

Shmanners 304: Haute Couture

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[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: I'm doing well. I head our promo on—

Travis: That was a such midwestern way—

Teresa: Doin' well!

Travis: I'm doin' well. Where it's like, oh my God, there's volumes there.

Teresa: I heard our new promo on another Max Fun show.

Travis: [gasps]

Teresa: I was very excited to hear it. It's— it's very cute. I like it. We did a great job.

Travis: Excellent. I love that. I'm going through— I don't know if this is how everyone else experiences allergies, but seasonal allergies where it's the ebb and flow of, "Oh, my face is so full of snot." To, like, "Oh, it's dry as a desert in there!"

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: And then just, like, back forth?

Teresa: I have that funny, um— that itch that feels somewhere between your ear and your throat.

Travis: Oh, yeah! I make this sound like a cat with a hairball—

Teresa: I need to write in to Sydnee on *Sawbones* and ask her, what is that?

Travis: I— when I have an itchy I make the sound, uh, like a cat with a hairball. And I have numerous times scared our children doing it.

Teresa: [laughs] Yeah.

Travis: And I remember one time Bebe jumped and you said, "Scared me too, Beeps. Scared me too."

Teresa: [laughs] Yes.

Travis: So that's cool. We're gonna try to squeeze with—

Teresa: I need to stop talking about allergies, because every time I think about it my eyes itch.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Yeah. To be fair, we have a lot of living things in our house.

Teresa: We do.

Travis: Plants, animals, children, more animals.

Teresa: [laughs] And it also, after a long winter in Ohio, sometimes it just feels really great to throw open the windows.

Travis: Oh yeah.

Teresa: And have that breeze.

Travis: [simultaneously] And just inhale the pollen.

Teresa: Have that breeze move through your house. But then you're like, "Oh, no. What have I done?"

Travis: But also, to be fair, I said we have a lot of animals, but no one's ever said, "Do you have fish at your house?" "I can't. It's— I'll start sneezing."

Teresa: I was like that with birds.

Travis: Well, that's different, though!

Teresa: A friend of mine had birds in high school and I was like, "I can't be here."

Travis: Well, I wouldn't wanna do it. Birds freak me out, man. How they fly? [laughs quietly] No one knows!

Teresa: They kept 'em in a cage.

Travis: What?

Teresa: They were budgies. In a cage.

Travis: Okay. Too close to wedgies for me.

Teresa: [laughs] Alright, it's gonna be one of those.

Travis: I'm very tired. Okay! We're talking about [makes guttural sound on the "H"] haute couture.

Teresa: [through laughter] Oh God!

Travis: Was that right? Did I nail it? What's wrong?

Teresa: [through laughter] Do not—

Travis: [makes guttural sound on the "H"] Haute?

Teresa: No, stop it!

Travis: Couture.

Teresa: Haute couture.

Travis: I think I nailed it. [makes guttural sound on the "H"] Haute couture.

Teresa: No!

Travis: I was trying to do it like it was all one sound.

Teresa: Yeah. One—

Travis: Like a big loogie.

Teresa: —throat clear.

Travis: Alright.

Teresa: Okay. So— so, what— here is some things that I'm gonna cover.

Travis: It's high fashion, right? We're doin'...

Teresa: It— okay. So, yes. What exactly is haute couture? Uh, what exactly is high fashion? What does it mean? Why did luxury fashion brands become a status symbol? These— all these things, okay?

Travis: And of course you brought me on, the most fashionable person you know.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: You're looking at my t-shirt that has— it's the mothman flying over Point Pleasant.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: And it says "Night Moves" on it, from Kinship Goods, yes. It's very fashionable. I could wear this to Milan. I could wear this to Paris. I could wear this to Monte Carlo. Or Las Vegas.

Teresa: So, very specifically, let me talk about the— we'll go into the history, but I do want to actually start with some definitions. Okay?

Travis: Okay. This is my favorite part of any entertainment podcast.

Teresa: I mean, it is *my*— *my* favorite.

Travis: Okay, yeah, what do words mean?

Teresa: My favorite part. Okay. Um, so there are some pretty strict rules regarding haute couture. So, it is an officially protected term—

Travis: Really?

Teresa: —which was first set in 1945, so a fashion label can only remain awarded haute couture status by a commission selected by the Ministry of Industry, so the French, right?

Travis: Oh! I didn't know that.

Teresa: Okay. And couture and haute couture are not the same.

