

## Shmanners 224: Agatha Christie

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**Travis:** Whodunit?

**Teresa:** Agatha Christie done it!

**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 this is Shmanners!

**Teresa:** It's extraordinary etiquette...

**Travis:** For ordinary occasions. Hello, my dove.

**Teresa:** Hello, dear.

**Travis:** We're recording in my new recording setup, so if it sounds super crisp, that's why. But also, it means Teresa and I are abouuut six inches away from each other.

**Teresa:** [laughs] Uh—

**Travis:** Not quite that close.

**Teresa:** —not quite that close, [holding back laughter] but we are a lot closer than we usually are?

**Travis:** Yeah, it's—hi.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Hello—it's like I could reach out and touch you.

**Teresa:** You *are* touching me.

**Travis:** Oh, wow—

**Teresa:** Stop it.

**Travis:** —okay.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Fair enough. Fair enough. Ugh... But it's nice, huh? Clean—no room tone, huh? Pretty good!

**Teresa:** Ahh, ohh!

**Travis:** Oooh! Now, listen. I'm so excited this week. This is, uh—I am going to present this episode. This is a subject that is very, very, very special to me. We are going to be talking about Agatha Christie, the queen of mystery.

**Teresa:** Ooooh!

**Travis:** Yeah, right?

**Teresa:** Did you make that up? That sounds like somebody else did.

**Travis:** No, yeah, no—I mean, that's—that's what she's known—

**Teresa:** Oh, okay.

**Travis:** —that's what she's known as.

**Teresa:** Okay, alright.

**Travis:** And now, you know, as is often the case sometimes when we do a biography, one might ask, "Agatha Christie? Why—[laughs] why, excuse me! She isn't an etiquette or manners or whatever person."

But... here's the thing. We—

**Teresa:** She's a major contributor to the zeitgeist, and to the, uh... to every, like, depiction of detective everything, from then on out.

**Travis:** Yes, absolutely. I—I would argue... [sighs] okay. Folks at home, sorry. This is gonna be divisive. [holding back laughter] I think Hercule Poirot is better than Sherlock Holmes.

**Teresa:** [laughs] Well, so I think that they are separate, but good, because Sherlock Holmes—so, if you're in the world of Hercule Poirot...

**Travis:** Yes?

**Teresa:** He lives in, quote, "the real world," where Sherlock Holmes in his world is fiction, right? So, he talks about Sherlock as a detective story, so he's not a real thing. So it's kind of like they're—they're like those nesting dolls.

**Travis:** Uh-huh.

**Teresa:** So Sherlock is inside, and then... Poirot—

**Travis:** [exaggerated French accent] Hercule Poirot.

**Teresa:** —is—

**Travis:** You can say Poirot.

**Teresa:** Poir—Poirot is on the outside of that, and then our world is on the outside of that.

**Travis:** Sure.

**Teresa:** So, like, it's—they're—they're apples and oranges.

**Travis:** Listen. I'm gonna spend a chunk of this talking about Poirot, uh, because I think the way that she writes it is incredible. But, since I made the bold statement, let me say why.

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Travis:** And this is a personal preference. I love whodunit mysteries, right? And I'll talk about what makes a whodunit mystery a whodunit mystery. But Poirot as a detective is—is very smart, obviously. Incredibly intelligent.

**Teresa:** Obviously. He uses those [French accent] little gray cells.

**Travis:** His little gray cells. And order and method. But... he doesn't—he isn't a, like, superhero detective.

**Teresa:** Oh, of course.

**Travis:** I think Sherlock Holmes represents this, like, incredible mind, right? That, like, is head and shoulders above everybody. Where Hercule Poirot, like, his whole thing, especially when he's talking to people like his best friend Hastings, he's like, "Anybody could do this if they just, like, sat down and really thought about it, and had and order and method."

Like, that this is—and so it really encourages the reader to, like, pay attention, put the clues in order, you can figure this out. Everything is in there. There's no, like, "Ah, but in order to be able to solve this, you have to know this obscure thing about this poison, and I, Sherlock Holmes, know that!"

It's like, "No, I have given you everything, and if you could just sit down and, like, lay it in order, you could solve this yourself."

**Teresa:** Not to say Sherlock Holmes isn't without his faults, because he has his faults.

**Travis:** Absolutely. The whole drug... taking thing.

**Teresa:** Well, and the sociopath—

**Travis:** Sure.

**Teresa:** —business.

**Travis:** Um, so—but we're not talking about Hercule Poirot right now. We're talking about Agatha Christie!

**Teresa:** It's true!

**Travis:** Did you know...

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm, mm-hmm, mm-hmm?

**Travis:** ... that she is the best-selling author of all time, surpassed only by... William Shakespeare, and the Bible.

**Teresa:** Wow!

**Travis:** Right. So when we talk about impact on culture...

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** It's kinda hard. Right? And—and you know—what I think is interesting is I—I think that while obviously Agatha Christie gets a lot of love, right? A lot of respect, I don't think she's talked about on the same level as, like, your William Shakespeares. Now, of course William Shakespeare, greatest playwright of all time, arguably. Right? And, you know—but to be the best-selling author right behind Shakespeare and... whoever wrote the Bible—[laughs] um, is then, like... she is not taught in schools the way Shakespeare is taught, you know what I mean? Like, she—

**Teresa:** Not in a dissecting kind of manner—

**Travis:** Exactly.

**Teresa:** —the same way that Shakespeare is, but I think it really has to do with the idea that it's—it's light fiction, right?

**Travis:** Sure.

**Teresa:** So it doesn't have—it doesn't have the kind of, like, weight that say, like, *The War of the Roses* kind of does. That's the reason why. I'm not saying it's right, but I'm saying that it seems that she's inconse—the writing is inconsequential because of the genre.

**Travis:** I—I believe, in my heart, that in, say, 200 years, I think Agatha Christie will be taught in, like, coll—like, assuming colleges and schools still exist at that point—

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** —and we're all not just beaming knowledge directly into our brain chips. I think that she will be taught that way, because I do think that there is a certain—

**Teresa:** Well, I mean, we read *And Then There Were None*.

**Travis:** Right.

**Teresa:** In high school.

**Travis:** I think that there is a certain amount of, like, historical nature to Shakespeare, where it's taught as history as well as literature.

**Teresa:** Yes, yes, yes.

**Travis:** As well as, you know, theater.

**Teresa:** That's it.

**Travis:** And I think eventually it'll be that way with Agatha Christie. 'cause that's one of my favorite things now, about reading it and watching adaptations of it, is it's all, like, 1920's, 1930's, glitz and glamour and stuff. And I'm way into that. Obviously. We make this show.

