

## Shmanners 264: Perfume

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**Travis:** Hear about that new angel perfume?

**Teresa:** No, what perfume?

**Travis:** They say it's Heaven scent.

**Teresa:** [chuckles] 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:** Uh, that really tickled me. That joke. It was your—your sly little smile at the end.

**Travis:** Thank you, yeah. I'm gonna have a weird energy for this one, 'cause I'm all, uh—all befuddled by my allergies.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Uh, I just have been feeling so tired the last couple days.

**Teresa:** Yeah. We really seem to, like, go in waves, don't we?

**Travis:** Just as a family. We're, like, in a round of...

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** ... of allergies. And speaking of allergies, this week we're talking about perfumes and colognes!

**Teresa:** Indeed. There are some that are... allergy-inducing? There's some people who are allergic to different scents.

**Travis:** You have the [awkward pronunciation] as-th-ma.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Is it—does—

**Teresa:** I do have asthma.

**Travis:** Does it affect you? Do perfume—is that a thing [crosstalk]—

**Teresa:** Uh, really really strong scents. Like, I cannot go into a candle store.

**Travis:** Yeah?

**Teresa:** Too much.

**Travis:** *I* can't go into a candle store or I buy all of 'em.

**Teresa:** [laughs] I mean, and I also can't go into those—those hip clothing places that you're—

**Travis:** Oh, yes. Like your Abercrombie's and your Fitch's.

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

**Travis:** And you can't jump on a bouncy house.

**Teresa:** Well, but that—yes, that is because of my asthma, but it's not because of the bouncy house smelling funny.

**Travis:** I know. I thought we were just listing things you can't do because of asthma.

**Teresa:** Oh. Right. Uh, and you know Sydnee, our sister-in-law Sydnee, she said that, uh, pregnancy really made her—her nose so, like—so sensitive that she still can't even really handle smells like that. Like colognes.

**Travis:** It's very interesting to me, and I'm sure we'll talk about this. But I would like to take a second to talk about the idea of cologne and perfume, right?

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** Because I've been thinking about it a lot as we've been preparing for this episode, and we got a lot of questions about it, which we'll get to at the end. But I've been thinking about it as, like, an accessory, right?

**Teresa:** Sure.

**Travis:** We've done episodes about, like, handkerchiefs and, you know, hats and canes and that kind of thing. And it seems to me that, like, that is the kind of category that colognes and perfumes fall into.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** For me, is very similar to, like, jewelry or pocket squares or something like that.

**Teresa:** Well, and you don't really wear perfume or cologne, 'cause all of your various hair things are all scented, right?

**Travis:** This is very true. It also is a matter of, like... I'm not goin' anywhere. [laughs]

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Um, I would say it feels different. There's something to me that, uh, a—cologne and perfume feels very specifically fancy to me?

**Teresa:** Sure.

**Travis:** And I think that that's a personal thing. But I also wonder how much of, like—how much is a generational thing. And I was thinking about this the other day, and this is just a theory that occurred to me based on nothing but logic, that

back when it was probably a lot harder to get, like, hot water, right? Colognes and perfumes were a lot more prevalent, 'cause you might have to go a long time without bathing, right?

**Teresa:** Yeah, yeah.

**Travis:** And so—

**Teresa:** That tracks.

**Travis:** —I think it is a pretty common experience now to have a great—a grandparent or even great-grandparent who wears too much perfume or cologne, and I wonder if that is a learned behavior from a time where the perfume or cologne was necessary as part of—of, you know, your hygiene routine, and not just as a, uh—an accessory.

**Teresa:** Sure. I don't know if our grandparents... were that old. 'Cause, like, you're talking about hot water and indoor plumbing and stuff.

**Travis:** I don't know what day it is, so I—

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Travis:** —I have no idea.

**Teresa:** Alright. Um, my grandmother did wear a musky perfume.

**Travis:** Oh yeah?

**Teresa:** She did. Um, and she was always trying to buy us, like, perfume sets and stuff. You know, like the stuff that you get in, like, a box set from, like, TJ Maxx or whatever.

**Travis:** Yeah, yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Teresa:** Kohl's. Um, but I, growing up, only either wore just, like, scented deodorant, or my mom bought me a little bottle of Clinique Happy.

**Travis:** Yeah. Oh, yeah.

**Teresa:** It's a very light fragrance.

**Travis:** I would say probably Clinique Happy and Curve—

**Teresa:** Oh, yeah.

**Travis:** —were the scents of my youth.

**Teresa:** Right, yeah. Did you ever delve into Axe body spray?

**Travis:** Um, I dabbled. Uh...

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** ... I was of the appropriate age. I would've been, you know, in '95, I would've been 12.

