

EP 3: KARDASHIANS & KOTTAGECORE

Z: Sync clap please! I really don't think we need to do that.

G: Same! It's like tradition. Welcome to the third episode of the White Pube podcast, my name is Gabrielle de la Puente.

Z: My name is Zarina Muhammad.

G: And we normally write about art, video games and food - but within that, we have been academically interested in reality TV.

Z: I think we are, quite frankly, big reality TV aficionados. And it's honestly the only thing that brings me joy to talk about in art world scenarios. Because everyone in the art world fucking loves reality TV, but there's this slimy, guilty part of everyone that refuses to talk about it. Or it feels like a fugitive subject where people do actually talk about, you feel like, oh how naughty of me! I don't know why that is.

G: Everyone's stuck up! Everyone thinks it's beneath them. Everyone thinks these airheads on the telly are not worthy of any critical analysis, but we don't, and we give it to them. The thing is, I feel like my relationship with it is changing. Across the broad spectrum of the genre, there are these icons who - depending on what they do, and their behaviour, and their relationship with social media - I think my relationship to it changes in turn. Like this is all chess, or something. And last night, and this is the reason why I thought we should do a reality TV episode, was because of Kimmy K...

Z: The OG reality babe.

G: Yes. She had done this twitter thread where she was like... ha ha, don't worry everyone, we were safe! We went and got covid tests and like, everyone isolated, and then for my 40th birthday I whisked everyone off to an island, and we had a special fun time. And just the way that she made this twitter thread of images, the end of October 2020, a few weeks before the election in America, it's in the midst of so many people dying, sick or out of work. Most people in America just got \$1200 to survive and that was months and months ago in the stimulus package. It just like, riled me up, and I don't know how people in America must feel to see someone who is like, a princess of culture, being like... "after two weeks of multiple health screens and asking everyone to quarantine, I surprised my closest inner circle with a trip to a private island where we could pretend things were normal just for a brief moment in time." (sighs)

Z: It's very batshit.

G: It's batshit because you could have done that without telling people! You could have, if you really wanted a good relationship with the public, which is not necessarily something they even need because they're always just going to make money off the fans they have... they could have done all this without publicising it, without this special thread explaining it all. It just pisses me off, because naively, years ago - 2017 I think? It was when I was going through CBT and anxiety and depression... it was just a year and a half of depression. One thing I did within those months was watch all 13 seasons of Keeping Up With The Kardashians. Because it just somehow fit into what I needed at the time, which was to lie horizontal and watch TV, because nothing else was going to entertain me in that moment. There's something about Keeping Up With The Kardashians' production

approach, the quality of it, it all was very still and cool and clean. They live in these big white houses with a white couch, who the fuck has a white couch? They're just that rich and privileged. So it was like, lovely to watch these people on a white couch who check their phones and just like... you're watching someone scroll twitter or instagram, take pictures or post pictures, all this bullshit that I really appreciated the Kardashians for providing. Which was strange, it's something I have thought about in terms of David Dobrik as well. If readers or listeners are familiar with David Dobrik, he's a YouTuber in LA who has a very famous channel where he does the craziest "we went to Las Vegas and bet \$20K on red" - and then they will give it to their maid, or something. For a while, those videos I found equally entertaining. Because of this salve in richness, there's something really weirdly therapeutic about watching rich people do rich things.

Z: Yeah.

G: Because they're just living on another level completely. And when you're not on that level, when you're not happy, when you're not a millionaire, it just feels so good for your eyes, I think. This is all to say that I just don't feel it any more. That coolness, this really privileged coolness of rich people doing rich things, I just can't enjoy it in the same way any more. I always joke that Michael, my fiancée, the things that he hates, I will hate in a few years. He will break me round to them. He's hated all of this shit, and now I'm there, and I'm like, ahhh!

Z: It's rubbed off on you, oh my god.

G: The illusion has broken.

Z: Why do you think that is?

G: I think it's something about the transaction. I've got no problem with people making money off their personalities, you know, live your life. But then getting to a point where you can exploit the parasocial relationships for all of this money, and these people now have like... she's got a beauty brand, a clothing brand, perfume. Every single thing is just raking in all this money and then to lord it over people and be like, I fuckin' flew off to a private island for my 40th birthday, hee hee hee... it just pisses me off. It didn't used to, but now it does.