**Teresa:** Obviously.

**Travis:** Okay. But let's talk about Agatha Christie's early life. She was born Agatha Mary Clarissa Miller on September 15th, 1890, in the southwest of England. Now, even as a child, she loved making up stories. She wrote poems at age ten, and shortly after wrote her first short story, and we know this because she labeled it "My First Short Story."

**Teresa:** [laughs] Do you think that making up stories is kind of like a euphemism for lying a lot?

**Travis:** Hmm... maybe.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** It's possible. 'Cause right now when Bebe makes up stories she's like, "And then the candy went to bed." And that's about it.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** And I'm not saying that's the end of the story, I'm—

**Teresa:** That's the whole story.

**Travis:** —that's the beginning, middle, and end [through laughter] of the story.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** But she titled it "My First Short Story," and her grandson still has it today. Um, she wrote in the manuscript of her autobiography, quote, "One of the luckiest things that can happen to you in life is to have a happy childhood, and I had a very happy childhood."

And that is, I find, interesting, especially of the time period.

**Teresa:** Can I say, whew!

**Travis:** Right! This is the thing—

**Teresa:** Thank goodness. [laughs quietly]

**Travis:** —especially for the time period, contemporaries of other authors of the time, to be like, "Eh, it was pretty fine." [laughs]

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** That is not true—now, her whole life was not, you know, cream and berries and dreams.

**Teresa:** Whose—whose is?

**Travis:** Yes. But, like, she had a good relationship with her parents. Her parents had a happy relationship with each other. Uh, like, her mother was like her best friend.

**Teresa:** She wasn't born into abject poverty.

**Travis:** No. Now, her father passed away when she was 11.

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Travis:** Um, and then that did put her family into some financial tight spots, right? And also, you know, especially at 11 to lose a parent—I lost my mom when I was 21, and that was a big, defining event in my life. I can't imagine, you know, if it had happened a decade earlier.

**Teresa:** Well, you were a full grown adult by that point.

**Travis:** Right, yes. Now, here's what I did find interesting. [laughs quietly] Just completely randomly, her mother decided that she wasn't going to be taught to read until she was eight? Arbitrarily, it seems. So she just taught herself how to read. So one day, like, her nanny came to her mother like, "I have bad news."

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** "She knows how to read."

**Teresa:** "She Matilda'd herself."

**Travis:** "She Matilda'd herself. I have bad news Ms., uh, Miller. She done Matilda'd herself real good."

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Um, and she says her mother was her hero, though, that loved her very much. But then the question is, how did this happy-go-lucky kid become the queen of crime? Now, I found this so interesting. Are you ready for this?

**Teresa:** Okay. I'm... ready.



**Travis:** She claims—said—I have no reason to disbelieve her—that in her dreams in childhood, there was a character named the Gun Man.

**Teresa:** Ooh.

**Travis:** That's what she called him. That would just, like, appear in her dreams. That she would be, like, having a dream about a tea party, and the Gun Man would roll up, they'd make eye contact, and she'd wake up screaming.

**Teresa:** Wow!

**Travis:** Yeahh!

**Teresa:** That's heavy stuff!

**Travis:** Yeahhh!

**Teresa:** I mean, especially since—since—I mean, we're—okay. She's ten, right? We're talking about 1900.

**Travis:** Mm-hmm?

**Teresa:** There's not, like, the kind of violent media that we have.

**Travis:** Right. She wasn't watching, like, *Nightmare on Elm Street* or whatever.

**Teresa:** Yeah. That's—okay! I—that's interesting!

**Travis:** Right?

**Teresa:** Where did that come from?

**Travis:** And, you know, here's the thing. I feel a bit of kinship to this, because I—I had—

**Teresa:** Oh, you had a very overactive imagination.

**Travis:** Oh, *very* overactive imagination, and I had a character that recurred in my dreams that I called the Dreamwalker.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** Who would just recur in different dreams, and be there, and, like, not be part of it.

**Teresa:** I had an evil My Little Pony that recurred in my dream.

**Travis:** Okay. That's a little bit different from someone that I would call the Dreamwalker.

**Teresa:** I mean, yeah, but it's still scary!

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Don't negate my experiences!

**Travis:** No, I'm just saying that one time the Dreamwalker said, "Don't be afraid, it's just a dream." And I opened my eyes in real life and fell back asleep, and he said, "See?" But I guess that's *kind* of like a My Little Pony. [weird noise] [laughs]

**Teresa:** It was an evil My Little Pony! It had a skull face!

**Travis:** [wheeze-laughs] Uh, there are also those who would say that Agatha Christie's actually idyllic upbringing might've contributed to her writing mysteries, because a lot of her stories are set in, like, idyllic towns where it's like, oh, everything seems so nice on the surface. None of these people could be killers! They're all upstanding people. But below the sur—you know, there's storm clouds and, you know, you're walking through these, like, hidden, secluded areas in the forest, and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. Right?

Uh, there was also the fact that while she had siblings, they were a decade older than her, so she spent most of her time playing by herself and imagining, like, in her family's garden and stuff.

**Teresa:** That is always a really great breeding ground for a—for an imaginative mind. Someone who is, like, forced to play by themselves. Not that I'm saying you should... force your children to play by themselves, what I'm saying is they—

**Travis:** Well, but—[laughs]

**Teresa:** —they don't need to be entertained constantly, because the imagination can bloom.

**Travis:** Well, and I also think that there is something to be said—man, once again, as I often say on the show, there's a child psychologist who could give a way better, like, lecture on this than I can. But I think it probably has a big impact on a child's psychology when you think of, like, they're not an only child, right? The parents have raised children before them, but they are a decade younger, so they do spend a lot of time—so the parents have had parenting experience, but the child is often isolated, away from other children. I don't know. There's probably something there.

So, her—as I said, her father passed away. And a lot of people also believe that this contributed to—there is a lot of money as motivation for murder and stuff—

**Teresa:** Oh yeah.

**Travis:** —where it's like—times were tight. You see a lot in—at least in Poirot novels. I admittedly have not branched out into the other ones, but in Poirot there's a lot of, "Our family used to be rich, and now our finances are failing, and maybe we're gettin' a little desperate." That happens a lot.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** So, despite this, her life went on. She moved to Paris when she was 16 to study singing and piano.