**Teresa:** Right, yeah.

**Travis:** And so that's the thing, is a lot of those products, too—and let's just get out of the way here, right? A lot of products, as far as, like, heavily scented stuff like that, is basically sold to people, mostly youths, by shaming them about any natural smell one's body might produce, ever.

**Teresa:** Exactly.

**Travis:** Um, that is why I like to think of it more as an accessory. Of, like, I would like to wear this. Right? There is a difference between, like, wearing a necklace 'cause you think it's pretty and wearing a necklace 'cause you're trying to cover up your neck, right?

**Teresa:** [laughs] Sure.

**Travis:** And I think that that's the difference, is I think it should be, like, a "I choose to wear this 'cause I think that this smell complements what I'm going for," rather than "If I'm not wearing this, how could I go out?"

**Teresa:** Yeah. Um, I have a perfume that I wear only rarely, occasionally, when we would—before—before the times of now—

**Travis:** Yes.

**Teresa:** —when we would go out.

**Travis:** Before the now times, the long ago, yes.

**Teresa:** Before—yes, the long ago. Back in the long ago—

**Travis:** Yeah?

**Teresa:** —I would put on, um, some perfume to go out to dine. Um, and the reason that I picked that perfume is because it's very similar to the perfume my mother would wear when she would go out on a date with my dad. And so that... that sense of "I'm a grown up and I'm goin' out, and I'm gonna—"

**Travis:** "Ooh, la, la!"

**Teresa:** "—I'm so fancy!"

**Travis:** "Wakka, wakka, wakka!"

**Teresa:** Is—is really how it makes—[confused] wakka wakka?

**Travis:** Yeah. You know, Fozzie Bear smells great. No, I bet that probably smells terrible.

**Teresa:** [laughs] It really makes it feel real, you know?

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Yeah, anyway.

**Travis:** That's what I'm saying. An accessory, right?

**Teresa:** Yeah, it's an accessory. So first I'd like to say—well, not first. That was a long—that was a long intro, but...

**Travis:** That was all the intro, yea.

**Teresa:** Next...

**Travis:** Next...

**Teresa:** I would like to say thank you to Alexis R. for suggesting this topic. Now, Alexis suggested this topic way back in September, and I think that this is a good example of we are reading your suggestions. We are putting them on a schedule, and we will get to them. Do not fear.

**Travis:** So, how old is perfume? And I bet the answer is really, really old.

**Teresa:** Really, really... really old.

**Travis:** 'Cause I know, like, ancient Egypt they were doing scented oils and stuff.

**Teresa:** Oh, absolutely. But even, like, before that, okay? Like, I think that some form of perfume has been around basically since people realized they had body odor.

**Travis:** Right? You gotta think that there was a time... like, it didn't take much. You probably had to think, like, "This flower smells good. I'm gonna rub it on me." Right?

**Teresa:** Yeah. [laughs]

**Travis:** Like, that was probably... it.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** I bet that even before, I bet that as far as, like, camouflaging your scent to hunt, I bet even before that the idea of, like, I am going to change the way that I smell using things that I found in nature.

**Teresa:** So it's not to be discovered.

**Travis:** Right. I bet, like, that was kind of the—and they were like, "Well, if I can smell like the bad parts of nature, I can smell like the good parts of nature, too."

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. Um, like—I mean, like a lot of things, the first recording of a perfume goes back to the second millennium, BCE, in Mesopotamia.

**Teresa:** Of course.

**Travis:** Of course! We have found an ancient Babylonian cuneiform tablet, which is like a hieroglyphics type thing.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Uh, hieroglyphics, sorry.

**Travis:** I wasn't gonna say anything. I was letting it go.

**Teresa:** Oh, man. [sighs]

**Travis:** Yeah. Hey, listen. We're both pretty tired.

**Teresa:** A woman named Tapputi is mentioned. Uh, not only is Tapputi a pretty high up palace official, but she's credited as one of the first chemists in history.

**Travis:** Oh. Okay!

**Teresa:** Uh, Tapputi was renowned for her distillation of flowers, oil, and calamus, uh, which are river reeds similar to cattails.

