

EPISODE 1544

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FT: So Money episode 1544, talking fashion, family, and finance with leading fashion entrepreneur and influencer, Chriselle Lim.

“CL: He had a successful career as well and I had an immensely successful career and yes, he was here to support me here and there, but for the most part, it was my hard earnings. It was me hustling, going out there nonstop. I was building this and I had support around me, but it was me and my team. And so when I realized, I was like, wait, so you mean because I built this business during our marriage, whether he lifted a finger or not, he is in time and I'm not talking about him. I'm just saying him just in general, right? Men in general and women too. And they are entitled to 50% of your business because it's considered community property.”

[INTRO]

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FT: Welcome to So Money, everybody. I'm Farnoosh Torabi. We have a blockbuster guest today. She is taking over the internet and the beauty world, also fashion and lifestyle. Chriselle Lim is here and wouldn't you know it? She listens to So Money. That's how we got connected. I feel like the Cool Girl. I feel like the girl in high school where like the most beautiful girl in your high school is like, you can sit with me.

So anyway, Chriselle is here and we go deep. She talks about her comeuppance as a fashion and lifestyle influencer, the business that she launched, Phlur, a flourishing fragrance brand that is found in hundreds of Sephora stores across the United States and on Sephora .com. It's called Phlur, P -H -L -U -R. She actually just released her latest fragrance.

Chriselle is very open on the show discussing her recent divorce, how it has impacted her family. She's the mother of two young girls, the financial lessons she learned, and why she

recommends all modern couples explore prenuptial agreements. It's a regret for her. And for anybody looking to start their own personal brand, content platform, Chriselle has some insider baseball strategies that have helped her navigate this evolving and competitive landscape.

Here is Chriselle Lim.

[INTERVIEW]

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FT: Chriselle Lim, welcome to So Money. Oh my gosh. I am so excited and honored to have you on So Money, especially because I know you have been listening to the show for about the entirety of the show, which is almost nine years. What an honor. Welcome.

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CL: I mean, it's an honor for me. I feel like you were one of the very first podcasts I've ever been exposed to. I think when podcasts started kind of popping off, for I don't know how I landed on your podcast, but I discovered it and I've been listening to it ever since. So it's totally an honor to be here.

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FT: Oh my gosh. Well, if only you knew how I felt. I mean, listeners, Chriselle is a really big deal. I've been in the podcasting space for a while, and in the personal finance space for a while, but you have also been trailblazing in fashion, beauty, and lifestyle for years. And in fact, I was reading that your mom was in fashion. So I wanted to start about kind of like asking you about how did you get interested in this space, but it's kind of like, it feels like it might be in your DNA.

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CL: Yeah. Well, my mom definitely had an interest in fashion. She never got to pursue it, unfortunately, because she pretty much chose to become a full-time stay-at-home mom. But her

way of being in fashion was making clothes for my sister and I. So growing up, my sister and I had these horrendous matching outfits all throughout our, you know, from babies to toddlers to becoming a kid to teens. And at that point, we're like, okay, Mom, we're not going to be wearing your clothes anymore. But that was her extent of being in fashion.

And I think she kind of vicariously lives through my sister and I, because she's always wanted to be in this world, but never really got her, her chance to.

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FT: We'll talk later about how motherhood has informed your approach to work in fashion, carrying the torch here. But when was the moment that you decided to pivot from working in corporate and working for brands, you know, editorial and working for brands to then being your own brand and everybody can check out your work? I believe your main site is thechrisellefactor, but you're all over social media as well. And Paris.

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CL: Yes. Yes. Everywhere. Everywhere that there is fashion basically.

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FT: Yeah.

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CL: So I, you know, I always say that there's, there is a moment where obviously a time meets the perfect place in your life. And for me, it was really during the boom of the digital blogs, the fashion blogs, right? And I was in college then and I was thinking of what it was exactly I wanted to do. And I, I wasn't in fashion. I was actually in accounting. Can you believe that?

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FT: What? Yes. No.

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CL: I was in accounting and like,

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FT: I knew you are smart, but that even, that adds a whole other layer of intelligence because I failed accounting so hard. I could not have had a job in accounting.

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CL: Oh no, that's you and I like, I realized that I was actually not great with numbers after I took a few classes. And so I was like, okay, this is really not for me. And in my college, there's a small, I went to a school called Cal Poly and not, not the good Cal. There's a Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, I think that's like the smart Cal Poly. I went to Cal Poly, Pomona, which is pretty much the school that you went to when I don't know, for me, I didn't get into any schools that I wanted to get into.