Travis: And Randy Couture I think is an MMA fighter?

Teresa: Couture can be used to describe any garment that is handmade and one of a kind.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Okay? But haute couture is a special designation from the French government.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: And to be considered a haute couture house, brands must own an atelier in Paris. So, like, a workshop, a designing house and creative workshop in

Paris, with at least 15 full time employees, and present at least 35 looks in a show twice a year. Paris Fashion Weeks, right?

Travis: Okay. I didn't realize— you said strict, and this is even stricter than I thought.

Teresa: Very strict. And the list can and does change. So, notably, Givenchy was dropped off the list of haute couture in Spring 2003, um, because they failed to qualify.

Travis: Oh, okay.

Teresa: Um, and so these are made-to-order clothes, right? There are usually only one of each haute couture piece, okay?

Travis: I love— I can hear you say it all day, by the way. I love it.

Teresa: Um, and so these day and evening looks are presented to the public in—

Travis: Do they do jammies?

Teresa: Mm... evening? No. They don't— they don't—

Travis: Maybe— they don't do any haute couture jammies?

Teresa: Okay, I suppose that in a particular show they might do pajamas as fashion, but...

Travis: Ohh. But no, like, flannel.

Teresa: These are— so, these are for private clients, okay? So there's only one of these things in the world, ever, at a time. And the guest members of the houses, right? They invite people every season, and if a brand is asked four times in a row, it becomes eligible as a member, right?

Travis: Okay. So, this is— this is not— okay. I'm gonna show— my West Virginia's gonna show, okay? But this is like when we watch a fashion show, like one of the big, fancy, catwalk fashion shows, right? There's one where you see those outfits, and then it's not like a thing you're ever gonna say at, like, Macy's or whatever, right?

Teresa: Absolutely.

Travis: It's just a designer flexing, right? And saying, "This is what I could do." Right? "This is my style." Right? It's not like this is the new fashion that everyone's gonna be wearing on the street.

Teresa: Well, okay.

Travis: I'm so confused by fashion shows, and I'm, uh, no longer afraid to admit it.

Teresa: So it's like a pyramid, okay? So, at the very, very top, the tiny point of the pyramid is haute couture.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: That is only Paris Fashion Week, only the specific haute couture houses, right? That's the only place. Now, there is a fashion week in New York, and Milan, and other places, right? Those are all fashion brands, right? With specific designers. And some of those are couture, meaning they are one-of-a-kind, bespoke garments. Some of them are not. And then the pyramid, like, branches out further and further, where you have different designers presenting different lines that are more and more down to the bottom, which is the ready-to-wear garment. Okay?

Travis: Okay. But those fashion— until you get down to that ready-to-wear garment, right? This is not them saying, like, "These are gonna be the looks you're gonna see everybody wearing next season," right? It's just like, "There's gonna be style like this."

Teresa: There's always, like, copycats, and blatant stealing. But, like—

Travis: It's like an art show, though. More than— right?

Teresa: Yeah, it's more like an art show.

Travis: More than it's, like, publicizing a line of clothes you could buy.

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: And if you can afford it, that's, like, the top .001% of people who care about fashion have the money to care about fashion. Um, those are the only people who can wear, like, haute couture and, you know, couture kind of, like, clothing. Because each house that is haute couture has its own, like, rules regarding the meeting with a specific designer, and how many fittings, and how many different, like, iterations of the same design there can be. So, like, some of the houses, if you buy this dress in black, right? You commission it in black. Nobody else can commission it in that color. That dress is done, right? Somebody else could maybe ask for that in red, made specifically for them. But—

Travis: Can you imagine if they wore it to the same event? Oh my God.

Teresa: I mean, you would—

Travis: I would watch that unfold.

Teresa: A lot of the time, only one of these garments exist at a time.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: And that's the way that—

Travis: And if you spill coffee on it? Oh my God, can you imagine?

Teresa: [laughs] You wouldn't. That's the way that haute couture works, okay? So, and this started way, way, way back with the European monarchies.

Travis: And can— I just wanna— I— I wanna put the tiger on the table and yell at it, right? 'Cause, like, right off the bat we should address, this is reeking of privilege, right?

Teresa: Absolutely.

Travis: 'Cause the— as you said, like, the— to have enough money to not just, like, want to be fashionable, but like, say, like, "I'm gonna flex so hard, and be the only person on Earth that has this outfit, no matter the cost." Right? That is a level of privilege.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Which is very interesting, because, you know, my mom used to make dresses for us when we were little. Those are bespoke garments, right?