Z: But I think this actually, this is coming from a super subjective place. It makes sense within your review, and where that came from within you. But I think this also speaks to a wider movement. Because I have been feeling the same kind of disintegration with that particular kind of reality TV personality. Which is very American. It doesn't function in the same way in the UK, which I think is interesting and we'll get into that. But as the past few years have gone on, since you wrote that review, all of a sudden the walls that hold society together have just crumbled, as Conservative government after Conservative government and in America, a Republican president and you know... I don't know how the American political system works. But it seems like things have been going mad over there as well. It's just kicked up a notch and everyone's aware of it. There's a public consensus on the fact that things are not great, like... society has been dissolving since 2016, I think. As life gets harder, bit by bit, day by day, month by month, incrementally for the wider population, rich people have been getting richer by doing more visible things, that visibly make them money. We are very aware of the fact that there are a certain number of billionaires, and their names are publicly attributable for the fact that they have money. I don't think that was the case, maybe 10 years ago. I think people could be a bit

more secretive about their money, they could make a choice to be reclusive. And now it's just like - Jeff Bezos, Elon Musk, as public figures for having money and being batshit in the process. Maybe they've chosen that reclusiveness isn't something they want to do, maybe it's that. But I think Kim, 10 or maybe 5 years ago, she could do this thing that was like - famous for being famous, and playing on that. But I feel like she's aware that became played out, she could only ride it for so long. Kylie started to overtake her, by doing something that was more active or interventionist, she could be a bit more visible about the fact that she was going out to make money. For years, Kim called herself a businesswoman and people laughed. And I don't think that was a joke then, I think she's just thrown that to the front of her activity if that makes sense. It's coming out in a more visible and publicly attributable way. I think as those things have happened, all of a sudden the reality TV portion of her fame has become more untenable, because that's become a tenser relationship. The whole point of that mystic magic of reality TV is best when it shows something just slightly outside the reach of your grasp. As the public have been hurtling towards full-on destruction and Kim has been hurtling towards very-visible signs of accumulating wealth, and consciously accumulating wealth with her billionaire husband who's got a ranch in Wyoming, and the family and surrogates, these strange tense points that only come from being fabulously wealthy. Like, those points are drifting apart, and I don't think reality TV is a space for her any more. That's why they fucking cancelled Keeping Up With The Kardashians, isn't it? It's not a productive, generative space for them any more.

G: Definitely.

Z: It's not mediated enough.

G: Ooh!

Z: What a fucking, diatribe.

G: I totally agree, I think that is a much smarter way of analysing - full disclosure to the listeners, I don't feel very well today, and my brain is on the floor. But I think something has changed in me in terms of like, education, and realising that being a billionaire is unethical. Being a very rich person is unethical. If I had money, I would give it all away. I just don't understand what these people are hoarding it for. In my head, LA is full of all these really scared rich people who are trying to stave off the revolution and plan for ways to navigate things like pandemics. I read this really interesting article a few weeks ago about a tech specialist who got an elusive invitation to fly to this island to give a presentation to what she was told... I don't think she was told you're giving a presentation to rich people. She was told, these people want your expertise. And her expertise is in new technologies, so she just created what she thought might be interesting to these people. She had like, a PowerPoint, and was ready to talk about technological development. And when she got there it was just herself and four very very rich people around a table, who were just asking her questions of like - what do you think we need to invest in, right now? And if there was this situation, what should we be doing to prepare for it? And one of the things she mentioned happened on that visit was conversations around a pandemic. So her visit to this island was a few years ago but they were saying to her, if there is a pandemic, and we build an underground bunker now, how much supplies do you think we need? And what do you think are the social implications of how we guard this? Because if it's a special secured bunker that is all-digital and it's got some kind of security software to keep it locked down, what if that gets hacked? Should we have a person on the door? But what if that person needs to get into the bunker and they

run away? What's the best way to go - software or someone on the door? The conversation just became something she was totally not expecting, but it felt like her account of it was such an insight into the way these people are thinking. Which is just, fear. Because they're like these dragons on piles of money and they don't want anyone to come close.

Z: Yeah. I completely agree with you. I think past a certain level of comfort, beyond stability - like, being able to afford two coats, a nice place to live that's comfortable and stable, and maybe a kid or a dog, there's a certain level of wealth, maybe even before being a millionaire, it becomes like - you've made a choice here, and I'm uncomfortable with what it implies. Even being a millionaire, it's just a way of thinking that I don't think - politically, morally, religiously, ethically (which feels like all those things combined) - logically, I can't get into that way of thinking. It's just very foreign. It's a completely different mindset to literally any single person I know. I don't understand it.

G: Have we ever met a millionaire?

Z: I don't think so!

G: Oh wait, no! Remember when we went to Norway? And we had the guy on the end of the table... what was he called, what was his name?

Z: Oh, the Oslo Biennial guy? Yeah... he was weird. I don't think I like millionaires. Rich people, I don't like 'em! They're not nice!

