: Sorry if it offends anybody from Borneo, but that’s the little thing I call him. It’s a love name.

C: We’ve had occasional problems with gas. We just changed our diet, and that was fine.

K: (laughs)

C: No, actually we just called the gas company, and they said, “you’ve got to go push this button really hard.”

K: Yes. Except for

C: Oh, yes.

K: Randomly, now. It’s so random. I’m so happy it didn’t happen – it doesn’t happen when we’re on vacation, so I do think it’s connected to the water. We have a Co2 sensor in our house that randomly goes off.

C: Yes. CO. Carbon Monoxide.

K: CO. What’s Co2?

C: Carbon Dioxide. We’re okay with that as long as there’s oxygen mixed in with it.

K: Okay.

C: Carbon Monoxide, we don’t want any amount.

K: Oh, drop the science on the people.

C: Yeah, I will.

K: Yeah, and the people love it.

C: Yeah.

K: [sound effect] That’s the crowd going crazy for the science.

C: So, every once in a while, it’ll just go boop, boop, boop, and then

K: And then it also shouts at us, “we’re calling the fire department” in Japanese.

C: Yeah. Because we live in a mid-rise, we have a security system that has a camera that shows us who’s at the door if somebody’s ringing to us.

K: Yeah. And it has a direct line to call the police. So much – I used to push that button so much that they told me, “if you do it again by accident, we’re going to charge you.” So, I have stickers on the thing that say, “this” and then a sticker below it that says, “not this.” (laughs)

C: It doesn’t say, “not this.” It just says, “no.”

K: Oh, it just says (laughs) Because there’s a main, big button.

C: Yeah, the big button right in the middle that you think would be for answering the door is, in fact, for calling emergency services.

K: Yes. So, I’m like, “that’s the one I’m going to push.” Because, as an American, that makes sense. But I get if I’m having mobility issues, that that would be the easiest one for me to reach.

C: But it doesn’t actually go directly to the fire department. It goes to the security company.

K: But there’s a button – I know that you can push because I told myself not to push it anymore that goes directly to the police because the police have shown up – not the security department – the police have shown up.

C: It notifies the security company. If the security company can’t contact us within like five minutes

K: Is what you think.

C: Is what I think because sometimes they have called me, and they have said, “did you push it on purpose or on accident?” and I say, “on accident.”

K: So, there’s a security – so – you don’t pay attention what all the buttons are for.

C: I don’t.

K: And so, there is a button directly to bypass the security depar-

C: The company.

K: The security of the company directly of the building and to directly contact the police.

C: Nice.

K: And there’s a button to directly contact emergency.

C: Nice.

K: So, we can go to the security company – the security company is faster, and so they encourage us to contact them. But I think that’s mostly their propaganda.

C: Oh, I think so, too.

K: Because we live right next door to the fire department.

C: Yeah.

K: How could the security department, who’s not on site, be faster than the police?

C: I don’t know.

K: And more effective than the police.

C: Yeah, I don’t know.

K: If something’s going down, I want the police.

C: We have a ten-minute lock on our door. They told us when we moved in.

K: Yeah. It would take someone ten minutes to pick our lock.

C: Yeah. To drill through it or whatever. Like, solid steel door.

K: We have two ten-minute locks.

C: We do, yes.

K: And a solid steel door.

C: Yeah.

K: And then another door. So, it’s like we have the safe room – our house is like a safe room.

C: It is.

K: Yeah.

C: That door would take your finger clean off if you slammed it on your finger.

K: Yeah. It would. So, I really like that. Although…

C: The finger part or the safety part?

K: The safety part.

C: Okay.

K: And up until our neighbor walked into our house – bad habit of not locking our door.

C: Yeah, and I was always telling you, you’ve got to lock the door.

K: Yeah, and I was like “eh, it’s safe.” And then our neighbor drunkenly walked into our house to yell at our son for saying hi

C: To his wife.