**Teresa:** Hmm!

**Travis:** Uh, and then she was an eligible bachelorette about town.

**Teresa:** So one would say that she was accomplished.

**Travis:** Oh, very much so. Very much so. Um, and she came out to society, as we've talked about, you know, making one's debut.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** In Cairo. And—

**Teresa:** Wow!

**Travis:** —yeah, and the surroundings inspired her to make her first attempt at a novel, titled *Snow Upon the Desert*. But, admittedly, writing was not her first concern. She was more interested with finding love.

**Teresa:** Awww.

**Travis:** Yeah. Well... save that "Aww."

**Teresa:** Oh—well, I mean... she—I—I said "Aww" because you said "Finding love" instead of "Finding a husband."

**Travis:** True.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Yes, yes, yes. I mean, I think what we will see over and over again with Agatha Christie is she was a very passionate person.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** Uh, and followed those passions, you know what I mean? Uh, in 1912, Agatha had five proposals, when Archibald Christie, or Archie, came into her life. They met at a social dance. And, you know, at that point there were dance cards, you know, that would fill up, and Archie was like—

**Teresa:** [simultaneously] Right, yeah, we've talked about that I think, right?

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** We've talked about dance cards.

**Travis:** Right.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** And Archie was like, "Tear up that dance card and dance with me, baby!"

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** And he probably didn't say "baby," but it was implied. And she was like, "Okay." And they were immediately smitten with each other, um, and—and it gained some steam, even though her mother was her best friend and her hero, gained steam when her mom was like, "I don't like this Archie fellow."

**Teresa:** Oh, of course!

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Forbidden love is always sweeter!

**Travis:** When you are a passionate, literary person, that, like—"Oh, this is making a good story!"

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm!

**Travis:** Right? It gets you. It gets you!

**Teresa:** I mean, it's that whole reverse psychology thing, right? That's the whole, like, tell me that I can't, and of course I want to.

**Travis:** Well, especially when you're living for adventure, and you're like, "This is my life!" Right? No one—

**Teresa:** "[mockingly] This is my life, Mom!"

**Travis:** In case anyone was wondering, no one ever opposed mine and Teresa's love.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Um—

**Teresa:** But that doesn't make it not sweet.

**Travis:** No, it's still very romantic. I'm just saying... no one opposed it. Um, so then, World War I broke out, and Archie was a pilot in the Royal Flying Car—the—*Car*. He flew in a—no. *Corps*.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** The Royal Flying Car wasn't invented until *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*. Now, during this time, uh, he was convinced that he would die in the war, right? I'm sure a lot of folks were.

**Teresa:** I mean, it was statistically very probable.

**Travis:** Yes, so, while he was on leave, he and Agatha got married in secret—

**Teresa:** Ooh!

**Travis:** —in 1914, before he went off to fight.

**Teresa:** Again, that's a—that's something that occurs a lot in her books.

**Travis:** Yes. Lot of those secret marriages, mm-hmm, mm-hmm. Um, and during this time, a lot of people believe that what she did next impacted her a lot, and impacted her writings. When her husband went off to France, uh, she volunteered to become a nurse, treating wounded men sent back from the front and helping out with, like, medical operations and stuff. And—and she had had a rather sheltered background, and so this kind of firsthand experience with violence had a huge impact on her.

**Teresa:** Oh, okay, okay.

**Travis:** She said in a 1974 interview, "I was shaking all over, but everything in life one gets used to."

Um, and this is when she [laughs quietly] met and befriended Belgian war refugees.

**Teresa:** [gasps]

**Travis:** Right.

**Teresa:** I'm startin' to put it together!

**Travis:** Right. And this is when she began writing her first novel in earnest: *The Mysterious Affair At Styles*, which is also the first Hercule Poirot novel.

**Teresa:** Who is a Belgian.

**Travis:** A Belgian war refugee!

**Teresa:** Yep.

**Travis:** Uh, she began writing it in 1916, and she used to come to Dartmoor, a national park in the county of Devon, many times when she was a girl. And her mother sent her there when she learned of Agatha's work on her first novel. Her mother's stance was if she didn't go away, she'd never finish the book. And thankfully, she followed the advice, and she would walk the moors for, like, six hours at a time just, like, saying dialogue out loud to herself.

**Teresa:** Ohh.

**Travis:** Now, as is—

**Teresa:** I wonder—I wonder if Agatha Christie ever, like, thought about making them into plays instead of books.

**Travis:** Well, maybe eventually. 'Cause we'll get to this, but she did write some plays.

**Teresa:** Oh, okay!

**Travis:** Um, and as is so often the case when we learn about these, like, famous authors, musicians, actors, the sentence usually begins with this. "After several rejections... "

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* was finally published in 1920. Um, and it centered on the murder of a rich heiress, but most importantly, used her meetings with the Belgian war refugees to give birth to Hercule Poirot. And it was, of course, a huge success. Everyone loved this book.

Um, and it is also where we see the first kind of inklings of what would become her signature style, right?

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

**Travis:** Now, this, I will take a moment here to talk about the whodunit mystery, and why it is a specific genre within mystery, right?

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Travis:** So a whodunit can be defined by a couple features. One, it is—someone who did it is a character that has been introduced.

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Travis:** Right? So you know the character, you just don't know that they're the murderer.

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Travis:** Right? So it usually—like, for example, a very modern example of this is *Knives Out*, right? Where we are introduced to the characters, and it is one of these characters who done it.

**Teresa:** What about Clue?

**Travis:** Clue! Another great example.

**Teresa:** Yeah, yeah, okay.

**Travis:** It is one of these characters who done it, right? There's not—like, for example CSI is not an example of whodunit—

**Teresa:** Ohh, okay, because they are looking on the outside for the person who's the murderer.

**Travis:** Right. And in the last act it might be like, "Wait a minute. What's this fingerprint? Who's this person? They done it!" Right? So, another feature of the whodunit is, "I am going to, as a the author, give you the clues as the detective finds them, that will then allow you figure it out as we go along."

**Teresa:** Hmm.



**Travis:** Right? And so I would say it differs—and we're looking at, at this point, another very popular genre of mystery at this point in time, the hard boiled detective drama, where—I would say in that, it is more about the detective following leads and, like, out there pounding the pavement and asking questions, right?

**Teresa:** Which is kind of like the opposite of what Poirot does.

**Travis:** Exactly the opposite.

**Teresa:** Okay, okay. 'Cause he's all about, like, "I don't care about fingerprints and clues and stuff."

**Travis:** Exactly.

**Teresa:** "I wanna talk to everybody."

**Travis:** Exactly. And so the whodunit is a lot more of, like, "Well, we're going to just put together, like, basically a recreation of events." And it's not so much "I know this dirty mob boss in town, and he has connections that can help me figure out who robbed—" no. Like, that's the hard boiled thing.