So my mom was like, you know, you have some cousins there, they're studying accounting, they seem to get, have their stuff together. So why don't you go into that? You want to make money, right? So I was like, sure. So I went into that and realize that I was not really meant for accounting. But there was a small program, it's an agricultural program, which is pretty much about farming, right? It's about creating fabrics from, you know, your farm and textiles and textures. And there was a small tiny fact, they called the fashion program because it was about textiles and fabrics. And so I got exposed to that. And I just became obsessed with the world of fashion. And I already love fashion, but discovering how fabrics and materials were made was very fascinating to me.

So I decided to transfer over to a fashion school. And from there, you know, I just, I studied and I was doing a lot of internships and really figuring out what and fashion it was that I wanted to do. And during that time, going back to your question, during that time was just the beginning when

Twitter was taking off, people were starting to get onto YouTube. That was a very, very beginning. Instagram didn't exist. TikTok obviously didn't exist. People had blogs. And so I started my own fashion blog while I was in fashion school.

And it was just an outlet for me. It was a creative outlet for me. At the time, no one was making money let alone, making this their job. So it was just a hobby for me. And then I think it was kind of two years into it. Again, I was just doing it for fun without any expectation. A company reached out to me saying that they wanted to pay me, I think it was for like \$500. It was for something like it was big for me at the time, \$500 for me was huge, massive for me at the time. Right. And I was like, someone wants to pay me to wear their stuff. And I blog about it. And that like something clicked on that day. If I could just do like five of these, I can make like \$2,000 and I could pay for my own food. That was the extent of my big dreams of just having some extra cash to be able to go out with my friends. That was the start of it for me.

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FT: Fast forward now, I want to get into the business of fashion influence and lifestyle influence. There's lots of podcasts and stories about this and there was a huge Creator Conference recently where people on YouTube making all this money, and I think sometimes we forget just the opportunities that there are and the potential that there is. I mean, you got sent to Paris, I believe, or you went maybe on your own dime, but let me tell you, people are looking at you closely more so than some of these legacy brands that have been around for a long, long time, like the Cosmo and the Vogue and that whole industry. That was your first taste, was \$500. You're like, okay, a light bulb went off. Maybe this is something. What have you learned since then in terms of how to value yourself in this industry and what are the opportunities, things that you didn't even know were possible?

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CL: Yeah. Well, we pretty much created the industry alongside the growth and the boom of the industry. We were the first generation of, "influencers." There was no such word as influencer back then. I think they called us more so YouTubers or Bloggers. Bloggers. Yeah, Bloggers. People still call me a Blogger even though I'm like, I don't even really update my blog. It's been

like a decade since it's happened, but nonetheless, that's how I started.

We were creating the industry as the industry was just getting started. I think a lot of people look at us and was like, I wish we were there when you started. I'm like, no, you actually have way more opportunity now. Yes, it is more crowded, but brands understand the value of a creator. They understand the value of an “influencer.”

It's definitely part of almost every single modern brand's marketing strategy. There's no shadow of a doubt that there is typically a budget for a marketing campaign and in there is some sort of budget for influencers. Back then, it was a wild, wild west. People did not understand what we were there for. They thought we were just these teens or not even teens, but young kids that were vain, that loved to take photos of ourselves. That was the extent of what a Blogger or a creator was back then. I remember our very first fashion show, I think it was at Ralph Lauren. It was over a decade ago.

They were one of the first to sit all the blogger's front row. It was myself, Pia Faroni, Ami Song, Sincerely Jules, and Brian Boy, and we were all sitting front row. It was a very first show that anybody, editors, everyone was exposed to us being there. It was almost like we have arrived and we got so much hate from that one show, but we started making some noise and people started paying attention. But it almost took — I would say about a decade for people to really fully embrace the value of a creator, the value of what we do. It's been a long time coming and I'm very proud to see the evolution of it all and to see all these creators, these young creators that are coming on and being able to be so creative and be able to make a life from it.

People know that. People that actually pursue it full-time, they know that it's an actual business and it takes a lot of work. Yes, it's easy to do one quick selfie or one quick TikTok just for fun, but the minute that you decide that this is what I'm going to be doing, it's no joke. It is more than a full-time job and I'm just proud that a lot of these creators are now taking that opportunity and the ability to make money for themselves and whether it be investing or creating more content or starting businesses.

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FT: Speaking of money, I mean, yes, it's a lot of work. And for someone at your level, the ROI is clearly there. But for someone starting out, how do you recommend that they manage their workflow so that that this not only is something that they can sustain because I just talked to friends like, it takes us two hours to put something on TikTok, you know, like something good, you know, I like, it looks simple because you watch it. It was 30 seconds, but behind the scenes, it was very long. And then people burn out, people arrive and then they leave because like any platform, content platform, whether it's a podcast or YouTube or social media, like it, there's — the burnout rate is high.