Travis: How often was your mom in a Paris fashion show? Just, I could—

Teresa: What I'm *saying* is...

Travis: Uh-huh?

Teresa: The way that the pendulum swings back and forth between, "This is for the rich of the rich, and this is for every man," right? At this point in time... I mean, let's say, outside of, like, social media DIY-ers and fashion designers and things like that, right? People who are forced to make their own clothes because they can't afford, now, ready-to-wear, right? Um, and then the people who have a single garment made specifically for them. These are like opposite sides of the same kind of, like, circle.

Travis: It's the pendulum swing—

Teresa: Right, yeah.

Travis: —that we talk about a lot. Where you talk about, like, tanning for example. Or like nail polish, makeup, hair. It's always that pendulum swing of what represents privilege. What is showing off at any given time.

Teresa: Um, so much so that in medieval— um, in the Middle Ages, there were laws called sumptuary laws.

Travis: I know these.

Teresa: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Travis: I do know this. Right?

Teresa: Tell us about it.

Travis: This— I— one of the ones I know about is, like, for example, there were colors that only royalty were allowed to wear, right? So, like, there was a shade of purple, right? Where it's just like, this shade is, like, regulated only for the royal family, right?

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: Uh, and there were, like, certain fabrics that only rich people could wear, and if, like, a poor person was caught wearing— if a peasant was caught wearing these, they could be punished for wearing clothes from above their station, right?

Teresa: Exactly, right? Um, so what we're talking about as far as, like, fashion brands, right? Ultimately started with specific designers, okay? And for example, um, you know, we've talked about how in, you know, pre-1700's Europe, you couldn't just go into a store and buy yourself any dress, right? You would have actual Marc Jacobs come to your house and, like, cut it out for you. [laughs]

Travis: But not— it would be, like, Marc Jacobs Sr. Sr. Sr. Sr. Sr. Right?

Teresa: [laughs] So let's take an example. In the 1720's the queen's dressmaker, Francois Le Clerc, was so popular that women from all roles in the French court flocked to him to design them a dress.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Um, and so this is like the start of kind of, like, a fashion brand. Right? Because everything that he designed was very similar, and everybody wanted it, and it was a status symbol.

Travis: So someone could say, like, "Is that Le Clerc? Is that Le Clerc?"

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: Yeah, okay.

Teresa: Exactly, exactly. Um, and there were some that reached beyond just French acclaim. For example, Rose Bertin. She was a French milliner and dressmaker for the French aristocracy, and—

Travis: Is milliner hat?

Teresa: Yeah, mm-hmm.

Travis: Yeah! Boom!

Teresa: And she was dubbed, quote, "The minister of fashion."

Travis: Oooh! Not bad for a title.

Teresa: Because she was the personal designer for Marie Antoinette.

Travis: Ah. Okay, yeah. I think you get to have that title when you're doing Marie Antoinette's hot looks.

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: And it's actually very interesting that, left to her own devices, Marie Antoinette would have dressed much simpler.

Travis: Yeah. Well, she wasn't— was she born French?

Teresa: Uh, she was...

Travis: Austrian? Let's see.

Teresa: Yes, Austrian.

Travis: Austrian, okay.

Teresa: I was thinking about croissants.

Travis: Okay? We— so, we all are.

Teresa: Which are— which are—[laughs] which are also Austrian. Anyway.

Travis: Uh-huh.

Teresa: Austria.

Travis: She was croissant-adjacent.

Teresa: Um, and so— but she obviously— Marie Antoinette needed to look the part, right? Of the French queen. Some would argue that she really outdid herself there for, like, you know, inciting the... [laughs]

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: ... the French Revolution.

Travis: There does hit a point where privilege becomes so privileged that you're like, "Okay. Wait, hold on. We're not— this is too much, right?"

Teresa: Right, yes.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Yes. Um—

Travis: "Your hair is taller than you are. We need to address this."

Teresa: [laughs] And so when we first get to the first designer in the modern sense, right?

Travis: I can't wait to hear about this. I can't wait to hear about designer in the modern sense. But you know what I'd like to do first?

Teresa: Thank you note for our sponsors?

Travis: That's correct.

[theme music plays]

Travis: I wanna talk for a moment and say thank you to Storyworth. Story— we got kids. I don't know. Hey, I—

Teresa: We do. Yes, we do.