**Travis:** Is that like calamine lotion? Or is that—no, okay.

**Teresa:** I think it's different. I think it's different.

**Travis:** Different thing, okay.

**Teresa:** Um, she would distill these ingredients, I mean, that had different—different aromas, and then filter them in a still several times before she was able to create her desired scent. Uh, not only does this tablet give Tapputi praise for her fragrance work, this is, like, *the* record of chemistry that we have.

**Travis:** That's amazing, too, to think about filtering it that many times and everything so that it is a little more shelf stable and a little more—not, like, just, there's some flower petals rottin' away in there. You know what I mean?

**Teresa:** Yep. Yep, yep, yep. Um, and, I mean, like you said, these early perfumes, very popular. Um, a lot of the—the countries to go straight into the foray, Middle East, India, China... and it would have looked a lot different than it does today. They were kind of like resins or oils.



So, like, we think of something that you could spray or dab, but these were, like... I mean, like I said, like resins. That's kind of sticky. [laughs quietly]

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** I think if I'm—I'm trying to picture it correctly, but I can't remember if it was Rome or Greek. But basically, like, you would take baths in this oil, and they would basically just pour it on you, and then they had kind of—it was almost shaped like a scythe, right? The curved, like—

**Teresa:** Like, scrape it off.

**Travis:** They would scrape that oil off you, and that was, like, your bath. You know what I mean?

**Teresa:** Right. Um, but actually, people didn't really put these things on their bodies. Uh, like I'm talking—the oils and resins, um, in this time period.

**Travis:** I also have an image of the resin being, like, on top of the wig, right?

**Teresa:** I mean, maybe.

**Travis:** So I'm trying to remember. Like I said... listen. I don't know what day it is. History all runs together.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** But I feel like that was a thing.

**Teresa:** But at this time in history, it was more like, um—like a wax warmer.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Or a, uh—or incense, right?

**Travis:** This is what I'm saying, 'cause I have this image of, like—almost like a wax incense-y thing, like, affixed to the top of the head, and it, like, melting down the face. I feel like I saw that. Okay.

**Teresa:** Interesting. Um, and this is actually where we get the word "perfume" from. It has a Latin root of per-fume.

**Travis:** For smelling?

**Teresa:** "Through the smoke."

**Travis:** Okay. I wasn't even close.

**Teresa:** No, mm-mm.

**Travis:** Okay. Okay.

**Teresa:** Um, so this perfume, this kind of, like, burn it in the room and the whole room smells great, instead of put it on the person, really, like, took off. And so this is the kind of thing when we think about, uh, the ancient Egyptians and the Mesopotamians, and the—the Greeks and the Persians, and all this stuff. Um, and then this fragrant oil... was great, you guys. It was great.

**Travis:** It was great.

**Teresa:** But people decided to start to refine the distillation process, so that you just—you just didn't have to, like, walk into a perfumed room. You could perfume things and people in different ways.

**Travis:** Man, I bet it was overpowering, right?

**Teresa:** Perhaps.

**Travis:** Like, if you're talking about, like—you've ever been in a room where someone has been burning a lot of incense...

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** Right? It can be, uh... what's the word? Like, discombobulating, right?

**Teresa:** It feels kinda heavy, right?

**Travis:** Right, yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Teresa:** It's like the air is heavy.

**Travis:** You get—it's for effect usually and not just like, "Well, this'll fade into the background."

**Teresa:** Um, so... in the 9th century, an Arab chemist and philosopher named Al-Kindi wrote *The Book of the Chemistry of Perfume and Distillations*.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Which was an entire, like we've talked about in our last episode, this was not just a recipe book. It had—

**Travis:** It was how to find the right celebrity representation for your scent.

**Teresa:** [laughs] No, it was, uh, beauty products, and medicines, and perfumes, and salves, and aromatic waters, and things like that.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** So it was a large tome. This is where you start to see the... hmm, the kind of, like, utensils for perfuming. Do you—do you know what I'm saying?

**Travis:** Like an atomizer?

**Teresa:** Hmm, no, not quite. The alembic? So that's the pot with the long neck, and then, like, sometimes it has, like, a long beak that drips into a smaller vessel?

**Travis:** Sure.

**Teresa:** No, you don't?

**Travis:** No.

**Teresa:** I can picture it in my mind's eye. I see it in my—in my head, from, uh, *Sword in the Stone*, in Merlin's hut.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Okay. Anyway... and then further on in history, another big perfumer was a Persian chemist named Ibn Sina.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** And... this is—this is where what you were talking about comes into play. These resins, these oils, they were *strong*. Right? So Ibn Sina found a way to, like, make a gentler scent, like a delicate thing. Now what we think of, more of, like, the regular perfumes that we smell. Um, not the really pungent ones.  
[laughs]

**Travis:** Hmm. Dense, I would say.

**Teresa:** Dense! Uh, again, this involved different raw ingredients, different parts, instead of maybe not the oils of the flower, maybe another liquid part of the flower or whatever. Um, more distillation. So distill, distill, distill, distill.