G: So we went to Oslo to see a ton of different stuff over Oslo Art Weekend, and it was great. It was the fanciest hotel we've ever been put up in, there was a literal Edvard Munch in the lobby, not a reproduction, an actual Munch painting. The end of the week left us in this very fancy Bistro restaurant with chandeliers and very nice...

Z: Mahogany tables.

G: ...waiting staff, three-course meal, and for some fuckin' cosmic reason me and Zarina were put on a table with like, I don't know if he was the head of Oslo Biennial, but some very fancy, posh man who had said to us "oh, I need to get up early in the morning because I'm going hunting."

Z: I knew from the off that this was going to be a crazy dinner. We walked in, and on the drive there we were in an Addison Lee or the Norwegian equivalent, and the reason we were next to this guy for dinner was because we were next to each other in the van, and we kind of walked in at the same time and everyone had already sat down. So we got lumped with him. But in the drive up there, I was like, where are we going to eat? I don't think my shoes- if it's nice, I'm not wearing the right shoes, they might not let me in. I'm wearing trainers. And he was like "no no, it'll be fine, don't be silly, it's just a really nice student cafe kind of thing, very casual, don't worry" so I was like, oh OK, cool. So I'll walk in with my trainers, cool, I wasn't expecting anything too fancy. Walked in, there's a fuck off chandelier, red carpets and people in suits! I was like, I'm wearing three-stripe tracksuit, are you joking?

G: As you were speaking I was just finding our twitter thread about it. So I'll just read it from us, the source. "Had a very surreal time visiting Oslo this week but peak surrealism was when the executive director of Oslo Biennale was sat across from us at dinner,

recounting his time in New York City in the 1980s when he 'lived in Brooklyn Heights. It was very black.'" So, yeah. Following on in this thread, "he was the absolute poshest person I've ever met and he couldn't join us the next day because it was the beginning of hunting season. It was like he was telling us Brooklyn Heights was 'very black' to make himself seem less like a rich dickhead, not that it makes it any better, but we couldn't find any black artists on the Oslo Biennale program, so make of that what you will."

Z: Literally, make of that what you will. As we've spent more time travelling, as we've seen this levels of the art world that are more internationally rich, I think I'm very aware that Europe, in general - Northern Europe, Western Europe, whatever you want to call it - has a lot of money. In a way the UK's like, middle-class, white, snobby, skinny curator class is small-fry, with their... their small primary school countryside education, their petty concerns feel small fry in comparison to some of the internationally rich people that populate the global art world, as it stands. The UK might be on a mad one, but the global art world of biennials and film festivals and that level of - "ah, I'm travelling to Rotterdam next week, and going to Berlin in March, oh, I'll see you in fuckin' god-knows-where..."

G: It's very strange and I think this changing relationship with the culture produced around rich people is why I tend to stay over on YouTube. But it's interesting what YouTube can do to people as well, they start very earnestly, just making some videos of them and their family, and then they attract such a large following that they're able to create so much revenue from producing the videos themselves, then they re-invest to make those videos even higher quality. Then suddenly they're moving into a very big house, and all the conversations they let us in on are underlined by money, and suddenly you're unsubscribing. I've seen it happen so many times. I just can't quite, I'm over it. I'm so over it!

Z: I wonder if that's part of a boom and bust cycle in cultural production, in the sense that like, culture is produced by individuals and the things that they produce come out of their individual experience. And as that individual experience shifts away from that of their audience, all of a sudden it drops off - it reaches a point that just, it makes it inevitable that it's going to bust.

G: Yeah - but I think what I'm trying to get at, is that I don't think rich people have as interesting personalities.

Z: Oh, so, yeah, yeah. Big time.

G: It's really weird and scary to watch it happen to YouTubers quite quickly where they're making all of this great content, you can kind of see it, not that they weren't rich already, but at the beginning of the Kardashians when they had fun and they really played pranks on each other and played fast and loose with how they looked. As the episodes and seasons have gone on, they become these statue people who won't raise their voice or move too much because they don't want to be look bad or break some kind of image they've been investing in.

Z: Yeah. But is that less about them as people and more about the visibility of the whole thing? Arguably they've got richer, they started rich but they've got richer exponentially through their reality TV careers. But the real thing that affects all of it is attention, because like, the family itself went from this peripheral thing around Kim - the true star - and even the intro, in the old series it was like, Kim is the fabulous starlet...

G: Pushing people out of the way to get to the front of the family photos.

Z: Yes! In that burgundy Herve Leger dress, the wrap dress - is it Herve Leger? I dunno.

G: I've never heard of that brand before.

Z: The wrap dress! Do you remember? They were popping, at the beginning of the tenties. Is that what they're calling them now?

G: I've also never heard anyone say the tenties.

Z: The tenties!

G: The tenties, Jesus.