Travis: —I don't know if you know this, Teresa. [wheeze-laughs] We got two children. And—

Teresa: And life with our children is often a blur.

Travis: It moves so fast. You know, one day they're little babies in your arms, and the next day they're asking to watch iPad.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: And you're like, "Uh, yeah. Yes. Fine!" And you know, it happens. And you wanna remember the good times. Um, and so that's where Storyworth comes in, because Storyworth is an online service that helps you and your loved ones connect through sharing stories and memories, and preserve them for years to come.

Every week, Storyworth emails your loved one a thought-provoking question of your choice from a vast pool of possible options. Each unique prompt asks questions you've never thought of, like "What is one of your fondest childhood memories?"

After one year, Storyworth compiles all of those questions and stories, including photos, into a beautiful keepsake book the whole family can share for generations.

I will say, as, you know, as our beautiful children have grown and everything, one of our most prized possessions is anything that documents the experiences of our last, like, six years as a family. I mean, we were a family before that, but you know what I mean.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: And, uh, being able to give people memories and shared experiences is some of the most beautiful gifts we've shared with each other, and with family, and all of that. So, get to know your loved ones better and preserve those special moments forever with Storyworth! Right now, for a limited time, you can save \$10 on your first purchase when you go to Storyworth.com/Shmanners. That S-T-O-R-Y-W-O-R-T-H.com/shmanners to save \$10 on your first purchase. Storyworth.com/shmanners.

Teresa: *Shmanners* is also sponsored in part this week by Quip.

Travis: I know Quip!

Teresa: Let me tell you story about my Quip.

Travis: Tell me about your Quip!

Teresa: So, we've been using Quip toothbrushes. Specifically for a very long time.

Travis: [simultaneously] For 37 years. Yeah, a long time.

Teresa: And the battery in my Quip died, and I just couldn't get around to replacing it. I was using it as a manual toothbrush.

Travis: Oh, the worst.

Teresa: And it's just not the same!

Travis: It's not the same.

Teresa: I finally replaced that battery, and now to feel that sweet, sweet vibration while I brush my teeth, uh, actually is amazing in the fact that it does feel very fresh and clean, but also while I was using it manually without the battery, I was not brushing nearly long enough.

Travis: No, no!

Teresa: I was like, brush brush brush, brush brush brush, that's it! That— I'm done. But now that I have the timing back with the battery in the toothbrush, I'm back.

Travis: The amazing thing to me— so, Quip has a built-in timer, and it pulses every 30 seconds to tell you to move to a different section. It's only two minutes, right? Which doesn't sound that long. But I'll start brushing my—

Teresa: But it *is* that long!

Travis: —I'll start brushing my teeth and, like, as I'm brushing and feeling vibrations I'm thinking, "That's almost two minutes. [unintelligible] It's still— okay,

still going. It's gotta— it's gotta be almost two minutes. This is— come on. No, come on! It's gotta be two— oh, you're messing with me, Quip."

Teresa: [laughs] And you know what? It's also helped Bebe brush better.

Travis: Oh yeah, Bebe loves it.

Teresa: They make kids Quips with a smaller brush head, which is great. Um, but it also still has the timing pulses, and she is very happy to brush her teeth. They also have— oh! She loves that toothpaste.

Travis: The strawberry toothpaste. She's wild about it.

Teresa: The strawberry toothpaste. She's wild about it. And you can be wild about it, too. So you should go to getquip.com/shmanners right now, and you can get a first refill free.

Travis: [gasps]

Teresa: That's your first refill, which is— it's the brush heads, right? And the toothpaste.

Travis: And the battery.

Teresa: And the battery.

Travis: All built in.

Teresa: Um—

Travis: All there in the bag.

Teresa: First refill free at getquip.com/shmanners. Spelled G-E-T-Q-U-I-P.com/shmanners. From Quip: the good habits company.

[music plays]

Carrie: I'm a psychic. My name is Psychic Carrie.

Ross: I'm Ross.

Carrie: Yes. Oh! What a pleasure to meet you. Of course I knew your name was Ross, as I am a psychic, but please take a seat.

Ross: Yeah. Well, I was hoping that we could talk about my podcast—

Carrie: [simultaneously] You were hoping that I— we could about my— your podcast, yes. I know.

Ross: It's called *Oh No Ross and Carrie*.

Carrie: [simultaneously] [mumbling indistinctly]. Yes.