How do you at least try to design your workflow and maybe it's the boundaries and it's also maybe the prices that you command so that the work then becomes worth it, right? Like, talk a little bit about that. Like the engineering behind being ChriselleLim and how that can also inform others who want to rise in your rise through the ranks, following your footsteps.

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CL: Yeah. So it's kind of that equation of like the chicken and the egg, like what comes first? And so yes, you want to demand a certain price. You want to demand a certain amount because it takes X amount of hours to film and then edit and then think of the caption and post, right? It does take some time. And especially if you need help, you have to hire other people to bring them on board. So it isn't an investment, but it's almost as if you have to create the value for yourself first. You can't be like, okay, because it's going to cost me this much time. I'm going to then charge this. But then what if, what if it doesn't perform, right?

Then all of a sudden your reputation of not being able to deliver becomes that's your, that's your business, that's your asset, right? Being able to bring in those numbers. And so I would say when you're first starting off — is really have a clear understanding of who your audience is, right? And I think more than ever now, and I think you're the perfect example Farnoosh, is that you have to have a niche audience. I think the, the mega influencers that have started a while ago, like myself and my peers, um, you know, we're, we're also struggling too at, at our level because there's so much good content out there.

And I think where we kind of struggle is that we cover everything, right? Like because we're

beauty, fashion, lifestyle, Mommyhood, business, all of that. Now people are like, well, what, what do you really stand for? Right? What, what is your core audience? Because now what brands, what I see brand suing are going to the specific people like, oh, Farnoosh, she is the money girl. You know, let's go to her. She knows what she's talking about. Oh, this girl is a fitness girl. Let's go to her.

Not saying that you can't dabble in other areas because I think as a creative, you want to try different things. And if it's your passion, you should have the freedom and ability to create and talk about different things. But I think you have to understand what, like your main niche and what your main subject is going to be. And, for me right now it happens to be money and divorce because that is what I recently went through with my ex-husband, and kind of what I'm promoting as an independent woman. And so a lot of brands are looking at me for that.

So I think that's my biggest advice — is before you start charging people or trying to make it into a business, really understand who, like what kind of audience you're trying to capture and what your messaging is going to be. And just really focus on creating amazing content around those topics. And eventually, people can ignore really amazing content that's consistent. Eventually, it will catch on. You have to, what, and another thing is you have to be patient. You can't be like, oh, my one video or my three videos I posted didn't perform. You have to be consistent and start building and it'll add up slowly.

Um, and I also, another advice is don't put all of your eggs in one basket. Like, don't be like, okay, Instagram is going to be my platform or TikTok is going to be my platform. I'm a huge believer. And this might freak people out because it's a lot of work. I understand. Is you kind of have to sprinkle yourself everywhere. Um, yes, have like your favorite. Everyone has like their favorite platform. Um, but put like, I would say put like 80% of your time into your favorite platform but have your other platforms to support it. So that's another piece of advice.

Because brands can also look at that and be like, okay, her strongest platform is this, but then also she's not bringing in as many numbers here, but maybe if she supports it on like her Twitter or her Threads now, right, or her TikTok, then it could be worth that much more value. So I would say having some other.

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FT: Diversification is what I'm hearing. Diversification as we talk about in personal finance. I'm also hearing obviously consistency, which I stand for as well. And I think what I'm hearing too is just the importance of beyond knowing your audience, knowing what your message is for that audience. And sometimes that message, you're allowed to evolve, but you have to have really rich content to go with it. Maybe you're working on behind-the-scenes and then you bring it to the forefront. I mean, I do think there's an aspect of like if you bring it, they will come. If you do it, make it, they will come. I think that is definitely, that's been true at least in my world. You have to believe in what you're doing. You have to make it for yourself and for the people in your lives that you know need it and trust that others will also.

So money and divorce, eh? Okay. All right. I'm just gonna, I'm gonna hit go. The go button. And then you're, I've been seeing some of this content.

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CL: The things that I've learned through this process. Yeah, it's wild.

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FT: I fell upon one of your posts on your Instagram that was talking about paying alimony. I think your, your divorce is amicable for the most part. Like I think I was reading, I don't know who knows what I read, right? Because like people can make stuff up, but I was just like, okay, so she's living with her close to her parents. You're raising your two daughters, but there is some tension, maybe some financial tension.

So what were the lessons hard learned?

