

Shmanners 201: Elsa Maxwell

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Travis: P-A-R-T-Y?

Teresa: Because she's Elsa Maxwell!

Travis: It's *Shmanners*!

[theme music plays]

Travis: Hello, internet! I'm your husband host, Travis McElroy.

Teresa: And I'm your wife host, Teresa McElroy.

Travis: And you're listening to *Shmanners*!

Teresa: It's extraordinary etiquette...

Travis: For ordinary occasions! Hello, my dove.

Teresa: Hello, dear.

Travis: How are you?

Teresa: [sighs deeply]

Travis: Yeah?

Teresa: Survivin'. Livin' every day.

Travis: Is it weird to think that when people listen to this, it will be *the future*?!

Teresa: The *future*?!

Travis: Maybe... we'll have jet packs! And—

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: —self-driving cars!

Teresa: Why do you mention that?

Travis: And gluten-free bread! What?

Teresa: Wait, we have gluten-free bread.

Travis: And self-driving cars. And I bet somewhere...

Teresa: Where's my gosh darn jet pack?

Travis: That's what I've always said. Where's my Laura Dern jet pack, huh?

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Now, is that a jet pack that sounds like Laura Dern or a jet pack that only Laura Dern can use? You decide.

Teresa: Or one that she invented.

Travis: Ooh! Yes. And if she—

Teresa: Patented. TM, TM, TM.

Travis: —if she did—okay, listen. We have—I know we're off topic already, but if Laura Dern invented a jet pack and didn't call it a Gosh Dern Jet Pack, I'd be so mad.

Okay.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: So, why am I talking about it? Well, because when people hear this, it will be, like, two weeks from now, and I'll be in the middle of some ocean or other on the cruise!

Teresa: Oh boy.

Travis: Yeah. And you will be here with the wee babby Dot, and I will be on the cruise with the toddler Beebs. [through laughter] Uh, the Dread Pirate Beebs.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Um... but that's not what we're talking about. We're not talking about being separated from your one true love. And that's me, to you. I mean, like, I'm your one true love and you're mine—that's—you get it. M—you're my OTP. My One True Pairing.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Okay. Um, but that's not what we're talking about!

Teresa: That—we are talking about Elsa Maxwell, which was suggested by...

Travis: A listener! [laughs]

Teresa: [laughs] Oh—

Travis: Hold on, I'm gonna—I'm pullin' it up, I promise.

Teresa: [through laughter] You're never around when I need you!

Travis: I'm never ready—sometimes I'm on a cruise. Sometimes I'm just not paying attention.

Teresa: Um, who was suggested by a listener, and when I read—

Travis: Maz Selby.

Teresa: —when I read the suggestion I was like, "Uh, who? Ha—what?"

Um, and it would—it would seem that, um, my sphere missed her by a... by about 40 years.

Travis: Oh, okay. How do you mean?

Teresa: Well, she, um—she left the world in the 60's.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: So—

Travis: I assume you mean "passed away," and not, like, spaceship.

Teresa: [laughs] Jet pack.

Travis: Wha—!

Teresa: No. [laughs]

Travis: But without the proper... space helmet...

Teresa: Um, and so... and unlike Emily Post or, um—or Ms. Manners, who—who, you know, is syndicated across the world, and Emily Post has a kind of, uh, family legacy at her institute, um, I—I didn't know about her at all. And I was like, "Who is this—who is this person?"

Um, and upon further inspection... I am flabbergasted that I hadn't heard of her.

Travis: Oh?

Teresa: Yeah! Um, because—

Travis: Um, let me be clear: I also haven't heard of her. I know, like, one thing about her when I looked up her name, uh, and we'll get to that in a moment. Uh, when it comes up appropriately.

Teresa: When it comes up appropriately. Because she was the ultimate hostess of her time for the rich and famous.

Travis: She was literally... the hostess—

Teresa: The ho—

Travis: —with the mostest.

Teresa: —the mostest.

Travis: Thank you. Okay.

Teresa: [laughs] Um, so let's—let's dive in, shall we?

Travis: Sploosh! That's me diving into a pool. Splaysh!

Teresa: Um, looking at her—and we'll get to this later as well—you would not have expected that she would be hob—hobnobbing, rubbing elbows with the rich and famous.