**Travis:** Right. And then diffuse, I imagine. Right?

**Teresa:** Yes, indeed. And we credit Ibn Sina for rosewater.

**Travis:** Ohh, rosewater's a tough one!

**Teresa:** It is.

**Travis:** I've learned that from *Great British Bake-off*!

**Teresa:** Well, I mean, for our noses today it might be quite pungent, but at the time it was like a barely-there scent.

**Travis:** I think it's only—I only think of it that way because in *Great British Bake-off*, like, it is so floral that adding it to a thing, if you even use just a little bit too much you make your baked good taste like flower—or like a flower instead of, like, a, uh, sweet treat.

**Teresa:** Uh, the perfume craze continues to, you know, pop up here and there and here and there. But it really took a firm foothold in Europe thanks to Catherine de Medici.

**Travis:** Okay. I was gonna guess that. Honestly, I really was.

**Teresa:** Were you really?

**Travis:** Yeah. I had just been thinking about the Medicis lately, you know?

**Teresa:** Alright. Uh, Ca—[coughs]

**Travis:** I don't know why.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Why have I been thinking—what's wrong with me? Okay, go on

**Teresa:** You're sure you're done?

**Travis:** I don't.

**Teresa:** [laughs] Alright. Okay. Uh, so much so that she even brought her own perfumer to the court of Henry II. Uh, Renee de Florentine.

**Travis:** Of course.

**Teresa:** Um, and this is really fun. I love it when Alex puts these things in, because... he was so important to not only, like, just a buddy of Catherine's, but also to her status as the new queen, that his room was like a closet in her room.

**Travis:** Oh!

**Teresa:** So no one could steal the recipes that he was concocting on his way to her room.

**Travis:** I will say that if I could open a closet door in my room and just like, "Renee! What am I gonna smell like today?" Like, that'd be very exciting to me. Or even if it was just like, "Renee, what shoes do you think I should wear?" That would be nice.

**Teresa:** [laughs] So enter in King Louis XIV.

**Travis:** Oh, I'm not surprised that that fool was into this. He was high fashion.

**Teresa:** He *loved* good-smelling stuff.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Um, and I think that this is appropriate because Versailles is very famous for being stinky.

**Travis:** Oh yeah? Okay.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** I didn't know that.

**Teresa:** Well, I mean, they didn't have indoor plumbing. Uh, people wore the same clothing for a very long time.

**Travis:** Lot of layers. Lot of sweating, I bet.

**Teresa:** Right. Um, there were obviously food smells to contend with, body odor. Again, the bathing thing, they didn't do a lot of that. Um, and so he was—

**Travis:** If you've ever seen—it's one of my fav—I don't know what period we're in here, but I think that this was very prevalent in, like, the 1600's—an orange with cloves stuck in it?

**Teresa:** Yep.

**Travis:** And people would just, like, carry it around, the smell.

**Teresa:** I believe—isn't that called a nosegay?

**Travis:** I think so. And it's just, like, to smell, instead of smelling anything else. They're just, like, holding it up to your face? Yeah.

**Teresa:** Uh, his signature scent was a blend of aloe wood, musk, rosewater, spices, and orange flower.

**Travis:** Hmm!

**Teresa:** Perfumes at this time were basically, you know, just like the cavemen... [laughs] used to kind of disguise yourself.

**Travis:** Right.

**Teresa:** But here's the thing, right? They filled everything so much with all of this perfume—we're talking, like, people washed their clothes in it, it was on any, like, upholstery, furniture, like, people would just kind of, like, have a boiling pot of smelly fragrant water running places.

**Travis:** Oh boy.

**Teresa:** And it became kind of like a calling card for the aristocracy.

**Travis:** All I could think, though, too, is they were drinking some really thick wine at that point, too. Thick booze. I bet people were just, uh, let's say being sick...

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** ... left and right with that overpowering scent and all of that rich food and drink?

**Teresa:** Yep. Yep.

**Travis:** Gross!

**Teresa:** Um, it became a real status symbol, especially Jasmine flower, which you don't get a lot of scent from, so you have to use a lot of it, and it has to be distilled down really far. And that was, like, something where you could tell someone's, like, "Ooh, they're doing really well this year!" by how they smelled of Jasmine.