Ross: We investigate fringe science—

Carrie: Uh-huh.

Ross: —spirituality and claims of the paranormal.

Carrie: [simultaneously] [mumbling indistinctly] Paranormal!

Ross: You took the words right out of my mouth!

Carrie: Yes. This whole podcast, it sounds like it's been a real challenge for you, lately.

Ross: Actually, it's a lot of fun.

Carrie: Yes, exactly! Because it's so fun!

Ross: I don't know how you do it.

Carrie: This will be \$75.

Ross: Okay. That seems fair.

Carrie: *Oh No Ross and Carrie*.

Ross: At Maximumfun.org.

Carrie: .org.

Ross: You knew it was a dot org!

Carrie: I have a gift.

[music and ad end]

Travis: You were telling about hot couture.

Teresa: Uh-huh.

Travis: Is that not it?

Teresa: No. That's not—

Travis: I think— I think I nailed it, just like you're saying it!

Teresa: Keep—

Travis: How did— how were saying it?

Teresa: —keep practicing.

Travis: How were you saying it?

Teresa: Haute couture.

Travis: Hot cotor.

Teresa: No.

Travis: No? Okay.

Teresa: Um, so fashion as we know it didn't really start until 1825, and it was started by a man named Charles—

Travis: Jim Fashion.

Teresa: —Charles Frederick Worth. Uh, so he had a very large business where he employed many seemingly anonymous tailors and seamstresses, right? So they are, like— they are able to pump out these clothes.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: And of course, I mean, he was still working very intimately with his high-influence clients. He was the primary designer of Empress Eugenie of France specifically. Um, so he was always working right alongside his clients, right? He had a large client base, and he was able to make... he was able to make the jump from designer for one person to designer that influenced everybody, because...

February 1st, 1853, Napoleon III dictated that no visitors would be received to his court without formal dress.

Travis: Oh!

Teresa: So that one statement sent the popularity of Worth's gowns into the stratosphere.

Travis: Okay!

Teresa: Everybody needed one, right? And so the demand was so high, um, he was able to dub his company the House of Worth, and Charles Frederick is still considered to this day to be the father of couture fashion.

Travis: Okay. Now, I'm sitting here trying to think about this— this declaration, right? So this would include everyone, right? If you have a grievance, anything, right?

Teresa: Anyone who stepped inside the court.

Travis: Okay. Okay! Alright.

Teresa: Yeah. Yeah. Um, and so as we get to the 20th century, Parisian high fashion becomes the top of this pyramid we were talking about, um, because of fashion magazines, and department stores who would send buyers to Paris fashion shows, and then they would purchase the garments, and then copy them, blatantly steal them, to— to sell en masse.

Travis: I also know, right? That this was a time— especially early 20th century, when we're talking about, like, 1940's, for example, that this was a time where people coming back from World War II, who had spent time in France, just, like, went on and on about France. And everybody was— like, saw them as the height of, like, fashion and class, right? So everybody wanted to be seen as being alongside of that, right?

Teresa: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Travis: So, like, that's why we, you know, think about fashion and food and wine and all of these things, this was a time when people really started to want to be, uh, Eur— not European, but, like, continental, right?

Teresa: Right.

Travis: When we talk about, "Oh, I wanna seem, like, well-traveled, and I know everything, and that's why I hold my cigarette like this." You know.

Teresa: But there is quite a famous American couture brand. Can you think of what it is?

Travis: Ralph Lauren. No.

Teresa: No.

Travis: Tommy Hilfiger.

Teresa: No.

Travis: No.

Teresa: Think further back. 1830's.

Travis: Chanel?

Teresa: Tiffany.

Travis: Ohh! Yeah, Tiffany's! The Blue Box!

Teresa: Yeah! Exactly. So, it was said—

Travis: Breakfast there.

Teresa: [laughs] It was said that their jewelry—

Travis: [simultaneously] They make a great waffle.

Teresa: —ushered in a new opportunity for a uniquely American look that had clean lines and classic pieces, but was still authentically Yankee style.

Travis: Well, and also I say jewelry and whatnot, but it's one of— I was blown away. And, listen. We are who we are. We like the *Antiques Roadshow*. And occasionally they'll be like, "Ah, a Tiffany's lamp." And they're always gorgeous. But I just never think about Tiffany's as making anything other than jewelry.