Travis: Yeah, I saw a picture of her and she didn't look like she was dressed or, like, made up in, like, a super glamorous way or anything.

Teresa: And she was often described, uh, quite fiercely, as homely.

Travis: Hmm.

Teresa: Um—

Travis: It is unfortunate, by the way, just in language, that the word "comely" and "homely" sound basically exactly the same, except one means beautiful and one means, like, kind of boring and unattractive, and I can never remember which one's which!

Teresa: [laughs] The homely one.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: Is—is kind of... boring and unattractive.

Travis: That's mean. Don't describe people as homely.

Teresa: Well, *I'm* not describing her as that—

Travis: No, I'm not saying *you* are. I know I was making eye contact with you—

Teresa: Others—

Travis: —you're the only—

Teresa: —others described her as that.

Travis: —would you rather I make eye contact with Baby Dot and say "Hey, don't call people homely, Baby Dot."

Teresa: [through laughter] No.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: No.

Travis: You just happen to be the only person in the room I can make eye contact with. I was talking about people at home saying don't—okay.

Teresa: Okay. Anyway, Maxwell was born in Iowa and moved to San Francisco shortly afterwards.

Travis: Oh, that's a big move.

Teresa: Uh, yeah. I mean, with her family. Not by herself.

Travis: Yeah, but I assume this is—what? We're talkin' either super late 1800's or early 1900's.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Right? When that wasn't, like, a super easy move to make.

Teresa: No, not super easy. But she didn't have to do it on her own as an infant.

Travis: That's—that's very good.

Teresa: [laughs] And she would describe her childhood as this, and this is a—a direct quote: "A short, fat, homely piano player from Keowa—Ke—Keokuk, excuse me—Iowa with no money or background who decided to become a legend."

Travis: Well, that last part is similar to me. I never played piano. [laughs] So—

Teresa: [laughs] Um, but like a lot of things, she was known for embellishing.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Um, she wasn't quite no money no background. Her father was not poor. He was a very successful insurance salesman, and also worked as a Pacific Coast correspondent for the New York Paper "The Dramatic Mirror."

Travis: Ooh!

Teresa: So—

Travis: I know nothing about that, I just really like the name!

Teresa: It's a good name.

Travis: Yeah, right?

Teresa: You gotta reel 'em in with that name. The headlines.

Travis: I know, right?

Teresa: You know? Get 'em in. Um—

Travis: I wonder if there was ever a paper—

Teresa: —clickbait.

Travis: —that was just called, like—the, like, San Francisco Cool Kid Paper. And I was like, "I wanna read *The Cool Kid!*"

Teresa: Hmm...

Travis: You don't think so?

Teresa: Nah.

Travis: Maybe it was started by, like, a middle schooler. [laughs]

Teresa: Maybe.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Um... so she really wasn't a stranger to arts and... culture, right?

Travis: I thought you were gonna say "arts and crafts."

Teresa: No...

Travis: No...

Teresa: Um, and, uh... even though they weren't A-list, right? Uh, they did get invited to kind of, like, I would say the B parties instead of the A parties. But her mother did often claim that they weren't rich enough, uh, so that was—that was kind of a constant reminder. Where, you know, there was—there was something more.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: She wasn't lacking, but there was something more that her—that she was always reaching for.

Travis: So they were somewhat—they were, like—they were between, like, the haves and the have-nots. They were, like, the have-somes, right?

Teresa: Yeah, they were have-somes. In a 1941 interview, she said that someday I—again, quotes—"Someday I would give parties, big parties, expensive parties, to which no rich people would be invited. That is, of course, unless they happen to be nice people or talented people as well."

Travis: Oh, okay. Well... I do notice that she says nice *or* talented.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Not nice *and* talented.

Teresa: She was known for really mixing up the—the guest lists. People like Cole Porter and the royal family. Uh, and—let's see. Marilyn Monroe and... you know, all those people of the time.

Travis: And maybe some not rich people too?

Teresa: Sure, yeah! If they were—if they were nice or talented, it seems.

Travis: Uh-huh.

Teresa: Um, so what really seemed to be the catalyst to her—her party planner lifestyle was when her Dad died. And—

Travis: Okay?

Teresa: —Elsa would say that on his deathbed, he told her.. hmm, that's a lot of he said, she said's.

Travis: But I understand, yes.