**Travis:** Listen. I can't wait to hear more about this smelly stuff. But first... how about a thank you note for our sponsors?

**Teresa:** Alright!

[theme music plays]

**Travis:** Hey, folks! This week's *Shmanners* wants to write a thank you note to Quip. Quip delivers fresh brush heads, floss, toothpaste, and now gum in a refillable travel-friendly dispenser. If you haven't already checked out Quip, what are you waiting for? It has changed the way our house and a lot of houses think about oral care. And, if you go to [getquip.com/shmanners](http://getquip.com/shmanners) right now, you can get a free plastic dispenser with any refill plan.

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**Ross:** Somewhere between science and superstition, there is a podcast.

[screaming and commotion]

**Ross:** Look. Your daughter doesn't say she's a demon. She says she's the devil himself.

**Carrie:** That thing is not my daughter! And I want you to tell me there's a show where the hosts don't just report on fringe science and spirituality, but take part themselves!

[upbeat music]



**Ross:** Well, there is, and it's *Oh No, Ross and Carrie!* on Maximumfun.

**Carrie:** This year, we actually became certified exorcists.

**Ross:** So yes, Carrie and I can help your daughter.

[demonic growling]

**Carrie:** Or we can just talk about it on the show.

**Ross:** *Oh No, Ross and Carrie!*, on Maximumfun.org.

[advertisement ends]

**Travis:** Alright. So, where were we?

**Teresa:** Uh, Queen Victoria!

**Travis:** I—okay, yes, I have heard of her—yeah, I've heard about her, yeah.

**Teresa:** Is about—is about to enter the scene. In the 1800's, right before her reign, perfume had become more widely available, thanks to more materials, thanks to the, uh, pillaging and stealing of the East India Company.

**Travis:** Sure, sure, sure, yeah.

**Teresa:** Right? Um, but as things do, when Victoria comes into power, um, she changes all the rules. [laughs] We've talked about how she had these kind of strict rules about modesty and ladylike and gentlemanly behavior, and this is when gender separation begins within, like, the kind of confines we think of of gender.

**Travis:** It's really—where it really starts firming up, yeah.

**Teresa:** Right, exactly. Um, and so scents like, uh, lavender, jasmine, bergamot, these very, like, light senses were coming in.

**Travis:** Is it bergamot [silent t] or bergamot [pronounced t]?

**Teresa:** I thought it was bergamot [silent t].

**Travis:** I absolutely don't know. Okay.

**Teresa:** Anyway, um, so in the Victorian era you were expected to smell like an English garden.

**Travis:** I imagine dudes were a lot more like tobacco smoke and, you know, the scent of the shaving cream.

**Teresa:** I mean, you're not wrong. Because although now there are products that mimic that, perfume started to be relegated strictly to those ladies.

**Travis:** Ah. So—but this is what I'm saying. It's like, in—[sighs] as is the case, I'm willing to bet that what it was was like, we're gonna relegate this for the ladies. And then someone said, "Yeah, but now we're not making any money off of dudes."

And they said, like, "Ah. We'll make aftershave, and we'll make... "

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

**Travis:** "... eau de toilette and stuff for men to use. Perfect! Great."

**Teresa:** Right. Um, and—but really, like, the scientific advances of this period, like, you know, the Industrial Revolution, are made with synthetic compounds, right? So now even more widely available, and it was—created scents that were more layered and had notes and whatnot.

**Travis:** Yeah, and wasn't specifically just like, "You smell like this."

**Teresa:** Exactly.

**Travis:** It wasn't just like you either smell like this flower or this flower or this—it was more just like a specific combination of thi—you know, yeah.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. And so this kind of, like, re-imagining of what perfume could smell like, uh, made it... more accessible, made it more, um—you know, just kind of a day-to-day thing, whereas before we talked about how really if you were rich you could smell nice.

**Travis:** Right.

**Teresa:** Well, "nice." You could smell.

**Travis:** You smell, yeah.

**Teresa:** Not—[laughs] not like mud and BO? [laughs]

**Travis:** Yeah. You could smell different.

**Teresa:** You could smell different, yeah. Um, and so there was, you know, the new fashions, our new vogue, cultural shifts that would allow people for leisure time, and this is where perfume really starts diversifying across really the continents, all of them. Is that the world? Is that what I'm saying?