Z: But that, from that to the current intro where it's trying to buy into a very manufactured nostalgia of like, this is how we used to be, homey - it's way more specifically engineered, it's an engineered authenticity. The original one was very performative, it was aware of and played up to its audience, and the tropes they all had - like Kendall and Kylie, the awkward, gawky teenagers, Khloe and Kourtney, you know, it played to those things. But it was arguably more authentic because it wasn't self aware, and I think the new intro, with the home videos of them as kids, they're trying to deliver something. Whether its nostalgia or relatability or just like, authenticity in a vague sense. It's way more self aware. I think that's why it's disintegrated, visibility has hit and it's tried to come back with a self-aware attempt at authenticity.

G: There's something about that though, the purpose of that, they are again these statue people who have been very polished and they've all got weaves because they want to appropriate black culture. They pull bits and pieces from what they want in order to create this mixed-race icon who's very ambiguous and charged, in order to sell things, or create higher cultural capital and value for themselves as bodies and people and names. My question is... are those people better at selling things compared to people who are like, us? Who lay it all out and are so transparent. Because people know that if we were selling something, we wouldn't be lying. What is that?

Z: That's interesting, because I think at the beginning, it was a bit more transparent, right? They were a bit more open in the fact that they were selling something. And then it became manufactured, it became a bit more removed, a strategy took place, I think. Maybe at the beginning it was a bit less underhand or subtle, or complex? I think the fact that we are not billionaires proves that we are clearly not as good at selling things, because-

G: We've never tried, to be fair.

Z: Ha!

G: I don't think we've ever had any kind of sponsorship offer or anything. But what is that? That's what I'm trying to get that, what is it about us as people and critics that means we wouldn't be approached to sell things? Because we do have like, a million followers. But it's really funny to me that it isn't capitalised on in that way. Not that we would, but just that the invitation isn't given to us. What is that?

Z: I think, right. This line of questioning makes sense, but for our listeners, we should clarify. Obviously we don't want to be approached. If you are a manufacturing tycoon, please do not approach us. This is not us begging.

G: We say that, but...

Z: No!

G: We do like some things. Let's name them. Who would you be sponsored by?

Z: Glossier, I genuinely use the products. I really like the mascara, I really like the cloud paint. Not sponsored, I just use the shit, you know?

G: You just use it a lot, and it would be good to have it given to you.

Z: Not even given to me, I would be willing to recommend it because I use it myself, I enjoy it, and I feel like that recommendation comes from a place that... I'd just be paying.

G: We are absolutely just undermining ourselves by giving people free advertising on this podcast.

Z: I'm going to edit this bit out, I'm going to bleep - honestly, I'm going to put a bleep over every time I say Glossier

G: I really feel jealous because I sometimes watch YouTubers like Sharla in Japan who is sponsored by a glasses company, like I wear. She has so much of it that she has put up a grid in her bedroom and she just hangs all these different glasses off them, that she wants to wear. They're all her right prescription and if I had millions of glasses to choose from, I think I'd be so happy. It would be so nice to just change- cos glasses cost so much money and you have the same ones for like four years because you just wait until your eyes deteriorate more in order to get the next pair. You don't think, oh I want to mix it up a little bit. You wait until your eyes go.

Z: And they're so prominent on your face, they're so prominent! They're just there. I think they're the first thing people see. And it stays the same! You can't choose, day to day! Yes, I agree!

G: If we had different glasses all the time, and Weekday on our bodies...

Z: Weekday! I'm going to bleep all these out!

G: You shouldn't bleep them, it's fine. We wear Weekday, more than any other brand, because it's quite good quality. Everything I've had has lasted very well and my new thing is - my New Year's Resolution for 2020 was I wasn't going to buy any clothes, shoes or make-up. Which has been very interesting.

Z: How are you going to be sponsored by Glossier and Weekday, then?

G: Come 2021 I'll be able to buy clothes. But what I've learned over this year of resolution is that I don't want to buy anything that doesn't last, because over the past few months I've been able to see my clothes deteriorating. Have you ever had a good sock?

Z: Yeah.

G: Where from?

Z: Sorry, I've really put a stick in your point, but yeah. I actually have had a good sock. This is disgusting but I need to preface this by saying I know I'm a boujie bitch, but I love a fancy luxury item. I'm not a real communist because I like cashmere. I bought some cashmere socks from Arket and they're fabulous.

G: Oh did you! OK, well I've not got any good socks. All my socks have deteriorated over lockdown. My converse kicked the bucket, I'm not being funny, where did I ever go? I didn't have shoes on this year! How have they got holes in? They like, squeak when I walk. It doesn't make any sense! I was sat down in 2020! I didn't put shoes on! Converse, never buying them again. So my new thing is like, I'm only going to buy stuff that is good quality. I asked people on twitter the other day for like, what have you got in your wardrobe that you trust is going to last you for years, or already has? And the recommendations were incredible. I've made a list, you know what was most recommended?