Teresa: Quote, "It won't be easy for you after I'm gone. You are plain and plump, and as time goes by, you'll get plainer and plumper."

Travis: Wow!

Teresa: "You can turn your looks into an asset, because no woman will be jealous of you and no man will be suspicious of you."

Here comes the looks—they're everywhere, aren't they?

Travis: That—hey, I'm just sayin'.

Teresa: This—this poor woman—

Travis: That ain't cool! [through laughter] That's not a cool thing to say to your daughter! Like... okay. Alright.

Teresa: I think that it really just goes to show... some people can be very mean, even to their family. [laughs]

Travis: Yeah. Well, it was also—you know, I'm trying to remember, like, what the 20's or 30's were. It was probably like—just sayin', like, "You probably won't completely fail at what you do." And it's like, "Thanks, Dad!"

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: "This is the best!"

Teresa: So. In 1907, she moved to New York City with—again, this may be an exaggeration—three dollars in her purse—

Travis: Isn't that something that everybody says? Like, "[holding back laughter] A dollar in my pocket and a dream in my heart."

Teresa: Right. And a one-way ticket. That's from Millie, right?

Travis: And a... cool hat.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: And some comfortable shoes, and some *really* cool socks. Bombas socks. [holding back laughter] But we'll talk about those later.

Teresa: Oh, wait—okay. And she began playing piano and writing songs in order to pay her bills.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Then, really the change—the person that she would meet next changed her life completely.

Travis: It was... her guardian angel.

Teresa: Um... not—not really. Uh, but she struck up a relationship with a coal industry heiress, uh, Dorothy Fellowes-Golden—Sorry, Fellowes-Gordon—or Dickie for short. Um, they were very close. In fact, their affair would be on and off for about 50 years. It's said that Dickie took on her fair share of male lovers, but she always came back to Elsa.

Travis: So this is the one thing I know, right?

Baby Dot: [fussing]

Travis: So, even though these two women had, like, a 50 year long, loving relationship, right? Um... romantic relationship, right?

Teresa: Absolutely.

Travis: Yeah. Um, this is the thing about Elsa Maxwell. She was an outspoken *opponent* of, like, same-sex marriage.

Baby Dot: [fussing]

Teresa: And she has several quotes saying that, you know, "Why get married? I belong to the world," and things like that. But still—

Baby Dot: [babbling]

Travis: I agree, Baby Dot. [holding back laughter] She was wrong.

Teresa: [laughs]

Baby Dot: [laughs quietly]

Teresa: She was also—I'm not defending her, obviously. There were many, uh, people in her same boat in this century. And, you know... she made the decision for her that I think a lot of people made at the time.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Which is to... you know, stay in the closet and, in fact, so far as to speak out against it.

Teresa: Right. Well, methinks she doth protest too much. Right?

Travis: Yeah. Didn't wanna—yeah. Ugh. That's so sad. But, I mean, that's the thing. And the thing that I think is always important when you're talking about historical figures and—

Teresa: Right.

Travis: —is, like, we have to take the good and the bad and we have to talk about who they were, and not who we want them to be.

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: It was not her claim to fame, though. The parties—oh, the parties—was her claim to fame. Um, so through Dickie, she was able to start playing and entertaining in the homes of other elite New York names.

Baby Dot: [babbles]

Teresa: Like—

Travis: That makes sense.

Teresa: —Vanderbilts and Whitneys. Um, so one of the things that people always said about her when she would perform, or—or even just join—join in at a party was that her joy and enthusiasm was infectious, right? Uh, again, here's another quote from her.

"Never in my life have I been depressed, and never tired."

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: That sounds like the kind of person who would put on a really great party! [laughs]

Travis: Yeah. Who knows how much of that is, like... you know. "I'm—I'm putting on... a show, and I'm actually very tired *all* the time," 'cause that's *me* sometimes.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Right? I'm gonna be very on, do a live show, "Wow, Travis has so much energy!" And then all I wanna do is, like, sleep for two days.

Teresa: Sure.

Travis: But you would—like, I bet she wouldn't get hired for a lot of parties if she was like, "Yeah! Sometimes all I wanna do is nap. Anyways, what do you need me to do for your cool fancy party?"

Teresa: Anyway...

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: She was so beloved that, um, many of the people—

Baby Dot: [fussing]

Teresa: —that she—that she did, you know, parties for or—or just played at their parties, ended up, like, seriously paying her bills.