So, to your point... Poirot is a very interesting detective, right? That I think to this day one of the reasons it holds up is it is not, as you mentioned, about fingerprints and footprints and—cigarette butts is often something made fun of. Because all of that stuff can be misleading, according to Poirot. And we actually see this now a lot in modern day criminology, where we see, like, DNA evidence turned over, and fingerprint evidence turned over because, like, we thought it was so concrete at the time, and were like, "Yeah, but actually we're looking at it again, and it turns out, this." Right?

**Teresa:** Right.

**Travis:** Where what Poirot does is psychology, right? Like, "Well, you think that this person did this, but why would they do this? That doesn't make any sense." Like, and sometimes people were like, "Well, maybe it was completely out of character." And Poirot's point is, like, people do not do that, right? Is, like, we have to look at the psychology of the crime. What is the motivation? What is the—what was the thinking? Why did they do this, and then this, and then this?

So a lot of times, like, what Poirot will get hung up on is, there is this one point that you think is so convincing. But, it makes no sense that they would've done that, right? So—like, for example—

**Teresa:** So this is a—this is even different from the—the fictional Sherlock Holmes, right? Because he's always talking—like, he does a little bit of the psychology.

**Travis:** Yes.

**Teresa:** But he also is, like, the whole "I'm smarter than you" thing, where I can figure out everything—I figure out all your tells by your physicality?

**Travis:** Well, but there was also with Sherlock Holmes a lot of, like, "Ah, you said it happened this way, but I know this thing about this metal that would mean that it wouldn't be able to happen that way, and so I know you're lying."

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Travis:** Right? Where Poirot is a lot more like—for example, in *Death on the Nile*, which, uh, is the new Kenneth Branagh movie coming out, based on Poirot, there is an element where it seems like somebody's trying to frame somebody, right? But they threw the murder weapon overboard. And his—

**Teresa:** So if you were gonna frame somebody, why would you get rid of the thing that could, like, really clinch the framing?

**Travis:** So, that is what he gets hung up on is, like, "Yes, but then why would that happen?"

So in trying to answer these questions that he has, "Why would this happen? Why would the person do this?" That is what leads him to the next thing, right?

**Teresa:** Okay, okay.

**Travis:** And it is by, like, putting those things in order—order and method is the thing he always pushes—that he is able to make a case together.

Now, we're gonna keep talking about Agatha Christie, but how about some thank-you notes for our sponsors?

[theme music plays]

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**Travis:** This week, we'd like to say a special thank you to Native Deodorant. Listen, deodorant's great. I think so. You know what I mean? And what I love about Native Deodorant is it feels light on you. It doesn't, you know, feel all clumpy and gross. It's not full of a bunch of ingredients that, like, seem like they should be in some kind of science experiment in perhaps a Marvel movie. They are all, like, recognizable things like coconut oil, shea butter, tapioca starch, and it's also vegan and never tested on animals, and it smells great.

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It's really cool. It's a great program. Um, I think it's gonna make it easier for you to feel like your kids, you know, are staying on top of it, no matter what their learning situation is going to be. And they have hundreds of free online classes to enrich your child's education experience, whether it's a class taught by an astronaut, musician, or wildlife expert. There are fascinating subjects for everyone.

Man, all of those are right up Bebe's alley, and I'm sure that there is countless other ones that she would be into. And, listen. She would sit through 'em, and she's only three and a half, so imagine how much your kids will enjoy them.

Varsity Tutors also offers one on one tutoring, self study tools, learning pods, and homeschooling resources. Varsity Tutors has a 4.9 out of 5 satisfaction rating, and you can't beat that. Well, I guess you could with a 5—it doesn't matter. 4.9 out of 5 is amazing.

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[music plays]

**Justin:** Hi, everybody! My name is Justin McElroy.

**Sydnee:** I'm Sydnee McElroy.

**Justin:** We're both doctors, and—

**Sydnee:** Nope! Just me.

**Justin:** Okay, well, Sydnee's a doctor, and I'm a medical enthusiast—

**Sydnee:** Okay.

**Justin:** —and we create Sawbones: a marital tour of misguided medicine!

**Sydnee:** Every week, I dig through the annals of medical history to bring you the wildest, grossest, sometimes dumbest tales of ways we're tried to treat people throughout history.

**Justin:** And lately, we do a lot of modern fake medicine, because everything's a disaster. But it's slightly less of a disaster every Friday, right here on [Maximumfun.org](https://www.maximumfun.org), as we bring you Sawbones: a marital tour of misguided medicine. And remember!

**Sydnee:** Don't drill a hole in your head.

[music plays]

\*\*\*\*\*

**Travis:** It's also believed, uh, that her time—oh, we're back. Hi, everybody.

**Teresa:** [laughs] Hello, welcome back.

**Travis:** It's also that her time working with doctors and everything contributed to the fact that a lot of her books, the murder weapon is poison.

**Teresa:** Ohh, yeah.

**Travis:** Uh, and in *Murderous Affair at Styles*—

**Teresa:** Well, it also feels like—I mean... for someone who's exposed to a lot of violence, I feel like poison is kind of like the most quiet way to die? I mean, not—I mean, not for the person who's dying. It can be quite horrible. But it's not, like... it's unobtrusive, as far as, like, the people around you.

**Travis:** Well, I think there is a reason that it is written about as a, uh, thing for, like, a murder method so often, because unlike a gun or a knife, right? You could poison someone, and before they ever ingest it—like, poison—put it in their thing, then be miles away when it happens.

**Teresa:** Ahh, yeah, that's true. Yeah, yeah.

**Travis:** So it's a lot harder, unlike—you can find—you can find the person dying, right? And not know who it is. Unlike a gunshot wound, where it's like, "Well, I heard the gun go off. You're standing over them holding the gun, and you're covered in blood! Sooo... "

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Um, and so it's used a lot, uh, to great effect. So, the end of the war brought Agatha a period of joy, right? Her books were doing well, she created, you know, Hercule Poirot, beloved—

**Teresa:** [hesitantly] And her husband came back?

**Travis:** And her husband came back! Husband didn't die.

**Teresa:** Alright!

**Travis:** And he *didn't* die. Um, and here's the other thing that—even if you didn't know anything about Agatha Christie's real life, reading her books would tell you that she clearly had a great sense of humor and, like, loved being fun and funny. One of my favorite things is in the Poirot books, there's a character introduced named Ariadne Oliver, and she is a female detective writer who has a character that—I think he's Danish, maybe? And she finds him annoying. [laughs quietly]

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** But people love him. And, like, the whole character is clearly poking fun at herself, right?