Z: Doc Martens?

G: Marks and Spencers.

Z: Oh!

G: Marks and Spencers, and I mentioned this to my sister because I think it is an interesting piece of data, and she said to me, well, look at the food.

Z: Gasp!

G: The food is very good quality.

Z: That's a good point, and do you know what? I really like their line of jumpers. Not that I've bought an M+S cashmere jumper, my Dad has, and given it to me, because he shrunk it in the wash. But it's so soft, it's been through the wash so many times and it's retained its shape, it hasn't bobbed.

G: Cashmere! This is important. I don't really know what cashmere is, I'm not going to lie.

Z: Neither do I! I don't know what cashmere is, all I know is it's really warm, it keeps me so warm and as we know, I am the coldest person alive. I have to little to no ability to heat my own body and retain that heat. I am a reptile, I need to sit in the sun at all times. Otherwise I'll freeze to death.

G: Unless you wear cashmere.

Z: Unless I wear cashmere! And it's really soft, and as we know, I'm incredibly sensitive to feelings and comfort levels. And cashmere, being so soft, keeps me comfortable, but it feels fancy so I can't just slouch about. It puts me in the head space where I'm ready to work and do things. So we get sponsored by Glossier, an eye wear company, Weekday, and M+S for the cashmere.

Or Arket, because those socks are actually really nice. I've had them a long time. There's something about fancy socks that just makes it feel like you're treating yourself to like... it's just a little treat, for you. No one else is enjoying the socks, you're not impressing anyone. But you're impressing yourself.

G: If you raise the level of your underwear, then you're just going to be a happier person all round.

Z: Yeah! Because it's your little secret! It's the kind of self care that is completely performative, it's completely capitalist. It's the self care of bath bombs, sheet masks, it's that level. But it's not performative for an audience, because no one else knows that you're wearing M+S...

G: Cashmere socks.

Z: Yeah.

G: How did we get here? We were talking about Reality TV.

Z: What would you buy if you were rich? Let's just lean in to the chaos. This isn't about anything, we're just having a chat, now.

G: I would have a house, I'd like a house.

Z: First five things you'd buy. House. What kind of house?

G: I want like, a house with lots of floors. I want a basement as well.

Z: Where would it be?

G: I want to say Liverpool, but if I had the option, maybe somewhere mad like, the Highlands. I'm getting this real draw to want to spend time in a forest.

Z: I've been saying this for years, I've been threatening to fuck off back to some bush, like a bush, the woods. I wanna fuck off to the woods. Every time life gets difficult, I'm like, I'm moving to the woods! And you've always chuckled, wryly, and I feel like you've never been in cahoots with me on that one.

G: Because I think I thought I was a much more social person than I am. And this year has made me realise that I could do without physically spending time with people. So I'm convinced, now. If I had a three-storey house with a special muddy basement in a beautiful forest that kind of looked like it was in Lord of the Rings, and a good internet connection. And a nice bike. Wouldn't that be gorgeous?

Z: Yes! Yes, yes! Are you joking?

G: A pizza oven in the back. And a Lassie dog.

Z: Let's just dwell on that for a moment.

G: I want that Autumnal magic...

Z: Cosy.

G: Cosy, beautiful, woody... I don't know what sandalwood is, but sandalwood... have you ever seen A 67Fairy Tale? What was the film called? It was based on Arthur Conan Doyle... not the real person but someone in the story played him as a character. The kids in it discover fairies out in the forest and they make them a beautiful little house and tiny little hats from the tops of acorns, and sometimes they turn the acorns upside-down and have a little bowl. They drink water from the little bowl!

Z: Stop, stop! One second. I just need a time out. You are describing these things like you don't know what cottage-core is and I need to like...

G: I didn't make the connection! I think I'm a cottage-core person! I'm Taylor Swift!

Z: Oh my god, oh my god. You're the last person I would think-

G: Same!

Z: It makes no sense.

G: It doesn't make any sense. I don't know who I am as a person!

Z: Cottage-core is the real virus and it has infected you, the last person left on earth.

G: I've been listening to the Taylor Swift album so much, I've just realised.

Z: When did you start feeling positive feelings about cottage-core? Is it because of the Taylor Swift album? Did Taylor Swift infect you?

G: Oh god. I think it's because me and Michael went to Loch Lomond once. It was a beautiful experience!

Z: Ha ha!

G: We went on a boat... oh Jesus, I think there's something really nice...