Travis: Oh, really?

Teresa: Yeah. Not to say that, like, she didn't get paid for her work, right? But she would go on to say these, quote, "Christmas gifts" from people were really, like, the source of her lifestyle.

Travis: Okay! I wanna hear more about this, and we're gonna talk more about it. But first... some thank you notes to our sponsors.

[theme music plays]

Travis: This week, *Shmanners* is sponsored in part by HoneyBook. Listen, you do so much to make sure that your clients look good. But here's what I'm wondering: who is helping *you* look good?

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We also want to talk about Bombas! Working out is hard. It's always been hard. Even when it's easy, it's still pretty hard.

Listen, there are—I think that there is this myth out there that there are people who, like, work out and they love it. But—it's so hard to believe. But Bombas can't change working out. I wish they could.

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[music plays]

Manolo: Hey, you've reached *Dr. Gameshow*. Leave your message after the beep.

[beep]

Steve: Hello, this is Steve from Albany talkin' about my favorite podcast, *Dr. Gameshow*. *Dr. Gameshow* is a show where listeners submit their *crazy* ideas for game shows, and the two hosts have to play them. And they often bring in celebrities and small children to share in the pain and hilarity.

At first it might seem like Jo Firestone has a contentious relationship with listeners, but that is only mostly true. She actually really respects us. It's a lot like *Lethal Weapon*, where Jo is like, "Oh, listeners! You're all loose cannons! You're outta control!"

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[beep]

Jo: Listen to *Dr. Gameshow* on Maximum Fun. New episodes every other Wednesday.

Speaker One: [radio static] Mission Control, this is Rocket Ship One. Come in, Mission Control.

Mission Control: [radio static] This is Mission Control, go ahead.

Speaker One: [radio static] We have incoming, and it looks big.

Mission Control: [radio static] Can you identify?

Speaker One: It looks like... [electronic beeping] some sort of... pledge drive. Affirmative! It's Max Fun Drive.

Mission Control: [radio static] That's a verified Max Fun Drive. Countdown to Max Fun Drive is initiated. Can you project a time to intercept?

Speaker One: [radio static] Based on the current trajectory, Max Fun Drive will be here from March 16 to March 27.

Mission Control: [radio static] March 16 to March 27, roger. Rocket Ship One, can you confirm a visual on common Max Fun Drive phenomena, such as the best episodes of the year, bonus content, and special gifts for new and upgrading monthly members?

Speaker One: [radio static] We have a visual. Great episodes, bonus content, premium gifts confirmed, and more. [radio static] Sure sounds quiet down there. Mission Control, what's your status?

Mission Control: [radio static] All systems go, Rocket Ship One, just catchin' up on our favorite Max Fun shows so we can tune into Max Fun Drive episodes between March 16 and March 27. Over and out. [laughs quietly] [radio static]

Travis: Okay. So, she's doin' the high society parties. She's playin'. They're sayin' "Ah, you're so cool. We're gonna give you... Christmas gifts that are, like, your main income."

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Um, and so, within 10 years of moving to New York City, she had risen from the funny pianist friend to now, she's the main event. Making the fun happen.

Um, I want you to think of any themed party you have ever been to.

Travis: Okay. [pauses] Do you me to tell you about 'em?

Teresa: Tell—yes, that's I guess what I meant.

Travis: Oh, okay.

Teresa: Tell me about any themed party you've been to.

Travis: Well, uh, I went to 80's themed parties.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: Um, and what's especially weird to that now is that if you're a college student now, an 80's party would be, like, an early—like, a late 1990's party, right?

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Or, like, a 2000's party, right? 'Cause, like, if you think about it, I started college in 2002, and I went to an 80's party in my first year, so that would be like... What, 2022 would be the same difference? It's—I don't care for that.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Now that I'm saying it out loud. Uh, there were... uh, "You are what you drink" parties where you dressed in a costume that seemed like, um, you know, a drink, an alcoholic drink. I went as gin. It was the easiest one. Just a shirt with some cards on it.

Teresa: Ohh, okay, okay.

Travis: Thank you, yes. Um... There were a couple like those, yes.

Teresa: The only themed party that I can recall other than, um, like... Halloween parties, um, during college, was a "Your favorite senior" party where all the underclassman dressed as their favorite senior, and then that senior at the end of the night picked the best one, their best, like, doppelganger, like, replica.