Teresa: Oh, they made pretty much everything. Um, so all of the people that we think about now as luxury brands, like Chanel, like Rolex, Prada, Balenciaga—

Travis: Cadillac.

Teresa: Gucci.

Travis: Is that something?

Teresa: No.

Travis: No.

Teresa: All formed before the mid-1920's, okay?

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Um, and so, you know, this was a great time to be rich, you know, with robber barons and—

Travis: To be fair—

Teresa: —fancy women in art deco jewelry.

Travis: —aside from the French Revolution, it's pretty much always a good time to be rich.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: There's very— like, very rarely was someone like, "And I would've hated to be rich during that time," except for the French Revolution. Other than that.

Teresa: Yeah... um, so, you know, there are now lots of designers at that kind of, like— we talked about the pyramid, right? There are lots of designers that started at the haute couture houses, as, you know, like, young designers, right? And then they left to establish their own brands. People like Yves Saint Laurent, uh, Pierre Cardin, Andre Courreges, um, and interestingly, Hanae Mori, a Japanese woman based on Paris. She was actually— she started in Japan in 1951, but she approached Chanel to work for them, um, and that was when her line just exploded in France.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Um, and so this isn't really where designers make their mark anymore. It is from the rich and famous wearing their outfits in public, right? So, think about Kim Kardashian.

Travis: Awards shows. Ohh, okay. I was gonna say award shows. Some people—

Teresa: Oh, sure, award shows for sure.

Travis: If there's a reason they ask the question of "Who are you wearing?"

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Because a lot of the time, those dresses and suits and stuff are free, and it's because they know they're going to get interviewed, and part of the deal is, you have to ask me who I am wearing so that I can say it, so that they get the free publicity and I get this free dress.

Teresa: Right. And so people see those— those designers on the red carpets or whatever, right? And then the haute couture brands have little branch-off fashion houses where they make the next tier of luxury goods, like Hermes does the Birkin bag, right? Um, which are very closely guarded, by the way.

And then, um, you get a little further down where, um, multinational brands, sports brands like Adidas and things like that.

Travis: I like how you said that.

Teresa: That is how it is pronounced.

Travis: I know. It's just, I'm a rube and I would never say it right. Uh, I like how you said it, 'cause it shows you've done your research?

Teresa: Thank you.

Travis: And I am a child.

Teresa: Um, who are haute couture, but they do have a recognizable fashion brand, right?

Travis: Right.

Teresa: Um, and so... fast forward to the 1990's and the early 2000's where there were—

Travis: JNCO jeans.

Teresa: —[laughs] thousands and thousands of fashion blogs and books and shows, updating, like, the masses on these designers. Um, and, you know, the culture built around the brands that we are talking about is synonymous with wealth, right? When you think about an Oscar de la Renta dress, you think about some kind of, like, huge thing that might've been on, I don't know, like, *My Super Sweet Sixteen*, right? Where the 16-year-old is, like, begging for this one beautiful dress for her birthday or whatever.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: Um, or if you go on YouTube and look up celebrity closet tours, right? There'll be whole rooms dedicated to just shoes, or just bags, and they have them in, like— you know, like those lit display cases where they, like, turn around and stuff. You know what I'm saying?

Travis: They probably don't have big piles of dirty clothes, right?

Teresa: No, they— they definitely don't. [laughs quietly]

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Um, and—

Travis: They scootch those into a smaller closet before the camera crews come.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: 'Cause everybody's got dirty clothes. Listen, I'm here to tell you, folks. Everybody's got dirty clothes. Everybody gets their clothes dirty. No matter how rich you are, you're not wearing something once and burning it, right? [sighs] Come on.

Teresa: Um, so there is a little bit— not a little bit. There's a problem with all this exclusivity, right?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Um, so it's kind of like capitalism in this tiny bag, right?

Travis: It's pure, unfiltered, distilled capitalism, yes.

Teresa: So, you know, what happens is, if a lot of these clothes on, like, the second tier— not, like, the bespoke clothing, right? Made for one person. A lot of the clothes on the second tier of the luxury brands, um, they actually sometimes get burned at the end of a season. They get pulled off the shelves, they do not—

Travis: 'Cause you want the exclusivity. You don't want 'em to go to clearance or anything like that, yeah.