K: Yeah. Like, at the time, Rasta was I think maybe fifteen or sixteen, and they had had a conversation. Because he’s bilingual, so they had a conversation the elevator ride up, and our direct – so, we’ve had like three different neighbors live next door to us.

C: Yes.

K: The original neighbor who lived next door to us would get hammered every night, and he just stumbled into our apartment one day, and you and Rasta handled it, but me with my – my anger management wasn’t where it is today. I went and knocked on his door and cursed him out in Japanese and came back home satisfied. And he never bothered us again.

C: Nope.

K: (laughs) Because I can read a fool in Japanese. My Japanese isn’t good, but I can read a fool in Japanese.

C: It’s a cultural difference I don’t agree with, but there’s a small area in the front entryway that’s tiled. And then it goes to the plastic veneer that hey pretend is wood. It’s called the genkan, which is literally just “entry hall.”

K: Yeah. People think that they can just

C: People think they can just open your door, and as long as they don’t step out of your genkan, where all your shoes and stuff go, they’re not in your apartment. I’m like, “no, you are literally in my apartment.”

K: Yes.

C: In the purchase contract, the front door begins my apartment. Not the **15:55**

K: Yes. And, so, I’ve had that problem in my office. I always ask clients, “are you cool with me locking the door?” Because there’s really aggressive salespeople and Jehovah’s Witness, and Mormons that would just walk in.

C: And other cults.

K: Yeah.

C: There’s some… I was reading about it, there’s some positivity group – and a lot of people are saying they’re a cult but I don’t even know their name – that tries to get you to come meet with them at like five in the morning.

K: Yeah.

C: Targeting women to come meet with them at five in the morning to read books and things.

K: Yes. So, yeah, there’s a lot of groups, and they’re all aggressive, and I don’t like it, so yeah.

C: Yeah.

K: But that doesn’t tie into banking at all, so I’m not even going to pretend that I’m trying to segway back to the topic.

C: Well, they want your money. There’s the tie back.

K: (laughs) So, our bills come all around, I want to say, the first two weeks of the month.

C: Yeah, that’s usually

K: And, except for our condo fees come every other month, which annoys the crap out of me.

C: Mhm.

K: And sometimes it doesn’t come for three months, and it annoys the crap out of me. Our condo fees come irregularly. I cannot count on – I couldn’t tell you any month whether or not we will get a fee, a bill, for our condo fees.

C: Right.

K: And that has to be paid via bank transfer, so it has to be taken to any ATM and the money wired directly from our – either my bank account, your bank account, or Rasta’s bank account

C: Somebody’s account.

K: Yeah, somebody’s account. They don’t care who it’s wired from but wired to them. So, there are several bills that we get that have to be paid via bank transfer, like you can’t pay cash for them, you can’t write a check, you have to do bank transfer.

C: And you pay the – you pay a bank transfer fee to pay those.

K: Yes, which drives you up the wall.

C: Right.

K: You don’t like that at all. Like, “I have to pay you to pay my bills? Really?”

C: And the fee differs depending on whether you’re paying your own bank or paying a different bank.

K: Yeah.

C: So, if we’re paying a different bank – we bank with UFJ which is the largest bank in Japan – we bank with UFJ, so if we’re paying UFJ it’s two dollars, if we’re paying to some other bank, it’s four dollars.

K: Yeah.

C: For transfer.

K: So, two hundred yen or four hundred yen.

C: Yeah, it’s like four hundred twenty or two hundred ten, I think.

K: Yeah. And, so, it annoys the mess out of Chad.

C: It does.

K: Which is one of the reasons why you don’t pay the bills.

C: Yes.

K: Is because all of the intricacy of bill paying you find to be very… anxiety-inducing, confusing, or anger-making. There’s, like – there are no bills that you are non-reactive to.

C: Well, plus, and it might seem unrelated, the autism.

K: (laughs) Yeah. It’s completely – some bills will give you an autistic meltdown if you have to deal with them on a regular basis.