**Travis:** Sure.

**Teresa:** No, I think I'm just saying, like...

**Travis:** Like the European influenced world?

**Teresa:** Yes, the European influenced world. Here is... again, some consumerism that entered into it. As the times changed, like, say in the 1920's when women were bobbing their hair and dancing the Charleston, um—

**Travis:** Yeah. The Dark Ages.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Just sayin'! The—the bad times.

**Teresa:** Coco Chanel released the iconic Chanel No. 5. I'm sure that you have smelled it.

**Travis:** And Lou Bega released "Mambo No. 5."

**Teresa:** No.

**Travis:** It was equally important.

**Teresa:** Mm-mm. Here we go. Uh, now in the 21st century, we see a sort of drift for, like, genderless scents, which is great. I think anybody should wear anything that they like.

**Travis:** I also think that there has been a sort of—and this is, you know, I'm out of touch with the cologne and perfume game, but a drift towards, like, the simpler... you know, this isn't, like, a huge explosion of scent so much as it is like a slow burn of scent. You know what I mean? It's more like a—a smell of pine and... you know, like, the for—rather than just, like... "Who knows what this combination is, but it smells good." Like, that's the thing about, like, Curve. If you were around in, like, the 90's and the early 2000's. The thing is, it didn't smell like anything except the perfume, cologne that you're putting on. And I think that there's been a more of a movement now that once again you can get back to, like, this smell—this has notes of this, and this, and this, you can smell it when you use it.

**Teresa:** Exactly. Um, so I wanna go through some perfume etiquette now.

**Travis:** Well, I'll tell you what.

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Travis:** How about we do that, but we also do some questions.

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Travis:** Okay. First, this is from Alex. Alex asks:

"How do you find the right fragrance for you, and what is the correct way to wear it?"

Here's what I know about, like, spraying stuff, and I learned it from the original *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*. Spray, sashay, and walk away.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** And this is—what that means is you spray it in the air in front of you, you walk through it, and you keep going. And that's it! That's how I learned to do it. I don't know if it's true or not. I know that there's, like, a dab behind the ears, right? As a way to do it. I think it is the level to which you would like to smell of the thing, right? For me, spray, sashay, and walk away works great.

**Teresa:** Sure. Um, perfumists would say that you should rub a single spritz onto the pulse points. So, your—you know... [pause] uh, what is this?

**Travis:** [simultaneously] Wrist.

**Teresa:** Wrist. [laughs] I'm pointing at it. Thank you. Behind your ears, and behind your knees, um, and that should make it so that it's pleasant, but not overbearing. Um, another tip that perfumists give is that you can actually put a little dab of petroleum jelly before you apply your fragrance. It will help keep the scent on longer, which makes sense to me, because, I mean you just kind of, like, make it stickier, right? So it doesn't all evaporate at once.

**Travis:** Well, 'cause a lot of 'em are alcohol based.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** And alcohol evaporates very quickly. Um, as far as finding the right one, off the top of my head I think there's, like, three ways. One is to, like, find one out in the wild, somebody wearing something that you like. And say, "Excuse me, what is the cologne that you're wearing?" Right?

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** The second one is to go to a place that has a cologne or perfume counter and sample a bunch of them until you find one that you like.

**Teresa:** Right. And the way that you do that is they usually have pieces of paper that you will lightly spritz, wave around, and smell the air.

**Travis:** Yeah. Not—don't put 'em on yourself, because then at that point you're just stacking a bunch of different scents together, and you're not going to get—one, you might end up being overwhelmed and passing out. But two, you're not going to get a clear representation of what you smell like. The third one is the internet exists. So at this point if there are, like, notes that you know you're looking for, if you're like, "Yeah, I really like the smell of leather and bourbon," or "I really like the smell of, like, an autumn night," or something, right?

**Teresa:** Right.

**Travis:** I guarantee that you could google and find—I think that there's a company—and they're not advertising with us—named Hawthorne that does that. Where, like, you take a quiz and you say what notes you're looking for, and they make 'em for you.

**Teresa:** Oh, sure. Yeah, I mean, bespoke perfumes are definitely available if that's what you like. A talented perfumist can find exactly the right scent for you.

**Travis:** Uh, let's see. Pip asks:

"What's a tactful way I can ask my coworker to dial it back on the cologne? Our employer has a clause about scents in our dress code to be mindful of those with sensitivity, but I don't know how to enforce it without basically telling him, 'Hey, you stink.'"

I wouldn't say that, just right off the bat.