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CL: So you probably landed on some of my fragrance posts because I have a fragrance company called Flur and it actually launched today. Like literally.

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FT: Congratulations. Oh my God.

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CL: I think it's our 11th cent, but this is probably my favorite cent mainly because of the store behind it. A lot of the fragrances were inspired by like my personal experiences and this was, this is called Father Figure and it's all about fathering and it kind of blended into the topic of money naturally, right?

And I think this is an important topic, especially for women and mothers because it's a taboo topic. And so yes, first of all, my ex and I, we have an amazing co-parenting relationship and I think because we have two daughters, it's kind of forced us to be amicable, for that reason. So that is hands down the most important thing. And I'm very, very grateful that we could see eye to eye on parenting because no amount of money can buy that, right? And so I'm very grateful for that.

But, you know, when I got married, I had the kind of idea of many women of my generation because our parents taught us, my immigrant parents, God bless them, but they taught me to marry, marry well and you'll be taken care of. End of story. Pretty much that fairy tale story that we were all kind of bought into. We all bought into it. Even Disney was part of that narrative, right?

But no one talks about what if a young girl who has no money but has a lot of ambition decides to start a business and starts making more money than her spouse. What happens, right? I see you grabbing a book.

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FT: *When She Makes More*. I'm gonna sign this and send it to you. You don't need it. Well, you can give it to someone. You probably know all the lessons in here, but you know. We're like soul

sisters here. I mean, I'm sure —

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CL: I need that book. I'm gonna read it to my daughters every night. And so, you know, it's not about genderfication. It's not about, okay, you know, I'm only speaking for the women. I mainly speak for the women because this is education that women were not taught. I think both sides, both men and women, should get prenups to both protect themselves. And prenups, that's a whole different conversation. But I think it's naturally, people naturally associate it with, oh, they don't love each other. They don't trust each other.

One of my followers said, no, it's, and I love this, this kind of idea of when you go into a car, just because you put on your seatbelt doesn't mean that you don't trust the driver. It's just for your own protection, it's for your own safety. And that's what a prenup does. But I think prenups are, especially taboo for women. Our parents were not really educated about it. And so I think our generation, my generation is really realizing those things the hard way as they're going through the divorce. And, you know, for me, as I was going through it, I had a big, it was really hard for me to accept it just because he had a successful career as well.

And I had an immensely successful career. And yes, he, he was here to support me here and there. But for the most part, it was my hard earnings. It was, it was me hustling, going out there, nonstop, you know, I was building this and I had support around me, but it was me and my team. And so when I realized, I was like, wait, so you mean because I built this business during our marriage, whether he lifted a finger or not, he is in entitled — and I'm not talking about him. I'm just talking, I'm just saying him just in general, right? Right. Men, men in general, and women too.

And they are entitled to 50% of your business because it's considered community property when it's a business started during the marriage. And so it does not matter. And, you know, different states might vary differently, but at least for me in California, it does not matter how much or how little he or she is involved, they are still entitled to 50% of your business. And for me, that was something that was very hard to swallow because I'd built multiple companies and I just felt like that wasn't fair. And so that was, you know, him and I, we were able to land on

something that was, you know, generally fair. And so I'm very, very grateful for that. But this is, for me, when I realized that was the case for the majority of people, I was like, This is information that I did not know.

When I talk to people, people don't know that either, especially women of my age. That's why I feel very strongly and passionate about talking about this. And not just my situation, but just in general, because I think this is education that women, that my daughters, their generation, really need to understand before they jump into the biggest partnership of their life, which is marriage.

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FT: Thank you for sharing that. That's a lot to go through. I think what you're really pointing to is also this sort of systemic problem around divorce proceedings and divorce law. They vary by state, but by and large, I feel like they're so antiquated and they're rooted in this thinking and this idea that the man makes all or most of the money. We have this patriarchy and the wife barely works.

I mean, alimony, for example, right? It originated because when a woman and a man divorced, chances are she didn't have a job. That was back in the day. Of course, she needs money and he needs to pay alimony because she was set up basically to have that life. She wasn't set up for success as a career woman. That hasn't changed. Now, when we have more women going to college, more women going to grad school, more women starting businesses, and more women than men owning property in their 20s.

I mean, you have to assume that when you get married too, if you don't agree with your state's divorce laws, which were probably set generations ago, you need to have a prenup simply because you're a modern couple and the divorce laws are antiquated.

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CL: The divorce laws have not evolved since God knows when. This is something that is not talked about and it's really important that couples understand that anything can go and this is the last thing you want to think about. This is the last thing that you want to argue over. A prenup

simply just clarifies things from the beginning from the start. As you mentioned, women have evolved. They were there. The initial alimony laws were there to protect the women that were stay-at-home moms, which I think is fair because the mom, as we're both mothers, but you have kids, right?