C: The thing that’ shard for me, and I know it’s hard for a lot of people, but it’s like literally cognitively hard for me, is that I pay a bill and it comes again. Like, what am I supposed to do with it? And, so, what happens isn’t that I’m upset about the bills, it’s that I forget whether or not I’ve paid them. Because, for me, if I pay two thousand yen to somebody now or if I pay two thousand yen to somebody six weeks from now or six months from now, it’s the same thing, so I can’t remember if I paid somebody two weeks ago or two years ago.

K: Yeah.

C: I remember that I’ve paid them. Why would I pay them again?

K: And Japan does a weird thing. It sends you a notification of how much your bill is going to be.

C: For some of the bills, yeah.

K: And sometimes that arrives the same day as the bill, and that’s very upsetting for you. And, so, you don’t feel like you can plan your money.

C: I don’t, no.

K: So, I take care of all of the bills, which I did in the United States as well. I wrote all of the checks for the bills, and your job was to go to the post – because I hate going to post offices

C: Right.

K: Like, - going to – oh, man, going to a post office, even thinking about it right now, it stirs me up.

C: I’ll go to the post office to sit all day. I don’t care

K: Yeah. And it pisses me off. I hate the post office. And I don’t know why. I have never had a bad experience at a post office, but once we go to – even here in Japan – so, in Japan, I love going to the post office because they treat me like a Rockstar.

C: Yeah. Our local one knows us. They’re like, “oh you’re back.” I think the first time that we went there, they gave us a box of tissues and also a hand towel.

K: Yeah. A box. Like, it’s really rare in Japan to get a box of tissue. It’s really common to get a little plastic thing of tissue, but the first time – I think we’ve talked about it before how much I love our local post office.

C: Yeah. The plastic thing with the tissue, that’s related to advertising law. Which, at least in Nagoya and Tokyo and Osaka, the big cities you’re not allowed to hand people fliers if there’s nothing of value.

K: Mm, yeah. You have to be value added.

C: So, you can hand them tissues because that’s value, but you can’t just hand them a flier. Coupons are kind of a gray area. Some cities allow coupons, some don’t, but the tissues are okay, so when we were first her, and I was working for an English conversation school – before they went bankrupt – one of the days I wasn’t busy, so I spent the day stuffing advertisements into packages of tissue.

K: Mnn. Yuck.

C: Yeah. But they didn’t make me go stand outside and hand them out.

K: Because you’re not Japanese.

C: Yes. I’m big and scary.

K: Yeah because you have a beard. (laughs)

C: People look at me, and they think, “he can speak English.”

K: (laughs)

C: When people talk to me in English, I want to tell them **21:33**

K: Yeah. (laughs)

C: **23:36**

K: So, for me, I find doing the paying of bills – I really love – Rasta’s sort of like the manager of our life in addition to being the manager of Adjustment Guidance because he does almost all of our grocery shopping, and he literally handles all of my banking. He doesn’t handle all of yours, but he literally handles all of my banking.

C: He’s the executive assistant for the family, among other things.

K: Yeah, he is. And he loves it because it comes with so many perks.

C: Yeah.

K: Because I’m generous.

C: It comes with a salary and benefits and all that.

K: Yeah. But then, like, for the family stuff he does, I’ll be like “oh, babe, we’ve been using you for a lot of things, you need to go out of town for two weeks with your girlfriend. An all-expense-paid vacation”

C: (laughs) Yeah.

K: “All-inclusive because you just look so run-down baby.” And he says, “thanks mom, I love how you appreciate me.” And we hug and we kiss, and I tell him, “take pictures.”

C: Yeah, you’re much more generous. I’m like, “you need to go out of town for two weeks, here’s subway fare to the edge of town, have fun.”

K: (laughs)

C: “Don’t come back.”

K: That is so not even true. That is so not even true.

C: (laughs)

K: You randomly tell him, “hey son, buy yourself a curry.”

C: Yes.

K: Or “go grocery shopping, make sure you get yourself something from the specialty shop.”

C: Yeah. That’s equivalent. Two weeks of vacation or a can of soda.