**Teresa:** Right.

**Travis:** Let me just say, don't say "Hey, you stink." Uh, secondly this is something that we talk about a lot when it comes to workplace stuff. You probably have a supervisor, or HR, or a manager. If it's in the dress code, this is why you should not go direct employee-to-employee, and instead go to someone whose job it is to act as a mediator in these kinds of circumstances and say "Hey, I would like to anonymously say I think that they're wearing a little bit too much and I'd like you to handle that for me. Thank you very much."

**Teresa:** If this is not at a workplace, I think that there are a couple things you can do. First, if you are not close enough—you know, your relationship, not in proximity [laughs]—but if your relationship is not such that you feel comfortable telling them "You might want to tone it down a little bit," talk to someone who is closer to them, and find out if, like... if they think this person wears too much perfume as well, and if they would be willing to say something to them.

**Travis:** And also, we say it once again, a lot of, like, "I" and "me" terms. Of, like, instead of saying "You are wearing too much cologne," say that "I have sensitivities and it is affecting my allergies or whatever, and would it be possible—" right? So it's not that they have done something wrong, right? It is that just you are asking for the courtesy of consideration for, like, what you need, right?

**Teresa:** Right. Um, and if you are that close person, I think it's important to offer a solution instead of just, like, "You—you're wearing too much perfume. It's making me ill." Don't say that. Uh, you can say, "I think you put a little too much on today. Here is a wet wipe to help you... "

**Travis:** Right. So I think we're talking about two different scenarios, right?

**Teresa:** Right, yes.

**Travis:** Where I think you're talking about, like, if you have an acquaintance who you think wears too much, right?

**Teresa:** Right.

**Travis:** And I'm talking about, like, if you're in a workplace, right? So we're coming at this from two different directions.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** 'Cause I would not walk up to a coworker and say, like, "Hey, here's a wet wipe, Doug! Wipe off your Bora Bora."

**Teresa:** No, no, no, no, no. I was—so I was talking about if you are not close to that person, not in a workplace situation. You are not close to that person in relationship, find someone who does have a close relationship and see if they can help you. If you are the person [laughs] who has a close relationship with the over-perfumer, offer a solution. Don't just say "This is bad, and you're bad."

You can say, "I think you put a little too much on this morning. Here's a wet wipe."

**Travis:** Yeah, and never, uh, underestimate... sometimes you can just move away from that person.

**Teresa:** [laughs] Uh, if you would like to dial down your own perfume, uh, I might suggest either a wet wipe, because a tissue's not gonna do it, it's into your skin—or a little rubbing alcohol on a cotton pad will also take a lot of the smell away.

**Travis:** Uh, this is from The Cleverest Girl.

"How on God's green earth do I respond to someone saying 'You smell nice' without sounding unhinged?"

**Teresa:** Okay. Um, first of all, I think it is important to address, you always should lead with the object that you are complimenting and not the person, and then the person becomes the object, right?

**Travis:** "I really enjoy that cologne" versus "You smell nice."

**Teresa:** Right. "I like your cologne."

**Travis:** Right. Uh, but I also think that—I think that—we kind of joked about this, actually, on this week's *My Brother, My Brother, and Me*. But I think that, like, smell and taste feel oddly personal.

**Teresa:** Oh, definitely.

**Travis:** Where, like, it wouldn't feel as weird to say, like, "You have a beautiful voice." You're just like—oh, say, "Thank you very much," right?

**Teresa:** I think it's proximity, right? You really need to get close enough to the person to taste it?

**Travis:** No. Uh—[gags]

**Teresa:** Like, to smell it? [laughs] To smell something.

**Travis:** But, like, if you—if somebody said, like, "Hey, that's a great hat." You wouldn't be like, "Whoa." Right? But now I think—you know at the very least you say, "Oh, thanks." And move on. Or you could say, "Oh, thank you, it's blah, blah, blah," and name the cologne or perfume, right?

**Teresa:** I think that's a great idea, to put it back onto the actual, like, object, so that you don't become the object. If someone says "You smell nice..." being like, "I got it on Amazon" or whatever, right?

**Travis:** Um, along these same lines, Coco asks, "How do you politely ask a stranger what perfume or cologne they are wearing without it being weird?"

**Teresa:** I think that's it. You have to talk about the scent.



**Travis:** Right.

**Teresa:** Instead of the person.

**Travis:** I also think rather than just saying "What cologne or perfume are you wearing?" Because the answer might be, "I'm not wearing any," and it's very confusing.