Um, but we went to a really fun party when we lived in LA. We went to a Harry Potter party.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: That was fun. Uh, you were a Death Eater and I was Bellatrix Lestrange.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: It was really fun.

Travis: We have—we have a—a... I don't know, an aesthetic? Okay.

[extended pause]

So, why do you ask? Why do you ask about these theme-ed parties?

Teresa: Well, um, because this is what she was particularly famous for.

Travis: Theme parties?

Teresa: Was theme parties. I'm gonna give you a couple of really fun examples.

Travis: Okay. 'Cause I will say, I was actually thinking about this the other day, that this is a thing I miss. And maybe there will be other, like, 30-somethings, you know, parents with two kids who'll be like, "I go to theme parties all the time!" But I can't remember the last time I went to some kind of themed party.

Teresa: [laughs] Uh, the one that really made her famous was a murder mystery party.

Travis: Ooh!

Teresa: But here's the trick: she didn't tell anyone that it was a murder mystery party.

Travis: Oh boy.

Teresa: Um, so when her—her guests came to dinner, she pretended to be worried about her house guest, a young model of fame at the time, and grew more and more flustered. And by the time she hadn't arrived to be seated for dinner, they gathered the guests together to search—uh, Zita was the name of the—of the model—Zita's room to find her, quote, "dead body" on the bed, with a bloody chest wound and everything.

Travis: Okay?

Teresa: Naturally, people flipped out.

Travis: Yeah!

Teresa: Um, people screamed and panicked and while everyone was freaking out, the butler corralled the party into a room where Elsa had—had called in fake

detectives to pin the crime... [holding back laughter] of murder, on the Duke of Marlborough.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: And *then*, after he had been accused of murder by these fake detectives she said, "Gotcha! It was all fake! Wasn't this a fun, fun party?"

And everybody was... was, like, astounded—

Travis: So relieved?

Teresa: —but they were totally cool with it! Everyone was like, "Yeah, that was so much fun!"

Travis: Must've been a different time.

Teresa: [wheezes]

Travis: 'Cause I'm—all I'm thinking is if someone did that to me I'd be like, "I... am *never* coming back here."

Teresa: [laughs] Even the paper ran a—now, several of these words are in air quotes. So, "Mayfair party, quote, 'murder,' girl, quote, 'stabbed' to death." [laughs]

Travis: Cool.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Great. I bet that wasn't confusing at all.

Teresa: Well, you know. Psychopathic power move or the best murder mystery dinner ever!

Travis: It could be both! It could be both.

Teresa: Both.

Travis: It could—sounds like both.

Teresa: Here's some—

Travis: Uh—you know what? I don't wanna judge too hard, because I think—there's a very—it's a very tricky to needle to thread, but I think if she threaded it, I actually might've had fun at that party.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: Right? If I started to be like—

Teresa: We have to trust that she did, that she threaded it.

Travis: I mean, I do—I read a lot of Agatha Christie and murder mysteries and stuff, so maybe I would be like, "Okay, the game's afoot! Let's do this!"

Teresa: [laughs] I mean, when even the person that they pinned the, quote, "murder" on is like, "Hey, that was a great time."

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: I guess—she probably did a pretty good job?

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: Anyway, she's famous for it. Here's the next one.

Travis: [through laughter] Yeah, but a lot of people are famous for some pretty horrible stuff, honey, so that's not, like, a good benchmark.

Teresa: They still use famous instead of infamous.

Travis: That's fair, yeah.

Teresa: I think that that—that gives you a clue. She, um, threw the first "Come as you are" party where invitations were sent out at all different types of day and night, and you were required to wear exactly what you were wearing when you received the invitation.

Travis: Oh, okay. Yes, I have—I have done that kind of party before, but—

Teresa: Oh, you have?

Travis: —but, I mean, it was not that elaborately set—it was just like, "Come as you are," and it was usually just, like, a pajama shirt and sleep clothes or whatever.

Teresa: Oh.

Travis: Or there—the "Anything but clothes" party?

Teresa: Okay, I've heard of this.

Travis: Where you have to—like, a lot of people do wrapped up in caution tape or—I made clothes out of, like, grocery bags, garbage bags—

Teresa: I think I've seen this one on television.