K: (laughs) It is not a can of soda. He likes – so, there’s this specialty shop right next to the grocery store that sells really, really expensive brownies. They’re like – for a package of brownies is ichi sen en, a thousand yen. And, so, that’s roughly between ten and eleven dollars. For a package of brownies.

C: Yeah.

K: And he will buy himself two.

C: Mmm.

K: Yeah.

C: I didn’t know they were that much.

K: Yeah.

C: I’m going to have to have a talk with him.

K: Oh, you’re so full of it. You are not going to talk with him about anything because sometimes – so, my groceries are really complicated. My groceries come from three different stores, sometimes four different stores, and Rasta goes to the four different stores to get – four is the highest I’ve ever gotten.

C: No, there’s five. I can think of an order that takes five.

K: Okay, give me an order that takes five stores.

C: Okay. An order that takes five stores would be French fries

K: Okay, French fries is one store.

C: Almond Florentines.

K: Almond Florentines, one store.

C: Sourdough bread.

K: Sellable bread?

C: Sourdough bread.

K: Sourdough bread, I consider that to be part of Aeon.

C: Does it have a different cash register?

K: Yes, but I consider it to be one bread, and it’s on the way to Kaldi.

C: Okay, so it’s still three.

K: So not only is it the same – like the Florentines and the bread are in the same geographical location.

C: They are, so four of them are all close together, but you’ve got to go to four different registers.

K: Okay, so if you’re counting by register.

C: Yeah, by register, it’s five.

K: No, because

C: Oh, okay. It can be six or seven because

K: Yeah, if you count by register. Because in Japan there’s a lot of stores that have different stores within the same, like, building space. And they all have their different registers.

C: Well, and then every place has its own little specialty that only they sell it.

K: What do you mean?

C: Well, that’s why I mention French fries. Our local grocery store does not sell French fires.

K: It sells French fires, but it doesn’t sell crinkle cut fries.

C: Correct, but a different grocery store that’s like another 50 meters, or like one block away further, does sell crinkle cut fries but doesn’t sell some of the things we go to sells.

K: Yeah, and they used to sell crinkle cut fries at the grocery store closest to our house, but I guess we’re right in between both grocery stores really.

C: Yeah, we’re pretty much equidistant.

K: And so, the reason Rasta goes to all of these places is because I bought him a car.

C: Yes.

K: And, so, that’s sort of – that’s not true because he used to do this on his bike.

C: Yes.

K: The reason he does all this is because he’s a loving gun. Loving gun. He’s a good and loving son.

C: And he would do it on foot before we bought him a bike.

K: Yeah because he loves me.

C: Yeah.

K: And I’m just a spoiled, pampered princess living in her tower.

C: Once he’d worn out five pairs of shoes, I was like, “okay, you’ve earned a bike.”

K: Oh my gosh, that is so not true.

C: (laughs)

K: Another thing that happens in Rasta’s life is I will randomly decide he needs new shoes, so for me that’s five pairs of shoes. Something super cool that I may have mentioned before is that you get 20% off for each pair of shoes that you recycle when you buy shoes in Japan.

C: But only one for one. You can’t bring five pairs and get a free pair.

K: No, but you can get 20% off on each pair of shoes that you’re buying to replace those.

C: Correct, yes.

K: Because I do buy him five to six pairs of shoes at a time, and they last for about five years. Because he has winter shoes and summer shoes.

C: Yeah.

K: And so, that’s part of my bills to me.

C: I tis part of the bills.

K: So, I’m pretending that wasn’t a massive digression. I’m pretending like I’ve been totally on topic this entire time.

C: You have been on topic, yes. You have been treading on that topic.

K: (laughs) That was a good one. I liked that.

C: Thank you.

K: So, when we opened our bank in Japan, I opened my bank by myself, which I’m really super proud of, but I did have – I did go to the special desk where they speak English, so the reason that my main branch is where it’s at – Chad always think it’s because it was near where I was working at the time, but that’s not the case.

C: Okay.