(HYSTERICALLY LAUGHING)

G: I just did a little wee! I can't breathe! (LAUGHTER) I just think it's really nice when like, moss grows on trees...

(LAUGHTER)

G: I love squirrels! I call the one outside the window Giuseppe! He's got a little belly!

Z: Oh, Gab!

G: Oh god.

Z: This might kill me. But did you really call the squirrel outside your window Giuseppe?

G: Yeah. I love him. Ah, Giuseppe.

Z: We need to- this is a podcast for us to discuss serious things. We were going to have serious guests! And talk about high brow culture! Third episode in we're talking about the pot-bellied squirrel outside your window.

G: Oh I just have to post a picture of him to you. What would you buy?

Z: I think... I'd buy two houses, one of them would be a nice town house in North London or East London, I'm not sure which. I feel like I would enjoy living in East London but I've never done it. I've lived in North London my entire life, I think I'm a North London kind of bitch. So I'm not sure, but it'd be like, zone two. I'd be one of those zone two dons. I can see that for myself. And I'd buy a house in the countryside, maybe Cornwall? I like Cornwall, but it's quite far away.

G: Is that what you want it for?

Z: Just being far away, yeah. It wouldn't be massive, I think a literal cottage, a bit on the nose, but I'd have a cottage.

G: A writer's retreat! You're building yourself a writer's retreat.

Z: Yeah. I think I enjoy the idea of the countryside but I couldn't live there full time, I don't think I could live anywhere other than London permanently. But I think there are moments when London becomes too much and I don't have the option to exit, at the moment. So I'd have a little cottage and I'd have a sausage dog as well. I'd buy some new glasses.

G: We'll be sponsored by then.

Z: Well that's it.

G: What are you calling your sausage dog?

Z: I'm calling my sausage dog Mr Patel and you know it!

G: I do know it I just wanted everyone else to.

Z: I think that'd be such a cute name for a sausage dog, specifically. Like you're in the park - Mr Patel!

G: Question. What flavour sausage dog are you getting? Because I know I want a long-haired one that'd like, blondie brown.

Z: Yes, I would like a long haired splotchy one, a bit like long, not wire-haired, just long-haired. That's Mr Patel. In my mind, Mr Patel is quite grumpy but like... did you hear that? My Mum's just posted a letter under the door!

G: It's like you're Harry Potter.

Z: I know! I'm the boy under the stairs. But yeah, a blondie sausage dog. Two houses and a dog. That's all I need, I think.

G: You said five things, though.

Z: Yeah, I don't know what else I'd buy though.

G: Are you not getting a car? How are you getting to your cottage?

Z: I've got a car!

G: Oh Zarina, you've not got a car.

Z: I have got a car!

G: It doesn't count.

Z: Why?

G: Because it's like, this little yellow thing.

Z: What's wrong with it? It works, doesn't it? It's got four wheels and a roof, that's a car.

G: The radio doesn't even work!

Z: I've got an aux cord now.

G: That's better, but we're talking rich-rich, would you not want to buy yourself a car?

Z: No, it works. Why would I want to buy a new car? It works.

G: You sound like your Mum. You sound like MY Mum. You're rich, get a car!

Z: No, because I like my car. I don't like driving other people's cars, I don't like automatics. I literally only like driving my car. And I know that it's basically broken and it's manual as well...

G: Zarina's got the Inbetweeners car.

Z: I know! It's literally the Inbetweeners car. It's bright yellow, it's from the 2000s, there's a tape section!

G: Do you not get big into tape collection, then?

Z: No, because it doesn't work. It's like a tape deck, you can put six tapes in at once, like a CD tower.

G: You want to live with this forever? What are you going to listen to on the way to Cornwall?

Z: Podcasts! You can queue it on Spotify. That's what I do when I'm on long drives.

G: OK. So I'd get my cottage-core house and I'd get a car but I want like a big, sturdy car. I also can't drive. I'd have to take driving lessons.

Z: Yeah, count that as one.

G: Shall I just do a tangent and tell everyone my driving lesson story?

Z: Please. Because I haven't heard a driving lesson story from you.

G: You have, you have. So, my Mum and Dad are both like, full on drivers. My Dad's a taxi driver and my Mum is a better driver than he is, and she drives so fast, but in a really safe, controlled way. She loves driving so much that we got her skid lessons for her birthday once where she went to a skid park - which sounds dodgy - and learnt how to skid in really fast cars for an afternoon. She loved it, she still talks about it. And for that reason I got driving lessons for my birthday when I was old enough, and just didn't vibe with driving. I hear some people say that you can get in the car and you realise, you're in this machine that could just run anyone over at any time. And I really felt that, I was young and so much happened on my driving lessons that nailed that in my head. I was driving through Everton once and these little windy roads, there's a big drop-off hill to your right, and these kids ran out in front of the car and threw a fish on the dashboard. Not the dashboard - what's the front bit of the car? Like, the chin.