Travis: Yes, probably. Uh, I also did theme parties of the "Get dressed up to get messed up" party, where you dress in, like, really fancy clothes and suits and stuff, but then you do, like, beer pong and—

Teresa: Ohh.

Travis: —like, you know, boat races and drinking games and stuff.

Teresa: Fun! Um, one guy even showed up with his face half smeared in shaving cream and a telephone stuck to his ear.

Travis: Huh!

Teresa: Yeah. People—people got really into it.

Travis: He really—he followed the letter of the law, yeah.

Teresa: They really did. And then, uh, "Come as your opposite."

Travis: Oh. So, like, a mirror universe, like, goatee, evil person?

Teresa: [laughs] No. Uh, some of the examples were George Gershwin came as Groucho Marx, Fanny Brice dressed as an opera character, uh, Tosca. Cole Porter came as a football player.

Travis: [through laughter] Okay?

Teresa: And Virginia Vanderbilt dressed as Elsa Maxwell herself.

Travis: Oh, that's funny. Okay. They were havin' some fun with it.

Teresa: Um, so not only were these two of her most famous parties, there's—uh, the "Come as you are" party that I just talked about was, uh, organized in the same year as Paris's largest scavenger hunt.

Travis: Oh, okay!

Teresa: Things that were included on the list: music-hall star Mistinguett's shoe, a black swan from the Bois de Boulogne, a red pom pom from a French seaman's hat, and—and many others. Um, which ended up... sending, uh, two people to the hospital, and the wife of a British diplomat got arrested for theft by the French Navy.

Travis: That's how you know it's a good party, you know? Not the hospital part. That's bad. But arrest? [through laughter] No, no. In fact, you know what? I'm saying it out loud—hospital and arrest are not signs of a good party. Please don't get arrested or go to the hospital because of a party.

Teresa: Um, because her parties were—were the hottest ticket, um, it's said that all of white glove society bowed to her, begging for invitations. Um, she didn't like to think that she was *hired* to give these parties.

Travis: Mm-hmm?

Teresa: Um, and she often said that her parties were the opposite of business. Um, but... if you—if you wanted your party to be something that anybody who's anybody wanted to be at, you had to have her plan it for you.

Travis: This is very interesting. Because it—she seems different than a lot of the people we've talked about, where she seems to be kind of straddling this line between... um... novelty and expertise, right? And, like—

Teresa: Certainly.

Travis: —you know what I mean? Like, 'cause as you're describing these parties, they have an air of, like, wild and whimsical, but I bet she was also, like, you know, executing them expertly and, like, really nailing it and stuff, 'cause it—just having a cool concept doesn't make for a super fun party.

Teresa: Exactly. She wasn't—she wasn't known for her etiquette—uh, if I can put more words with air quotes around them—her, quote, "etiquette," um, because she—it wasn't about the kind of, like, stuffy, haughty, white tie only, charity ball-type stuff that—that people of the day were doing.

Um, but what she did was, as hosting these parties would prove, she made sure that everybody had a great time.

Travis: Yeah. Well, that's the—it seems like she had a focus on fun and activities and... frivolity? And not—and maybe it's because she didn't come from, like, a super—as you said, like, white glove upbringing. That she was like, "Well, let's have fun." Like, it's not just about showing off, right? It's about making sure everyone's having a good time. And it's weird to think that that was so revolutionary at the time?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: But I bet lots of these, like, high society parties were just showing off. Of, like, "Look how lavish a party I can throw."

And then you get there and be like, "Oh yeah, you spent a lot of money on the champagne or whatever, and I'm bored."

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: "I'm bored! There's nothing to do!"

And she was like, "Well, maybe it's not about how much money you spend on the champagne. It's about thinking about, will your guests enjoy the party?"

Teresa: Which is kind of the ultimate etiquette anyway, right?

Travis: Right, yeah. It's not about, like, showing off. It's about, like... everybody having fun and everybody being involved.

Teresa: So, um, she would allegedly throw over 3000 parties. Uh—

Travis: Sounds like me in college, ayyy! I didn't throw that many. I—did—that's not true. We did—we did have a lot of parties. We had parties, uh—let's see. Thursday nights, Friday nights, Saturday nights, and Sunday nights.

Teresa: Wow.

Travis: Um, then we took Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday off, most—

Teresa: Oh, to recover.