K: It’s because it was the branch when I called up the branch in Japanese and asked which place can I order an English-speaking person to help me set up

C: Open your account.

K: Open my account. And they said – they gave me a specific time and branch location.

C: Okay, they gave you an appointment.

K: Yeah, they gave me an appointment. So, I went to that branch location and went to the desk. I took you to that same English desk.

C: Yeah, I was there with you.

K: Yeah. So, then I opened my bank account there because they had English service, and then we would go to that bank quite often because they had English service, but then they stopped doing that English service, and it was inconvenient and out of the way, so we stopped going to that one. And then we used to go to the branch that’s actually nearest our house, and they closed that one down just randomly, and now it’s just ATMs.

C: Yeah, they’re consolidating.

K: Yeah, and nobody works there anymore, and it’s completely inconvenient. But there are ATMs everywhere. Like, UFJ ATMs are just scattered throughout – I think there’s one every three to four blocks at this point.

C: In Nagoya, yeah.

K: Yeah, in Nagoya. I don’t know outside of Nagoya. I don’t really take money out outside of Nagoya.

C: Yeah. UFJ is national, so I can usually see a UFJ – if we bank at the local bank, then I had one bank account, a second bank account, because the company that I was working for would only pay you if you banked at that bank, and when I went down there, they said, “why do you want to open a bank account here?”

K: Yes.

C: Like, “what is your business? You need to prove you have some reason to open a bank account here” because it’s a credit union. And credit unions in the U.S., you used to have to prove some association. So, I showed them I’m employed by this company, they’re like, okay that’s a valid reason, but they only had three ATMs in all of Japan.

K: Well, when we went to UFJ to open the bank account, I had to prove why I wanted to open up a bank account because they’re really – they have really strong laws that we’ve talked about before against money laundering.

C: Right.

K: So, I had to show them my pay stub, like, “look, I have this check, this information.” It wasn’t a pay stub, I called it a pay stub just for shorthand.

C: You had a check. That was one of the reasons you had to open up an account. They were like, “you don’t have a bank account, so we’re going to give you a check.”

K: No, I don’t think I had a check from them.

C: You don’t think so?

K: No, I had a document stating that they wanted to pay me.

C: Oh, okay.

K: Because one of the things that I had to do to work for that company was to prove to them that I had a bank account to which they could pay me.

C: Right.

K: So, before I could actually do any paid work, I had to prove that they could pay me.

C: Yeah.

K: And, so, I had the statement of intent to pay if I had a bank account. Which that was just so bizarre to me. I was like, “what do you mean I need a statement with intent to pay?” Because we had been living in Japan for a little while, but we were still using our American bank account. We hadn’t shut everything down in the U.S. yet. And, so, I was still just drawing money from the U.S.

C: Yeah, you would just go to the post office and take money out because you could do it internationally

K: Yeah, and it was your pay as well, so it was not a big deal. So, when I was working, doing that, okay, I have this letter of intent to pay, and they were telling me what I need to say, and then I was explaining it to them, and then they took me over to the cashier – something I absolutely love and take advantage of everywhere I go in Japan is that all the city offices, there are people just standing around there to help you.

C: Yes.

K: And, so, we had to go to a bank because I’m getting – I get transfers of money from the U.S. sometimes, and we had to get certain banking codes and a form saying that this is my branch, this is my bank

C: Oh yeah, you had to get your SWIFT code with the address and everything.

K: Yeah, all of that. So, because I deal with a lot of American insurance companies.

C: Yeah.

K: And, so, to get them to do the bank transfer because they want to send me checks, and I’m like, “yo, I can’t accept check.”

C: “Well, if you can’t take a check, just send us your ABA number” like, “don’t do that.” “Just send us the IBAN code.” “Japan doesn’t do that.”

K: Yeah, and so, some accounts they want me to have specific things I can’t have, and I have to explain to a client, “I will send you everything you need so that you can get reimbursed, but I can’t get paid through”

C: Yeah, there was one insurance company you had to write them a letter that said, “this is the official form from the bank, please note here where it says it is the official form of the bank.” There is no other form from the bank. This is the only way. Japan does not – is not signatory to the IBAN convention, no there is no IBAN number for this. It is not an American bank. There is no American banking routing number.