Teresa: Exactly. The high fashion industry is responsible for about 10% of the carbon emissions, um, because they do burn a lot of clothing. Uh, they do also— a lot of the fast fashion brands like, you know, Forever 21 and H&M and Shein and all those ones, they make such low quality clothing to make people feel fashionable, like they have the luxury fashion brands. Uh, a lot of that low quality

clothing gets just dumped. It gets shipped overseas. It gets, uh, put in, you know, into huge piles that nobody wants and they can't get rid of.

Travis: And that's not even touching on issues with, like, labor issues and underpaying workers in sweatshops, and then getting into also, like, paying more for a dress than a lot people will make in a year, or sometimes a lifetime.

Teresa: And specifically the US exports more than a billion pounds of used clothing every year.

Travis: Uh-huh. Meanwhile, there are people who don't have the clothes that they need, uh, and we're just burning some of them.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: Okay!

Teresa: So that— that— those are definitely problematic areas of this, and that doesn't mean that luxury brands aren't— you know, that they are inherently harmful. They aren't.

Travis: And it's also important to note, if you're someone who likes fashion and wants to be fashionable, it doesn't make you a bad person. As with a lot of things, the problem is that there are practices, there are behaviors going unaddressed that could be addressed to make everything better, except then it would cost more and people would make less money, and capitalism.

Teresa: And here's the thing. Um, fashion is an art form, and we talked about those haute couture shows being kind of like an art exhibit.

Travis: Just that, they're a show, right? Yeah.

Teresa: Right, it's a show. And one of the things that we are, you know, unlearning from history, is that clothes, like a lot of fiber arts, is considered, quote, "women's work," even though the designers are mostly men, right? Um, and so things like Louis Vuitton, Michael Kors, Versace, things like that, they all have men at the helm, but the people working are the seamstresses, right?

Travis: Yes. I also want to say, this is just a little bone to pick from me to you. Um, please everybody, make better fashion for men.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Because I routinely am like, I wanna update my fashion [mumbling indistinctly] professional. And I'll find these blogs. I saw this blog one time. It's the thing I referenced every time. Which is, like, "Looking for a fashionable look? Try a t-shirt and jeans." And it was literally just, like, a picture of a guy walking down the street wearing, like, blue jeans and a white t-shirt. And it was like, "So fashionable!" And I'm like, "That's not it."

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: You guys. That's not it. That is not a big— like, that's not a revelation in fashion. "[stammers] T-shirt and jeans!"

No!

Teresa: No. So—

Travis: Give me something! That's not like, "Oh, have you thought about a blue shirt?" [groans] Oh my God.

Teresa: Fashion is an art form, and it is great to elevate it, especially women designers who are often overlooked. Um, and it is multifaceted, certainly, and it's entrenched in our culture. So, you know, if you really want a Birkin bag, it's a great investment. These are things that seem to really, at this point time, only appreciate over time.

Travis: I mean, we— I mentioned the *Antiques Roadshow*, right?

Teresa: Right.

Travis: And it's something I have thought many many times, and have said to Teresa many many times watching *Antiques Roadshow*. Of, like, as things become more, like... not copied, but become more, like, off the shelf, right? Kind of deal?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: We'll see fewer and fewer things where it's just like, "Oh my God, is that a, you know, Tiffany's lamp? For example, right? Because those— that's not what

ends up— so if you see it as an investment, as you have said, where it's just like, "I'm gonna pay for this, right? And then keep it and be very careful with it, and eventually I could, like, resell it or whatever."

Teresa: Or, you know, I'm certainly I'm not the only person who has bought something and calculated the cost per wear, right?

Travis: Oh yes.

Teresa: If it's something that I'm going to wear a lot, it's okay that it is, you know, made very well and expensive, because cost per wear is important to me.

Travis: And the same way around, man, I have some shoes that are covered in, like, little gold plates or gold spikes or whatever that I got for, like, \$15. And every time I wear them people are like, "Oh my God, those are amazing."

I'm like, "Yeah! And they're wildly uncomfortable."

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: I know they're gonna fall apart, like, the fifth time I wear them.

Teresa: So the psychological cost per wear is important too.

Travis: Right. But, like, I get compliments on 'em, you know what I mean? Oh, one other thing. One of the biggest questions we got, right? And I think it kind of encompasses a lot of what people were asking, is if somebody pays a lot of money for a thing, right? Or they want to show you something that they have, or want to get, right? How do you offer your opinion on it if you think it's overpriced, if you think it's ugly, whatever.