Say "I am smelling—like, I smell a really great perfume, is that you?" Like, or something along the lines—"Am I smelling your perfume?" Something like that, right? Where... I don't know. That might be too careful. But—

**Teresa:** Yeah. I—I think that do—do try and make it about the perfume and not about the person.

**Travis:** Yeah. And—[sighs] I can't stress this enough. We talk about this whenever it comes up. Don't say "I don't wanna be weird, but... "

**Teresa:** Yeah, that's the thing. You just made it weird.

**Travis:** That makes it weird. "Excuse me. What is that cologne you're wearing? I'm really—I think it smells great," or something along those lines. Right? Like, same as like, "That's a beautiful jacket. Wherever did you get it?" Right? That wouldn't be a weird thing to ask. Uh, maybe if you said it like I just said it, like it is the 1800's. "Excuse me!"

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** "What a well-tailored weskit!" Um... this is from @peopleaskingwhy.

"What are your ideas on using different types of cologne or perfume for specific occasions?"

**Teresa:** I love it.

**Travis:** Yeah, I think it's great.

**Teresa:** Do it.

**Travis:** Right? Like I said, accessory. Man, you know, you wouldn't wear the same jewelry to everything. You wouldn't wear the same pocket square with everything. [laughs]

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** And so, like, having that thing... all of this is about your experience, right?

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

**Travis:** I've talked before about, like, painting my nails or wearing makeup for a thing feels like... ugh, this sounds... bad. But, like, getting ready for battle?

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** Like when I used to do theater and, you know, you're getting into costume, putting on your stage makeup and that kind of thing. And so, like, when you're getting prepared for an event, it should be about your comfort and about your, like, excitement for the event, and doing what makes you feel ready for it. So if you're going to an event and you're like, "Oh, I've got a lot of, like, reds on. I wanna have kind of a folky—um, smoky, fiery smell." Or, like, "Oh, you know, I'm wearing a lot of blues today, so I wanna have, like, kind of a eucalyptus, like, minty, cool kind of scent going on." Like, I think that's really cool, right?

**Teresa:** Yeah!

**Travis:** I'm seeing your eyes, like, kind of sparkle as I'm describing this. You're loving it.

**Teresa:** It's—it's—I'm imagining it in my mind's eye and it smells wonderful.

**Travis:** I know, right?

**Teresa:** What? My mind—wait a second. [laughs]

**Travis:** You're smelling it in your mind's nose.

**Teresa:** [through laughter] In my mind's nose.

**Travis:** You've got it in your mind's nose. I get it. Alright, folks, that's gonna do it for us. Thank you so much for joining us here in our mind's nose.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Um, thank you to Maximumfun.org, our podcast home, without whom... I don't know, we'd just kind of be leaving cassette tapes on street corners, hoping people'd find them.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Thank you to Alex, our researcher, without whom we would not be able to make this. Thank you to the listener who suggested this episode, whose name is Rachel?

**Teresa:** No. Alexis.

**Travis:** Nope. Alexis. I mean, I wasn't even close.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** I'm so sorry. Um...

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Uh, thank you to you for listening. Thank you, Teresa, for doing so much talking... and presenting. You know, the [crosstalk]—

**Teresa:** You know, what I do.

**Travis:** You get it. Uh, who else do we thank?

**Teresa:** We always thank Brent "brentalfloss" Black for writing our theme music, which is available as a ringtone where those are found. We also thank Kayla M. Wasil for our Twitter thumbnail art, and that is where we got all of these excellent queries, uh, @shmannerscast.

Thank you to Bruja Betty Pinup Photography for our cover picture of our fan-run Facebook group, *Shmanners* Fanners. Go ahead and join that group if you love to give and get excellent advice from other fans. And once again, please continue to submit topic suggestions. They are in the queue, I promise. Also, we love doing

those idiom shows, so continue to submit your idioms. Um, you can email those to us, [shmatterscast@gmail.com](mailto:shmatterscast@gmail.com)!

**Travis:** I was thinking of a new segment I want to do on the next idiom one. If you have an idiom that you're pretty sure, like, a grandparent or parent or somebody you grew up with made up... you know, like, "My parent always said this. I've never heard anyone else say it." Send those to us, because then we can see if anyone else has ever heard that of saying before. I think that would be great, so you can email that to us too.

Uh, and I think that's gonna do it for us, so join us again next week.

**Teresa:** No RSVP required.

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

**Teresa:** Manners, *Shmatters*. Get it?

[theme music plays]

[chord]

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