K: Yeah. I think the longest it’s taken me to get paid from an insurance company is 18 months.

C: Yeah.

K: And, so… like… I was just working on faith at that point.

C: Yeah. Letting Rasta hunt them down.

K: So, it was literally every thirty days “we’ll pay you in thirty days.”

C: Right.

K: So, every thirty days, I was like “okay Rasta, it’s time to call them.” We’d have to call them on U.S. time, so “hey, it’s U.S. time now, they should be open. Keep track of the person you were talking to.” And they just kept passing Rasta from person to person to person. So, that was just like… a trip.

C: Why? Well, we know why, they don’t want to give you the money.

K: Yeah.

C: They want you to give up.

K: I feel like they were trying – they don’t understand me. You don’t understand me, though. I am so for real about my money. I will get paid.

C: Okay. You will wear out your shoes chasing a dollar down the street.

K: Yes, I will. Yes, I will. If I have – that’s the thing about me. If I have worked for that money, if I have earned it through work, oh I am so for real about it. I’m super generous and give money away.

C: Yes.

K: But if I’ve worked, you better give me the money I’ve worked for.

C: Right?

K: Yes. And, so, for banking, we do daily deposits because sometimes clients pay me cash, and I don’t like to keep a lot of cash in my office just for safety reasons. I don’t want anyone to rob me.

C: Yeah.

K: And, knock on wood, I don’t know why I have to knock on wood for that, but knock on wood, hopefully nobody ever tries to rob me. They wouldn’t get any money, but they would go to jail and probably be thrown out of the country.

C: Only a few of your clients pay you cash.

K: Yeah, most clients opt to do either PayPal or bank transfer.

C: Right.

K: And I find that PayPal is super convenient in Japan because it allows me to accept credit cards.

C: PayPal is super convenient for receiving money, but for sending money you basically just link your debit card to it because it’s almost impossible

K: My debit card is not linked to my PayPal.

C: No. Mine is linked to mine, though.

K: Yeah, but my debit card is not linked to my PayPal

C: No, it’s not. But it’s basically impossib

K: I usually just have money in PayPal from when clients pay me.

C: Right. But it’s basically impossible to get cash into PayPal. It has to go through a debit card or credit card somewhere. In Japan. Because they’re so concerned about the money laundering.

K: Yeah. And, so, I do – I have PayPal, bank transfer, or cash is how people give me money.

C: But we don’t have Venmo, so Venmo is

K: Because you can’t have Venmo in Japan.

C: No, you can’t.

K: Which I’m totally bummed about. I would love Venmo.

C: I would love Venmo, too, and there’s another thing called TransferWise

K: Yeah, I would love that.

C: You can setup TransferWise in Japan to transfer to an overseas bank account, but you can’t setup their TransferWise cash card – is not available in Japan yet.

K: I’m hoping that they get Venmo in Japan.

C: It would be nice.

K: Because they have coffee in Japan. Ko-fi.

C: Ko-fi just sends through PayPal.

K: Yeah, I noticed that.

C: Yeah.

K: So, we only know that because we have Ko-fi for the podcast. So, when people – thank you lovely people who have purchased coffee. We love that. Totally appreciate it.

C: We do.

K: That goes into Chad’s PayPal. Chad wanted that to go into my PayPal. I said, “how do you know that I will ever split any of the money from – that we make from the podcast? How can you trust me?” (laughs)

C: Yeah, I don’t know.

K: He’s like “because you are obsessed with making sure I’m taken care of.”

C: I pay all of the podcast bills.

K: Which is why the podcast money should go into your bank account because the podcast bills rea coming out of your bank account.

C: Yes.

K: Oh, my goodness, protect yourself man.

C: Always looking out for me.