Travis: —most of the time. [through laughter] Or just to go out to bars.

Teresa: [laughs] You and I had very different college experiences.

Travis: Listen. The University of Oklahoma Theater School in 2002 to 2006 was a party school! I don't know what to tell you.

Teresa: 'Cause Travis McElroy was there.

Travis: No, it was not me. I didn't throw most of those. It was—the real reason for two years of it was, much like you're talking about, like, a hostess. There was a house that, like, five guys lived in that was, like, right next to campus, and it was, like, huge, and had, like, a big back porch and stuff. So they hosted a lot of parties.

Teresa: I see. And her—she was throwing these parties from the 1910's to the 1960's.

Travis: Uh-huh.

Teresa: Um, it wasn't just her parties that were lavish. Uh, her lifestyle became more and more lavish. I told you about these, quote, "Christmas gifts."

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Gosh, how many—how many air quotes am I gonna use in a podcast?

Travis: Well, it's a lot of euphemisms here.

Teresa: There are. We could make it—we could make a game out of that.
[laughs]

Travis: Oh! It's also occurring to me now that if it was 1910 to 1960, she *definitely* was throwing some parties during Prohibition that I bet were fun as all get out, right?

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: I bet there was some legit speakeasy parties. Not like "I bought some stuff at Michael's to make a speakeasy party," but literally, like, a speakeasy, with, like, secret codes and stuff. You know that was fun.

Teresa: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Travis: I bet she had a great time.

Teresa: Totally. Um, she released her own perfume line.

Travis: Ooh!

Teresa: Uh, which was the most expensive on the market at the time at \$40 an ounce. That's a lot for 1900's. Uh, the perfume was named Joy.

Travis: Oh, that's nice.

Teresa: She was a columnist for the New York Post. She wrote about politics and parties, of course. Um, she was also a regular on Jack Paar's talk show, where she was often introduced as the Orphan Annie of the Waldorf.

Travis: Oh.

Teresa: I mean, she did live at a Waldorf for a while. Um, but she was usually traveling, because, you know, her parties took place all over the world.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: She even dubbed herself Europe's Pioneer Press Agent.

Travis: Oh, okay.

Teresa: She would say this because, um, she takes the credit for feeding tourism in Venice by suggesting that they host a regatta. She also takes the credit for telling the prince of Monaco to get beachfront property to draw more people to the country.

Travis: Okay, yes.

Teresa: Um, and one of these—these Christmas gifts I was talking about, um, comes from a—an anecdote that they tell when Elsa's mother died. A group of aristocratic ladies were talking about how sorry they felt for her, uh, when one said that she admitted to giving Elsa \$5000 for the funeral. [holding back laughter] And then every other woman at the table also said that they had given her \$5000 for the funeral.

Travis: Well, okay! Alright, yeah! Make that money!

Teresa: Right? Yeah, always on the—on her grind, as they say.

Travis: I appreciate that.

Teresa: Um... so, here's—here's the thing, right? She really was the pioneer of, like, mixing people that we talked about, you know? Like, the—

Travis: Inclusion.

Teresa: —inclusion, right. People who were performers, people who were celebrities, people—royal people, things like that. Um, and people still, even though she was famous for her parties, they wanted to get to know her individually. I wonder if you can hear that on the mic.

Travis: Is that Baby—is that Baby Dot snoring?

Teresa: It's so cute! She's snoring.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Aww...

Travis: I couldn't tell if she was snoring or farting.

Teresa: No.

Travis: Snoring, okay.

Teresa: Snoring. Um, here's another anecdote. Um... one of her friends said that she was visiting Elsa, having tea at her apartment, uh, when Marilyn Monroe dropped by.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: And Marilyn was, like, five hours late. [laughs quietly] But kept calling every 20 to 30 minutes saying that she was on her way.

Travis: Okay. [laughs quietly]

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Okay, Marilyn. I guess you can be forgiven, 'cause you are Marilyn Monroe.

Teresa: Yes. Uh, in 1954 she wrote an *alluring* autobiography called *RSVP* about all of her grand adventures, some of which... were probably embellished, like I've said before.

Travis: Eh, what are you gonna do.

Teresa: Um, and in 1957, she released her grand party manifesto: *How to Do It, or the Lively Art of Entertaining*.