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FT: I do. I have actually, I have a Collette. Yes. I have an Evan. I know you have a Collette and a Chloe. But yeah, our mothers and their mothers and so on and so on, they were not given the same message we were, let's just say that you should grow up and have a career and go to college and have a career. They were set up to become stay-at-home moms by and large and that was just the expectation and the cultural pressures right there too. We can't fault them. The laws reflected that traditional setup.

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CL: Yeah. Now the modern couple basically both were, a lot of times, the women do make more money than the men now. And yeah, so something that I feel very strongly about.

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FT: Now, I'm going to send you this book for you, but you said you're going to read it to your daughters every night. I should make a children's book version of this.

What do you want your two girls to know that you didn't know about money, about work, about influence, about power?

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CL: I think, there are a few things, but for me, I think the most important thing that they have to understand on a financial side, but also on an emotional side just because, you know, I me going through a divorce is that no one's going to come to save them, right? No one is going to come to save them except for themselves. And so to really understand the importance of one

self-love and to like being able to feel comfortable in your own skin, having the education, emotionally smart as well, emotionally comfortable, but also understand that they can't rely on other people to bring them this lifestyle, this fairy tale journey.

So really empowering them to making sure that they understand the importance of work, the importance of not to saving, being but also investing, something that I'm already teaching my girls at a very young age in a very like elementary way. And being smart with your money. And you know, I think teaching kids at a young age about money will only empower them, right? It won't scare them. I think for me, I grew up in a household where money wasn't really talked about. And I think this is very common for immigrant families where it's like, "Oh, we just worked so hard," and, you know, it's all about hard work, right? And yes, there is an importance on hard work, but understanding how to be smart with your money. I think that's something that it's going to be very important for me to teach the girls and continue to educate them on.

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FT: How lucky for them to have you as their mommy. And I hope we get to meet in person someday, Chriselle. If I come to LA or if you come to the New York area, please let me know. I'd love to hang out and say hi.

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CL: I would love that.

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FT: Congratulations on all your new projects. Tell us about all the cool stuff that's going on, where to find it, and where to find you.

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CL: Sure. So I have a few things, but Phlur is probably my biggest project. You know, Phlur was an existing fragrance brand that my business partner and I acquired and relaunched the brand.

It's P -H -L -U -R. And it just kind of became this viral fragrance brand online. We launched it about a little over a year and a half ago, and we've been able to tell just beautiful stories through our scents.

So our very first scent was Missing Person, which was really developed during the heartbreak of my divorce of like missing someone. And that was actually the fragrance that went really viral because people were saying that it literally smells like the person that you miss and people would purchase it and be like, "Oh, my God, I was missing my mom and this smells exactly like my mom," or "I was missing my ex-lover."

And I don't know how that wasn't the intention. It was just a deep, dark emotion that I had during that time. But there are a few notes in there that might trigger that like a skin mask. It smells like just yummy, beautiful skin. And so that was a relaunch of Phlur with Missing Person. And we've launched over 10 scents since. And yeah, just really focusing on continuing to build Phlur.

I also do a little bit of investing with I don't really talk about it because, you know, something that we try to keep internal, but we have something called Sync Ventures. And so really kind of focused on identifying female-led businesses that we really believe in and then and being a part of their narrative and just, you know, being able to invest into not their plot, just their product, but also the founders because as a founder myself, I know how hard it can be without that financial support.

And so, yeah, those are a few things that I'm personally working on.

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FT: That's incredible. Paying it forward. Yeah. Chrisselle Lim, thank you so much. Honored to have you on the show and please come back any time.

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CL: Thank you Farnoosh, for having me. It was such an honor.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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FT: Thank you to Chrisselle Lim for joining us. Please check out thecracellfactor.com to learn more about Chrisselle and her new fragrance line at Phlur, P-H-L-U-R.com. I'll see you back here on Friday for another episode of Ask Farnoosh. Please send in your questions. It's not too late. You can DM me on Instagram. You can also email me at farnoosh@somoneypodcast.com.

And check out our show notes. I've got some good links. One, which takes you to the website for *A Healthy State of Panic*. If you pre-order, you'll get access to over \$300 worth of bonuses. And this is the last week to join our launch team. I'm calling us the Panic Posse for the book. As a member, you're going to also get access to some great stuff and work closely with me to help bring this book to a smash debut success.

Thanks for tuning in and I'll see you back here on Friday. I hope your day is So Money.

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