K: I am. I feel like you’re this babe out here in the woods. I could exploit at any moment, and I’m not just talking about in the hashtag twitter after dark kind of way. Heh heh. (laughs) Because I always do that in the twitter after dark. When I use that hashtag, I always do heh heh. So, if you say heh, heh, it’s heh heh.

C: From you, yes.

K: Yeah, from me. Bow chika bow bow. Oh yeah. That’s my porno music.

(laughter)

K: For me, that’s shorthand for all porno music.

C: Yes. M-U-S-I-C-K of course.

K: (laughs) So, I don’t feel like, - at first, I felt that banking in Japan was completely overwhelming to me. And scary because in the United States, I would never ever send out – there are literally, at this point, I think over a thousand people that have my personal banking information.

C: Right. And, on the other hand, at the ATM, there’s – it depend son the time of day – but it’ll, like you put in y our card and your bank book – which it automatically updates – anybody who’s struggled with balancing a checkbook, you don’t have to do that in Japan. You just have to have a bank account that includes bank book service. It keeps you up to date.

K: Yeah.

C: But it’ll ask

K: Every bank account has a bank book service, don’t they?

C: No. Aeon bank doesn’t do – doesn’t do the, they’re called techo, doesn’t do techo at all. Sorry, they’re called tsucho. Techo is

K: Techo is day timer, yeah.

C: They don’t do tsucho at all.

K: really?

C: Yeah.

K: Forget them.

C: The low-cost banks don’t do the bank book.

K: Oh okay. I love the bank book. Rasta updates my bank book every week, and it’s a party. (laughs)

C: Yeah, and well, we have stacks of years and years of them, which is really helpful when it comes to tax time and stuff.

K: I do, yeah. I think we have – we have every bank book we’ve ever had since we moved to Japan, so like fifteen years of bank books at this point.

C: That’s what I’m saying. It comes in helpful when we pay taxes or proofs of expenses or things. But it’ll ask

K: More so for U.S. taxes.

C: Absolutely.

K: Yeah. Because the U.S. is like – the U.S. one time sent, and this was so ridiculous, we had been living in Japan for like five or six years at that point,

C: Yeah.

K: And the IRS sent us a bill for like three million dollars in taxes.

C: No that was California.

K: California.

C: And they sent us a bill for a million dollars in taxes.

K: And I was like, “okay, if you got it that way.” Like, well alright California. Thinking I got all that kind of money. It was – it was laughable.

C: What happened is that they took the sale of our house and said, “all of that money is income. And you haven’t paid any income taxes. And you’ve been making the same income since that year.”

K: Yes.

C: “So, you’ve been making the price of a house every year for the last five years, so now you owe us triple in fees of everything.”

K: Yeah.

C: So, they’re like, “one million dollars, please.” And I just wrote them a note saying, “we don’t live in California, we don’t have an income in California, here’s our record.”

K: Yeah. We’re not residents in California, have not been residents of California.

C: After that, they still sent me a jury duty notice.

K: (laughs) Which that’s fun because by the time it reached us, it had expired. It had already gone past the date.

C: Yeah. So, I don’t know, there might be like a warrant out for my arrest for not fulfilling my jury duty five years after I left California.

K: In California?

C: Yeah. I don’t think so because I’ve been to California.

K: Yeah. Because they know that – it would be easy enough to prove that we live out of the country because you did send back – it’s not like you didn’t respond to that.

C: No, I responded.

K: You just sent them the form back saying you live in Japan.

C: Yeah.

K: So, I really enjoy the bank transfer conbini – convenience store – payment, but I don’t know if I enjoy it so much because, for me, it’s all centralized exactly the same way it was in t he United States. I open the bills, I go through the bills, I add the bills up, I hand them to Rasta to doublecheck that I’ve added them correctly, and then I hand him money, and he goes and pays them.

C: well, that didn’t happen in the U.S. because he was only 12 when we left the U.S.

K: Yeah, but in the U.S> I would open the bills, I would write the checks, I would put them in the checks, stamp it, and then tell you to take them to the mailbox.