**Teresa:** Exactly.

**Travis:** And she—and, like, it's—it's so funny. There's also one point where—so, Hastings is kind of the Watson to Poirot's Sherlock. There is one—

**Teresa:** In the same way that a lot of the books are from his point of view.

**Travis:** Yes.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** And there is a point where, like—where Poir—I think it's Hastings is sick, but makes a really good point that Poirot had not thought of. And he's like, "Your brain must be overheating. That's amazing!"

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** "This must be a result... of your fever, that you were able to come up with this!"

**Teresa:** "You don't usually work at capacity—"

**Travis:** Yeah, exactly.

**Teresa:** "—but this fever is really—is really contributing!"

**Travis:** This is also when she gave birth to her beloved daughter, Rosalind. And, as I said, her career took off. They started traveling around the world, and— [laughs quietly] I love this. While visiting Hawaii, she became one of the first Europeans who learned to surf while standing up.

**Teresa:** Okay!

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Go—go Agatha! Great work. I can't surf. Not that I'm extremely athletic in any way, but that's impressive!

**Travis:** I love finding out, like, these completely non-related to their career things. Like that, uh, Harry Houdini was the first person to fly a plane in Australia. [laughs quietly]

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Like, these things where it's just like, "Okay, cool! Great." Uh, in 1925, they moved from London to Sunningdale, and Agatha bought her first car, a Morris Crowley. And she described it as, quote, "An experience as fulfilling as meeting the queen."

**Teresa:** Wow!

**Travis:** Yes. Now, uh, this—

**Teresa:** Wait, had she met the queen?

**Travis:** I don't know. Probably, at some point.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Um, and now this next part is going to contain a spoiler for the book *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*. So if you haven't read it, maybe skip ahead, like, two minutes. But this period of adventure and stuff, then she wrote *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, which contains a—a very, um—what's the word I'm—hotly conflicted opinion, uh, convention, known as the unreliable narrator. And as far as

I know, I think this is first, like, prominent example of the unreliable narrator, where the narrator of the book *is* the murderer.

**Teresa:** Ohh!

**Travis:** And so, like, he is lying as he narrates to us.

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Travis:** And then at the end, when Poirot confronts him, that's when he's like, "Yes, yes it's true, and I told you about that, and that's why I wrote the—"

**Teresa:** Ooh, that's gotta be hard on a reader.

**Travis:** Right.

**Teresa:** That's a lot like in a play when you have to act like you're lying, but you have to kind of, like, show the audience that you're lying, but you want the other person to believe you, and... yeah. That's rough.

**Travis:** Yeah. But, that said, it is believed that this was one of her all time favorites that she wrote. And it—don't get me wrong—is very good, right? I think it's just, like, really hard—the problem is, you can't go into it knowing that—

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Travis:** —or it ruins the whole thing.

**Teresa:** Ruins the whole thing.

**Travis:** But, the feeling at the end where you're like, "Wait, then how was I supposed to figure it out?"

**Teresa:** Right.

**Travis:** Which is, like, one of the beloved things about the whodunit.

**Travis:** Um, so, this should've been an amazing time for Agatha Christie. But...

**Teresa:** Uh-oh.



**Travis:** This is where the—the bad—the secret bad comes in.

**Teresa:** Nothing gold can stay.

**Travis:** Um, so, as with so many people—and I'm going to say that these are two separate ideas that many people, historians and biographers, will link. I'm not going to do that, because I'm not comfortable doing so. But it is believed that point one, after the Great War, Archie was, you know, damaged, right? And that is the word of them, not me. That he was described as damaged. Probably that means post-traumatic stress.

**Teresa:** Yes, yes.

**Travis:** Um, and then point two, he developed a wandering eye.

**Teresa:** Hmm, okay.

**Travis:** Yes. And as I said, I'm not going to connect those two ideas, though a lot of biographers do.

**Teresa:** Could be a—a "then", could be a "and."

**Travis:** "And," right? Which made it difficult for Agatha. And so, uh, he met a very attractive young woman named Nancy Neal, and started to develop feelings for her. Now, here is the thing. I will once again step away to say, anyone who's read Agatha Christie books knows that this, like, marriage, then a new person comes in and, like, starts to disrupt it, and now there's a murder—

**Teresa:** Is a common trope.

**Travis:** *Very* common.

**Teresa:** Oh yeah. It happens—I feel like we've listened to probably, like, three or four books that that happens into.

**Travis:** Yes. And so she kind of denied to herself and to others that there was a problem going on. And then, to make matters worse, way worse, her mother passed away. And this was, remember, her best friend, her hero, all of this stuff. And while Agatha was at her family's home packing stuff up after her mother

death, Archie rolled up and was like, "Hey, by the way, I'm in love with someone else and I want a divorce."

**Teresa:** [groans loudly] That's the worst!

**Travis:** Yeah. Now, get ready folks, because here is perhaps the most interesting part of Agatha Christie's entire life.

**Teresa:** Okay, well, there's not enough room in here, because I want to sit on the edge of my seat—

**Travis:** Oh yeah, but you would fall off.

**Teresa:** —but I would fall off. [laughs quietly]

**Travis:** Okay. At this point in her life, Agatha Christie *literally*... disappeared.

**Teresa:** Whaaat?!

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** No, wait. Okay. I have heard of this.

**Travis:** Mm-hmm?

**Teresa:** In the way of, like, people have written other books and movies about Agatha Christie disappearing.

**Travis:** Correct. It also happens in the, I think, very good Doctor Who episode.

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Travis:** Yeah. "Unicorn and the Wasp" I think it's called?

**Teresa:** So, like—

**Travis:** It's got Donna, so you know I love it.

**Teresa:** So, like, she actually disappeared.

**Travis:** Yes!

**Teresa:** So, like, nobody heard from her.

**Travis:** On December 3rd, 1926, she said goodnight to her daughter and walked out of her house at a quarter to ten with a suitcase, got in her car, and was gone. The next day, a boy walking around the bottom of a nearby hill stumbled upon the car. The hood is popped, the lights were on, and all the doors were open. And that was her beloved Morris Cowley, now abandoned by the side of the incredibly remote road. Kid calls the chief constable, William Kenward, and a full blown—a full blown search begins. Because in the back of the car was Agatha's expired license and a coat in the backseat.