Z: The bonnet? They threw a fish on the bonnet?

G: Yes, and then legged it!

Z: Did they see you coming? Did they have the fish in-hand and it was just a spur of the moment thing? Was this premeditated?

G: I don't know how this went down. Because it wasn't even a naked fish, it was like, in a Tesco fishmonger packet. So it looked like one big fish that a Tesco fishmonger had put in a special thing. Like it was really big! Anyway. Fright of my life. Stuff like that would just happen over and over again on these lessons and I started to feel like, oh, I don't like this. I could do it, but I didn't like it and I was constantly getting thrown off. It was getting on a bit so my Mum was like, book a test! The test lasted all of two minutes. It was terminated for dangerous driving, and the woman who was giving me a test got out of the car and walked back to the centre, because she was still that close. Make of that what you will. I need driving lessons again. But maybe because I've had CBT it would be fine, I wouldn't be as anxious. The reason it was terminated was because the beginning of the test, it was quite easy, they wanted me to reverse into a parallel parking space or something. I can't remember, whatever it was, smashed it, easy. And then I needed to drive out of the test centre but there was a tiny tiny little, not even a road, a tiny little driveway from the test centre onto the main road, and there was cars parked all along the left. So I was skirting the middle of the road, like, I couldn't fit in the left hand lane but I needed to be there. By the time we got ten seconds to the end of the road, the woman looked at me and said, you know you've just been driving on the wrong side of the road? I was like, what? My brain just shut down. So she went, carry on. And I thought - I've already failed. That's it, I've failed. So I turned right onto this main road and at the end of that main road, double roundabout.

Z: No.

G: So, my brain has switched off. I don't even know what happened... I fucked it, I fucked it. So at the end, for all I know I could have been going round and round and round like that scene in Rugrats in Paris. And I got off the roundabout and she went, pull over here. I'm terminating this test for dangerous driving.

Z: She sounds horrible.

G: She didn't even say anything, she got out the car, and I sat there and I was like, ahhhh. Because my Mum, and the instructor - who is my Mum's cousin - were waiting in the test centre for me expecting me to back in like an hour.

Z: But you hadn't passed your driving test. So she walked back, what did you do? Did you sit in the car or drive back?

G: I sat in the car... I think I went and sat in the passenger seat. Then my instructor came, he walked and he drove us back. Then, that was 2012, and now it's the future.

Z: Do you think it's been enough time for you to like...

G: Get over it?

Z: Yeah. Are you over that?

G: Oh I'm over it. I just didn't realise I had anxiety until much later and now I can see how it came through. And now I'll have a redemption arc. Do you know what? I was going to learn to drive this Summer. I thought oh, I've got a job, I can afford some driving lessons, I'll do it now because I might as well. Then, 2020. So first it was the evil driving instructor, and now it's 2020.

Z: Mm.

G: I'm going to have to do my theory again and all that shit.

Z: Do you want to know something? This doesn't happen, but I did it. No one fails their theory test...

G: Did you fail?

Z: I failed first time. Yeah. I dunno how.

G: Don't be ashamed!

Z: You've just told me about how you nearly murdered a driving test official, so I don't feel shame. I'm willing to come out now and make a declaration of my own, I would like to live in the truth. I failed my theory test first time round, and I passed third time.

G: Third time?

Z: Yeah, I'm clearly not meant to drive either, but I just had some kind of- I really felt like I had to, there was some kind of internal motivation. Like this isn't for me, but we're going to force it. I'm a good driver now! It's fine, it comes to you. It's a process.

G: I will learn. One way I think we should maybe end today's episode is like, just back to reality TV for a second, and maybe how we find better examples of that in YouTubers. Some YouTubers, or some types of YouTube. I know that you've been watching or listening to a jazz thing, and I just wanted to hear about it. What is it?

Z: Now I sound weird.

G: No you don't! Go on.

Z: Right, so, you know last episode we spoke about slow TV. I've really taken that to heart and I think my YouTube algorithm heard me talk about enjoying that, and I've been getting some really nice recommendations. So other than the jazz thing, three hours of bookbinding came up on my recommendations.

G: But what is the jazz thing?

Z: It's like an hour long music thing, it's just music with a blood orange coloured background, with a nice vibey picture at the track list. It's called Japanese Jazz When Driving On a Warm Night. And it is what it sounds like.

G: That's so nice, so lovely.

Z: Just imagine Japanese jazz... when driving on a warm night. There's no driving taking place on the video, it's just...