C: See, and I tried for like three months to set us up with, I don’t even the remember the name of it now, this payment service where you set your billing address to their address, and they would open the bills, scan them electronically, send you email with them, and you could just click to pay them. They’d write an e-check for you.

K: What year is this?

C: This was probably like 2002 or 2003.

K: Okay.

C: It was the same time that Webvan was around.

K: What’s Webvan?

C: Webvan was grocery deliveries.

K: (laughs) What is all of this stuff you’re talking about?

C: Defunct dot com companies, basically.

K: Okay, there you go. Like, early 2000

C: Early 2000s yeah.

K: Okay. I don’t remember anytime I didn’t take care of any of our stuff. Like, all of our stuff.

C: when we first moved into our house in California, you weren’t taking care of all of our stuff.

K: Really? Who was taking care of it then?

C: I was taking care of it.

K: Really?

C: Yeah, and that’s why you started taking care of it.

K: Okay. Because I remember you jacking up the bills.

C: Absolutely.

K: Okay, yeah, I do remember you being like, having an “I don’t want to depend on you. I can pay my bills” kind of thing.

C: Yeah.

K: Now, it’s like, “okay, I trust you that you’re going to pay my bills.”

C: Now, I don’t even pretend. If you die, Rasta would take care of my stuff.

K: Yeah. We have an agreement that Rasta would take care of you for a small fee.

C: Yeah. If you both were gone, I would hire somebody. Literally. Because

K: Greedy bastard that he is. He would do it for free, but we’re – the way that we’re setting up our life, we’re trying to build stuff so that he could make a living managing it, and that and his books.

C: Yeah.

K: And right now, he’s currently in the process of writing his second book. He hasn’t released his books yet. When he does, trust and believe I’ll be talking about those bad boys. And tweeting about those bad boys. Promote, promote, promote.

C: So, somebody asked me, “are you good with money. You’re a mathematician. Are you good with money?” And I’m like, “other people’s money, yes. But not my own.”

K: Yeah. I’m the saver.

C: Yeah

K: So, I say I’m generous with money, but I think I’m mostly generous with our son. (laughs) With money.

C: That’s not true.

K: Yeaahhh. I have my spurts where I – so, I have a certain amount of my income that I do charitable giving with.

C: Yeah.

K: And that’s figured out and locked in, and so I guess if you’re a Musick Note, you might be one of the people that I’ve been generous with – no reason to lie about that – but I’m not a sucker. Like, dear sir or madame, I’m a prince from some country in Africa, no.

C: Okay, I am not falling for that again.

K: (laughs) You’ve never fallen for it.

C: No.

K: The most interesting one was that I had someone message me once about Rasta’s name and asking me if I would sponsor them writing a book to explain the definition of African names, and I was like, “I know the definition of Rasta’s name.” Rasta’s name has several meanings in several different languages. It’s the chosen one, the chosen path, the light, and god.

C: Yeah.

K: And, so, different languages around the world – and he looks like the second coming of Baba - a very important Baba from India – so

C: Yeah, a Telegu friend of ours was telling us about it.

K: Yeah. Their father was telling us about it.

C: Yes.

K: Yeah. So, for – like the reincarnation of a really famous Telegu Baba. So, yeah. I’m the mother of god. (laughs)

C: Yeah. (laughs)

K: I so love all of our Christian Musick Notes that you’re so patient with us and loving with us and don’t get angry at me for being sacrilegious. I can’t help it.

C: She is wholly unable.

K: Yeah, I am unable.

C: Holy unable.

K: Completely. Yeah, I got your holy, and I’m rolling past it.

C and K: Because you’re (I’m) a holy roller.

(laughter)

K: High five. So, thanks for hanging with us and kind of sort of learning about banking in Japan.

C: Oh yeah, you know all about it now.

K: Yeah, you know (laughs) everything you need to know. As always, do not trust us as an information source because this is an entertainment podcast. We are not educating anybody about anything. Thanks for tuning in, and we’ll talk to you next week. Bye.

C: Bye-bye.