**Teresa:** Okay. So... first question. How old was her kid? Rosalind?

**Travis:** Uh, let's see. At this point, 1926, versus, uhh... 19... probably... I would say maybe, like, six years old? Maybe a little less.

**Teresa:** Awww. That's terrible.

**Travis:** Right.

**Teresa:** Second question—

**Travis:** Well, she definitely wasn't left there all alone, you know? There were definitely, like, house staff.

**Teresa:** Well, yeah. But, like...

**Travis:** I mean, still. Yes.

**Teresa:** Yeah!

**Travis:** But I just don't want people to think she was like, "Bye, kid. Good luck havin' some dry Rice Krispies in the morning. Mom out."

**Teresa:** [laughs] Second question.

**Travis:** Uh-huh?

**Teresa:** Her autobiography. Did it come out after she disappeared, or before?

**Travis:** Well... I'll get to that.

**Teresa:** Okay, okay, okay.

**Travis:** Okay. So, at this point the police go bananas searching for her, right? There are all these terrifying theories, and, like, they send out, you know, 300 men, and dogs—

**Teresa:** And of course it's Agatha Christie so they're all like, "Uhh, maybe it was one of her books come true!"

**Travis:** I don't think anyone thought—well, you know what? I say that. I thought you were gonna say, like, "Come to life." [laughs] But—

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** —maybe! So the get, like—

**Teresa:** Not like *Indian in the Cupboard*, but like—

**Travis:** Yes, absolutely. They get bloodhounds, divers, search parties, airplanes. Like, anything that they can find, to the point where they bring in mystery authors Dorothy L. Sayers and Arthur Conan Doyle to search for her.

**Teresa:** That's exactly who I would bring in!

**Travis:** Right?! Doesn't that sound straight out of a fiction story? Like—

**Teresa:** Absolutely it does!

**Travis:** —hey, you went—it's like—it's like *Castle*! [laughs] It's like the show *Castle*, where it's like, "Hey, you're a mystery writer. Help us solve these mysteries."

**Teresa:** Exactly. That's exactly what I would've done, because if you're—if you have disappeared and you're a mystery novelist, who would know your mind better than another mystery novelist?

**Travis:** Listen. If I ever disappear, I want you to get the ladies from *My Favorite Murder* to solve it.

**Teresa:** Okay, deal.

**Travis:** Right? Have podcasters solve my podcast mystery.

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Travis:** So, she is found, after missing for eleven days. And here is what supposedly went down. And it's contested, because, you know, who knows?

Uh, but... well, they pretty much know. I don't mean to be a conspiracy theorist, but I like to be, 'cause in Doctor Who it's like, "Well, she forgot, 'cause of the aliens!"

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** So, on December 3rd she heads out, saying she's going to drive to London, and 24 hours later turns up at a hotel and spa called Swan Hydropathic in Harrogate, which was 230 miles from where she started. And she checked in under the name Theresa Neal. The name of her husband's mistress.

**Teresa:** Oh ho ho!

**Travis:** Um, so she claims that she's Mrs. Neil from Cape Town, South Africa, and she lost a child and needs to recuperate, and to be left alone if possible. So, during that time, two men from the hotel who played in the band recognized her and very quietly went to the police and informed them, instead of claiming the 100 pound reward. Cool dudes.

But... that didn't stop the media circus that came the day that she exited the hotel. And in fact, there's still a plaque in the hotel's lobby. Um, so there's all kinds of speculation as to why she did this. Um, some think it was a publicity stunt for her new book, but that doesn't ring true for me. If we're talking about psychology, right?

**Teresa:** Right.

**Travis:** Because she was known before then and after then to, like, not really claim—like, not crave, I should say, like, the spotlight. She just liked writing the books and living adventure that, like, the books provided for her. She wasn't really, like, a big flashy person in that way.

Others thought she was trying to get back at her husband. Once again, doesn't really ring true for me. And still others believe it was a nervous breakdown. And that—like, that feels more right to me.

**Teresa:** Yeah. I mean, there were definitely some heavy things goin' on.

**Travis:** Right.

**Teresa:** I don't know. I mean—but if you have a nervous breakdown, why go through the trouble of creating a fake story? Like, why not just tell your—your daughter, like, "Hey, Mommy needs a vacation? So, uh, you stay here, and I'm gonna go check myself in at a little spa retreat for a while. So, you know, it's cool."

**Travis:** I think my—my theory on that, my Poirot psychologique theory is that it was that she didn't want spotlight. That she didn't want it to be a thing—because here's the—

**Teresa:** But if you don't want spotlight, why not tell everybody, "I'm okay! Just leave me alone." And—instead of disappearing!

**Travis:** Because that would imply that in the nervous breakdown she was thinking clearly and logically, and I think that those are contradictory ideas to each other.

**Teresa:** But if you don't want spotlight, why create a scene at all?

**Travis:** You know what? It's still—

**Teresa:** When you could very quietly just check in?

**Travis:** —it's still in doubt. Um, but here—here's the thing. After this, her career goes on. She divorces Archie, and never speaks of it again! The little—

**Teresa:** Uh, that doesn't sound... healthy. [laughs]

**Travis:** Well, I mean, maybe during that 11 days she processed it, worked through it, dealt with it, and was like, "Okay! I got more stuff to do! I can't live in this moment. I gotta go on!"

Um, and, like, she talks about it very little. She barely writes about it, as you asked. Like, it's barely a thing. Um, and—and she doesn't—as I said, she doesn't really like, uh, the—after this, it cements in her the very deep dislike for press, journalists, and crowds. She says she felt like a fox being hunted. Quote, "I always disliked notoriety of every kind, and now I had had such a dose of it that at some moments I could hardly bear to go on living."

**Teresa:** [scoffs] Here's the thing, though. You know how you keep people from chasing you? You don't run.

**Travis:** [sighs] Okay. Now, here's—there is a biographer—

**Teresa:** That's also how I keep people from giving me unflattering nicknames.

**Travis:** Yeah. You just don't run? [laughs]

**Teresa:** Don't answer. Don't answer!

**Travis:** Oh, I see. I thought you were saying you don't run, but that's—

**Teresa:** I also don't run.

**Travis:** Yeah. So, there was an Agatha Christie biographer named Laura Thompson who believes that clues to this mystery can be found in her Mary Westmacott novels. Now, Mary Westmacott was not a character, but rather a pen name that she wrote under from 1930 to 1956, when she wrote six novels. And the reason that she wrote under the pen name, presumably, is that unlike her novels that she wrote under her real name, in the Mary Westmacott novels, they are not tied up in neat packages. There is not a clear solution to the crime. It's a lot more chaotic. There's a lot more, like, stuff churning up and, like, being left with all these questions, and—

**Teresa:** So it's not exactly a new genre, but it's not exactly her style, from the other books. I think that happens a lot, where an author known for a certain genre or style wants to branch out and picks a pen name.