G: Do you wish there was?

Z: No.

G: Just someone on the roads?

Z: No. Because I think if I was watching it actually happen, I'd have a super-fixed image of what it is. But because there's nothing taking place visually, it can play out in my mind and it's way less fixed. It's more malleable and adaptive.

G: I was watching a good little five minute analysis video yesterday of someone's experience of playing Euro Truck Simulator, which is a game that sounds like exactly what it is.

Z: You're obsessed with this game.

G: I've never played it though. But I'm interested in what you're getting at, which I think is the same experience he's unlocked from playing it, which is around like - the world's gone to shit, you storm out the house and you start driving, and at first you're like, aargh, but after a while you're just driving and all that's in your head is the fact that you're driving. You become a bit lighter. People are getting that from the game and I think it's really nice. Also, more recently there was a flying simulator, that people started to play. I just imagine it's the same thing, it's lovely. It feels strangely like a more comfortable type of reality TV to spend time with, even if it's in a game. A one-shot person driving through Japan listening to jazz on a warm evening or whatever you just said. I'm preferring that type of thing, and last episode I spoke about one of the things that saved me through lockdown, which is Rambalax YouTube videos, and I've been digging through them recently to find the one I really like. It's just this guy who carries a Steadicam on walks around Japan. There are two that I really like now and one is him walking through a cherry blossom festival where all the trees have been lit up with white lights, it just looks gorgeous and you get this sense of festival-ness and people being out late with a coat

on, getting some hot food and everyone taking pictures of their friends with the trees as a backdrop. So there's that and a second video, in a very snowy place, where there's another festival and you can't quite tell what it is. I think if I could overhear the Japanese being spoken and understand what it was I would have a better sense but people are like, filing into a building and you can't tell what's in the building because he never goes in, he's just walking around. He gets a little bit of food from a stall and then he carries on and you can just hear the sounds of his footsteps, it is strangely the comfort I was describing at the beginning of the episode, from lying down and watching Keeping Up With The Kardashians. But this feels harmless in a way that that doesn't to me any more.

Z: But I wonder if that's because, between that moment - when did you write that review?

G: I think it was 2017.

Z: Right, between 2017, when watching it was like a salve to your eyes, and now, when reality has disintegrated as we know it, this year normalcy has shifted to the other side of a completely different spectrum. So that shift, I feel like the needle has been shifting - culture changes, normalcy changes - the limits of what we think of as everyday banality shift every day. Things get normalised and assimilated into the background of our imagination, etc. But the needle moved this year so sharply, and I wonder if that's why we can notice it, or looking back on such a different period of life and time. Only then does it become really noticeable. I feel that with the YouTube stuff, I'm a normal person, normal people don't watch three hours of bookbinding unless there's something weird going on. And that guy, wandering around real life, this feel like stark examples of how life is a mad one at the moment. We need that...

G: Palate cleanser.

Z: Yeah. And reality TV doesn't really exist... we were talking about this the other day, I've been watching Love Island USA, and it was Love Island but American, that was weird, first of all. But also Love Island, American, and shot in a pandemic? They'd all had to go into lockdown and do two weeks quarantine to check they didn't have it, and stuff. They have to do that anyway, right, but it didn't feel right. I couldn't tell if it was the American-ness of it or the pandemic-ness of it, I think it was the pandemic-ness of it. Because the American-ness of it made sense, they didn't do any of the whispering, you know? It sounded weird when they asked to go for a chat. I didn't like it. But, that's not the reality TV I want to watch at the moment. I want to watch these small moments of other people's lives because it matches the scale of my own.

G: That's very true. And on that note, I think I might watch some of that this afternoon. I'm going to write this week's text. I'll put some book-binding on the telly...

Z: Do you want me to send you the Japanese jazz when you're driving on a warm night?

G: I'd love to. I'm going to wrap up in some blankets because I don't feel well and have a hot drink. I never have hot drinks.

Z: You're so fucking cottage-core.

G: I am, oh my god. Watch me - I'm going to start wearing cardigans. I can't wait. 2021 when I can buy clothes again - cardigans.

Z: I don't see it happening, I really can't imagine you in cardigans.

G: Get ready!

Z: No!

G: I'm going to rebrand, and start posting loads of flat lays of the clothes I'm wearing. And then we'll get sponsored. Thank you for listening, if you want to - god knows why - spend more time with us we've already posted two more episodes of The White Pube Podcast. If you want to read anything we've written, everything is on thewhitepube.com and there are audio versions and written versions and more recently, video versions on Instagram as well. It's just @thewhitepube. Thank you for listening and I hope you're OK! Is that a weird way to end it? I dunno. Jingle! Bye!

Z: Bye!