Travis: Oh, I bet that's fun! I bet that's a great book!

Teresa: It was a hit for the same reason that we are talking about her. It really went against conventional etiquette. All the advice that she gave. Things like, should a party—if you're gonna have a party, shouldn't you have a good time instead of worrying about all of the rules that you're supposed to have? Um, so

one example that she listed was that in some of her parties in Europe, she changed the dinner hour from 8 to 10, because she thought that the moon looked nicer, right?

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: It was just kind of a—

Travis: If someone told me, "Come to party, we're having dinner at 10 PM," I'd be like, "I'm already in bed. I'm already—what are you *talking* about?"

Teresa: In other parts of the world, dinner is served very late.

Travis: Even 8 PM seems late to me!

Teresa: Well...

Travis: I like to have my dinner at 6, and I'm in bed by 7.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Let's party! Isn't it funny that I spent—

Teresa: You have a toddler. You're not in bed at 7.

Travis: I know, but I've spent so much of this episode talking about, like, all the themed parties and partying I did in college and now I'm like, "10 PM? Are you kidding me?! Gross." [laughs quietly]

Teresa: Yeah. Um—

Travis: It's almost like I'm not as young—

Teresa: Oh.

Travis: —as I used to be.

Teresa: Almost, almost like you're an old man.

Travis: Oh, that's weird.

Teresa: Old Dad.

Travis: Old Dad.

Teresa: Uh, it was filled to the brim with recipes from Dickie, from famous chefs, um, high society members, even the editor of Vogue.

Travis: Oh, wow!

Teresa: She passed away in 1963, and according to her she had no regrets. She says, "If I knew I were to die tomorrow, I'd want my epitaph to be 'I die happy, for I was born gay and my life has been glorious, transcendently magical, and full of glamour.'"

Travis: That's very ironic, by the way. The beginning of that statement, "I was born gay," which she definitely meant "happy" at that time, right?

Teresa: Right. That was what was used for happy.

Travis: Yes. But the irony of that, 'cause it—

Teresa: It is slightly ironic, I would say.

Travis: uh, that's very interesting. She's very interesting. Thank you, Maz Selby, for telling us that we should talk about Elsa Maxwell. Um, hey! So, next week, folks. Next week is going to start the Max Fun Drive. Uh, and you know what? I'm just gonna tell you. If you're listening to this, the next episode's going to be all about chivalry, which is mind boggling to me that we've never talked about that, 'cause that seems—

Teresa: I think that we may have mentioned it in several episodes, but never altogether.

Travis: The fact we've never done an episode by now is—it seems like such a big historical topic about, like—and something people always talk about. Like, "Is chivalry dead?!" Well, we'll talk about it.

Uh, and it is also your chance during Max Fun Drive to support the shows you love, like *Shmanners* and get rewarded for it! Uh, you can check out Mc—well, you'll find out.

Teresa: You'll find out.

Travis: You'll—you'll find out, and we'll tell you all about the rewards, but just know that's coming up.

Teresa: Keep a weather eye on the horizon.

Travis: Exactly. Uh, you can follow us on Twitter @shmannerscast.

Teresa: And that's where we get all of our questions for when we, uh, have topics that take your questions.

Travis: Uh, and you can email us, shmannerscast@gmail.com.

Teresa: Email your topic suggestions to that address. Um, and we would love to give you a shout out on the show.

Travis: What else, Teresa?

Teresa: Thank you to Brent "brentalfloss" Black for writing our theme music, which is available as a ringtone where those are sold—found. [laughs] Sold and found.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Thank you to, uh... Kayla M. Wasil, there it is, [through laughter] for our Twitter thumbnail art. Thank you to Bruja Betty Pinup Photography for our cover picture of the fan-run Facebook group, which you should join! It's a place where you can give and get excellent advice from other fans!

Um... also, you know, listen to all those other Max Fun shows.

Travis: Oh, yeah. Thank you, Maximum Fun, for being our podcast home. Go check out all the other amazing Max Fun shows.

Teresa: Thank you to Alex, as well.

Travis: Oh, yeah. Thank you Alex, our researcher, for helping us get all this information organized. Uh, and that's gonna do it for us, so join us again next week.

Teresa: No RSVP required!

Travis: You've been listening to *Shmanners...*

Teresa: Manners, *Shmanners*. Get it.

[theme music plays]

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