**Travis:** Yeah. And—and these books are also a lot more emotional, where, you know, as we've talked about, Poirot and her other novels are very logical and very, like—you know, like, we're moving forward, we're talking about psychic, order and method, psychological, we're moving forward, right? Where the Westmacott novels are a lot less satisfying in the way of, like, "Oh, order and method," but it's a lot more, like, visceral, I would say.

**Teresa:** Okay, alright.

**Travis:** Um, and so after this—oh, and during this time, uh, in 1949, the Sunday Times exposed her pen name in 1949, which was very upsetting, and she stopped writing the Westmacott novels a couple years later.

Uh, so, after this divorce, she craved adventure, and so she went to Istanbul on a whim. And do you know how she got there? [pauses] The Orient Express.

**Teresa:** Okay!

**Travis:** [groans] Okay.

**Teresa:** We made it. We're finally here.

**Travis:** So, this began her love affair with the East, and also—anyone who is a fan of the Poirot series will see that this is when she started, like, writing novels like—*Murder on the Orient Express*, *Death on the Nile*, like, stuff that happened in Egypt, stuff that happened, like, in the East, right?

**Teresa:** This is when Poirot starts traveling. [laughs]

**Travis:** Correct.

**Travis:** Can I tell you my favorite thing about Poirot novels, just in case I—before I forget? That they're so different, right? From time to time, of how Poirot interacts with the story. And this is not about what we're talking about, but in some, he's, like, the main character who's in every scene, and in some, he's barely there.

**Teresa:** [laughs]



**Travis:** He just, like, pops in. He's like, "Oh, what was happening? Okay, cool. Here's what it is. Bye-eee!" There's one—

**Teresa:** Or, like, someone writes a letter to Poirot and he's like, "Hmm, no, I don't think so."

**Travis:** Yeah. There's one that I'm trying to remember that we listened to recently, but, like, he is in a little scene at the beginning, and then he does not come back for two and a half hours. It's so good.

Um, so *Murder on the Orient Express*, surely you're aware of it. But to me, I think it is the greatest mystery novel ever written.

**Teresa:** Uh, I would think that some people agree with you. There's been a million adaptations.

**Travis:** Correct.

**Teresa:** There's been screenplays, there's been, you know, different cuts, there's been—I mean, it's—it's mentioned in other works, you know?

**Travis:** And, uh, it—I would say, as an adult, it is my favorite book. Um, I have reread it and relistened to it probably over ten times.

**Teresa:** What did you think of the movie?

**Travis:** Ummm... I thought it was a fun movie, that I went into with very low expectations and enjoyed.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** It is not... the same.

**Teresa:** We're talking about the most recent movie—

**Travis:** The Kenneth Branagh version, yes.

**Teresa:** —the Kenneth Branagh. There have been other movies.

**Travis:** Uh, it was not the same as the book. It is a different vibe. There's some, like, action sequences, which is—

**Teresa:** Is not his style.

**Travis:** —very unlike—but all in all, I thought it was a very—

**Teresa:** Who's the actor that does the miniseries one?

**Travis:** David Suchet.

**Teresa:** Yeah. I mean, you can just look at the—the way they have styled Poirot in those and know that this man is not gonna run on a train. [laughs]

**Travis:** There is—there was one we watched recently where, like, he saw something—oh, it was *The Death on the Blue Train*, where, like, he solved it and then, like, looked at a cop and he was like, "Go, get someone! Urgent, urgent!"

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** And then stood there watching the guy run away.

**Teresa:** Yeah. [laughs]

**Travis:** Um, but yeah. They make some action sequences in it. But all in all, I think it's good. I mean, if you haven't seen it, I'd read the novel first. But that was it, is I fell in love with the Poirot series I think, like, two, maybe three years ago, when Justin and I were on a trip together and he was like, "Just listen to this one." And I was like, "Okay!"

And I listened to it, and then immediately I listened to every Poirot novel in order at that point.

**Teresa:** As you do. That is very in character for you.

**Travis:** Consumed! And I've done it a couple of times since then again. Like, I think right now I'm on my third relisten of all of them.

**Teresa:** You're just—you're just a completionist through and through.

**Travis:** Yes, absolutely. I'm a binger. So, this is—at this point in her life is when she meets Max Mallowan, who is a cool dude. And they end up falling in love. He is an archaeologist, um, and so this is, like, right up her alley, right? We see once again at this point in the Poirot novels, he starts visiting a lot of dig sites. And she would go on dig—you know, digs with him and everything, and they got married in September of 1930. Um, and, uh—[sighs] let me just—first of all, Agatha Christie wrote a memoir in 1946 titled *Come, Tell Me How You Live*, which is just a great title.

**Teresa:** Okay!

**Travis:** And she writes of her experience with him, uh, and going on these digs. "It is like standing on the rim of the world and looking down on the promised land, and one feels much as Moses must have felt."

**Teresa:** Huh.

**Travis:** Yes.

**Teresa:** But she doesn't write very much about her disappearance.

**Travis:** Nope! Um, and so most people know of Poirot, but she wrote a lot of, like, characters and series, right? So, there was, I would say her other famous creation was Miss Marple.

**Teresa:** Yes, yes.

**Travis:** Yes. Miss Marple is an older lady who... mostly her detective style is meddling.

**Teresa:** A little *Murder She Wrote*.

**Travis:** Yes, very *Murder She Wrote*, I would say. And, like, you know, she just kind of meddles in people's affairs to solve crime. She's like a grandmother who's just like, "[high pitched mumbling]" and it—well, not a grandmother. But it is based off of Agatha's own grandmother, um, and it was a huge success. But that's not all. She—uh, well, I should also mention, Miss Marple has been played by Angela Lansbury, Helen Hayes, Geraldine McEwan, uh, and of course Poirot has been played by David Suchet, Kenneth Branagh, and John Malkovich, recently.

**Teresa:** Oh, really?

**Travis:** Yeah! Um—

**Teresa:** How did I miss that?

**Travis:** It's a more recent, like, series. It's not a movie.

**Teresa:** Oh, okay.

**Travis:** Um, and that's not—I mean, he's been played tons of times. Um, she also had characters named Tuppence and Tommy, who were a husband and wife detective team, um, an ex-MI5 agent named Colonel Race who also appears in *Cards on the Table*, a Poirot novel, with Ariadne Oliver, Colonel Race, and I think Lieutenant Battle of Scotland Yard?

**Teresa:** Oh, okay, okay.

**Travis:** Um, and then of course Ariadne Oliver. Lots of characters.

**Teresa:** So it's kind of like she has a little, like, multiverse going, where—

**Travis:** Absolutely.

**Teresa:** —where the characters that she creates kind of interact in different styles across her books.

**Travis:** Yes.

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Travis:** Um, and, you know, at this point, we hit World War—

**Teresa:** Is that what I mean? Multiverse?

**Travis:** Yeah!

**Teresa:** Yeah, okay.

**Travis:** Well, sure.

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Travis:** It's the Christieverse, if you will.

**Teresa:** The Christieverse.

**Travis:** Yeah. Um, and during World War II she had a huge cultural impact, right? Because she wrote novels that let people escape, right? And it was a time of chaos and a time of, like, who knows what's gonna happen next? And so having books that were all about order and method, and solving things, and stopping killers—

**Teresa:** Feels very comforting.

**Travis:** Very comforting, very comforting.

**Teresa:** That's why I like to watch the same TV shows.

**Travis:** Yep.

**Teresa:** It's like hangin' out with my friends.

**Travis:** Um, and, you know, she wrote 70 detective novels over the course of her life, as well as short fiction.

**Teresa:** I had no idea she was so prolific.

**Travis:** Oh, yeahhh. And she became known as the queen of crime, or the queen of mysteries, and to this day she has sold more than 2 *billion* copies. Billion! B-b-b-billion!

**Teresa:** Don't—Don't pop those B's too much.

**Travis:** I can't help it.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Um, and, as you asked earlier, not only that, in her later life she wrote some plays.

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Travis:** *The Hollow, Verdict, and The Mousetrap.*

**Teresa:** [gasps] Yes, of course!

**Travis:** Yes.

**Teresa:** *The Mousetrap.*

**Travis:** *The Mousetrap* opened in 1952 at the Ambassador Theater.

**Teresa:** I can't believe I forgot about that.

**Travis:** Listen, there's a lot to cover, right? The play had more than 8800 showings, and holds the record for the longest unbroken run on London's West End.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm. I mean, it's a—it's a pillar of theatrical, like, stability. [laughs]

**Travis:** As we have also mentioned numerous times, her books have been turned into TV shows and movies, including *Murder on the Orient Express, Death on the Nile, Then There Were None, Appointment With Death*, and countless others. Um, so they—Agatha and Max settled in Winterbrook, Oxfordshire, uh, shortly before the second World War, and that was their home until she died.

Uh, in 1956 she became a Commander of the Order of the British Empire. In 1968, her husband was knighted, and she was made a Dame Commander shortly after in 1971. And, fun fact, her and her husband are among the few couples who were both knighted for their work.

**Teresa:** Huh. Okay, that's pretty cool! But knighting doesn't really get you... much, right?

**Travis:** I mean, no, but it's a cool title.

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Travis:** I'd like to be a knight, you know? Um—

**Teresa:** I wonder how much comes with Dame Commander.

**Travis:** Probably an army. Um, so—

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** —she continued writing until 1974, despite her health problems. As she aged, her memory began to slip, which—can you imagine?

**Teresa:** [sighs] No.

**Travis:** I mean, like, that—it's—that's—it's so painfully ironic—like, dramatic irony that, like, it hurts. Um, many believe that, you know, she suffered from Alzheimer's and dementia, uh, and she eventually passed away of natural causes in 1976. Um, and, you know, here's the thing. At this point, I could go on and on.

**Teresa:** I'd be interested to see what happened to her daughter, in the way of, like...

**Travis:** Probably lived off those sweet royalties forever, first!

**Teresa:** [laughs] Uh, living in the shadow of such a great writer, you wonder what they do.

**Travis:** I don't know. I'd have to imagine, though, just based off of—and I didn't research that, and neither did Alex, but you have to imagine that after she had such a great relationship with her mother, you'd have to think she was a pretty good mom, right?

**Teresa:** I hope so.

**Travis:** Yeah, seems like it. But here's the thing—

**Teresa:** Except for the leaving part.

**Travis:** —well, but that was extreme circumstances! I'll d—ugh. I'm not saying I would leave you and Bebe if I had a nervous breakdown, but I'm not saying I wouldn't. [laughs] I wouldn't. Hey, it's okay.

So, uh, you know, that's—that's it! She's super cool, and I cannot stress enough how much I love the Poirot novels, how much I love Agatha Christie's writing style. It's funny, it's fun. Uh, and I also think that one of the things that I think makes Poirot such an endearing character is he has foibles, he is lovable, uh, but without being—like, he is—he is fallible, but without being in any way pitiable. Like, she makes fun of him at times, but it's also clearly proud of him. And, like, he's not unassailable as a character, right? And so—

**Teresa:** But he's also not an antihero.

**Travis:** Right, exactly. He's just a fairly cool dude, who has compassion and strong morals and all that stuff. If you haven't read them, please do.

**Teresa:** Travis introduced me to them in the same way that he introduces a lot of stuff. He just kind of, like, put it on?

**Travis:** Uh-huh?

**Teresa:** In my vicinity, and now I'm interested too.

**Travis:** Yep!

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** That's how it happens. So, I need to start reading the other ones too, you know? I think I've done the Poirot books enough that it's time to do, like, Miss Marple next, I think.

**Teresa:** Okay!

**Travis:** Um, but yeah! Agatha Christie! Turns out, super cool. Check her out! Uh, and that's gonna do it for us. And first and foremost, I wanna say thank you to Alex, our researcher, without whom we would not be able to make this show. Uh, thank you to Max Fun, our podcast home, and thank you to all the members of Max Fun who support us and Max Fun's efforts. Uh, let's see. What else, Teresa?

**Teresa:** We always thank Brent "brentalfloss" Black for writing our theme music, which is available as a ringtone where those are found. Also, thank you to Kayla M. Wasil for our Twitter thumbnail art, and you can tweet at us @shmannerscast.



That is where, when we do question-centric Shmanners, that's where we get all of our listener submission questions.

Thank you to Bruja Betty Pinup Photography for the cover picture of our fan-run Facebook group. Some good stuff goin' on in there lately. Uh, if you want to join that, that's called Shmanners Fanners.

Um, and we also want to thank you for all of your topic submissions, and that you can submit one if you email us, [shmannerscast@gmail.com](mailto:shmannerscast@gmail.com)!

**Travis:** 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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