Teresa: I think that the most important thing is to, instead of shutting down the conversation with something like, "Oh, wow. That's way too expensive," right? You ask the person about what made you choose this, when do you think you're going to wear it, how are you going to display this item? Is this more about fashion for you, or is it more about the design, the art? All kind of stuff. I think it's— it's the questions that you talk about it in, um, so that, you know, if you would never buy something that was that expensive, that's fine. Nobody's making you buy it. But if someone is excited about buying something, and it happens to

be very expensive, I think that the conversation that you're having is the most important one.

Travis: I also think... [sighs] one, if somebody asks you that question, you have to do some, like, rapid gymnastics to flip into their mindset.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: 'Cause as you said, like, there are things that are not my style, right? That if someone said, "What do you think about this?"

They are clearly not asking if I want it, right? Where if I said, like, "Oh, that would look great on you." Right? Because it's your style more than mine. But I also think... [sighs] here's a word. Oh, use this word. "Interesting!" Right?

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Interesting will give you time to think of a more— "Oh! Interesting." Right? 'Cause it is, right? "Oh, interesting!" Um, rather than say— because I'm gonna make a slight change. Rather than say "When would you wear it?" Right? Which sounds, I think in that wording, a little challenging.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: Say, like, "Oh, interesting. Like, what sort of occasion is that for?" Like, you know, like, there's a difference between, "Ooh, do you have something coming up that you would wear it to?" Instead of "When would you wear it?" Right? "When would you wear it?" feels a little challenging, you know?

Teresa: Okay, I'll allow it.

Travis: But I do think, like, "Oh my God, yeah, it's beautiful. I would never— I could never let myself pay that much for something." Right? "I" statements is another good way. Especially if it's, like, say it's a friend who you know can't afford it, but is gonna spend money on that thing, right? Say, like, "I don't know that I would comfortable spending that much on something."

Instead of "You can't afford that," or "You shouldn't do that." "I" statements, right? And let them come to the realization themselves. And that's about everything,

right, "I wouldn't date that guy." Right? Like [laughs] "I wouldn't eat that whole tub of ice cream." You know what I mean.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: I would, though.

Teresa: You sure would.

Travis: Oh, I would. I like to let it all melt and then just drink it like soup. Love it!

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: The problem with that— 'cause this happened to me last night, I had Cherry Garcia. I let it all get— not room temperature, but pretty soupy.

Teresa: Pretty soupy.

Travis: But then the problem is is then when it refreezes, all the bits have sunk to the bottom.

Teresa: Oh, man.

Travis: And you have about, like, three quarters of just, like, vanilla ice cream, and then [wheezes] sediment.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Alright! That's gonna do it for us, folks. Thank you so much for joining us. Uh, thank you to Maximum Fun, our podcast home. Check out all the other great shows there. If you wanna see all the other McElroy projects, you can go to mcelroy.family and check those out. If you wanna see all the McElroy merch, you can go to mcelroymerch.com. Couldn't be easier to remember.

I want to let everyone know, I've got a virtual live show coming up. April 1st, 9 PM Eastern Time. It's gonna be available for two weeks, video on demand afterwards. It's a CUSS Cares show. What that means is— CUSS is the Cincinnati Underground Society Show, uh, and it's a show that I host, and I have amazing guests. Those guests for this show are Rob Cordry, Adam Brody, Krystina Arielle, and Montaigne.

Teresa: Woo hoo!

Travis: And I think maybe one more, if I can figure out who to ask, and they're available.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Um, but it's gonna be a super fun show. We're gonna do "would you rather" questions that you submit. So if you think of some you would like to hear my guests talk about, you can tweet them using the hashtag #cusscares. Uh, tickets are \$8, and proceeds from the show are going to go to support two great organizations here in Cincinnati, one of which helps families that are facing or experiencing homelessness, and the other one we're going to put some masks and COVID tests into some free fridges here in town. Uh, so you should get your tickets at cincyticket.com, that's Cincy with a Y ticket.com/cusscares. And it's gonna be a super fun show, and we hope to see you there. 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. We are @shmannerstcast, and that is where we got some of the questions for this episode. Um, also, thank you to Bruja Betty Pinup Photography for the cover picture of our fan-run Facebook Group, *Shmanners Fanners*. If you love to give and get excellent advice from other fans, go ahead and join that group today.

Also, thank you so much to our researcher, writer, friend, Alex.

Travis: Inspiration.

Teresa: Inspiration. She's amazing, and we could not do this show without her. Also, thank you to Rachel, our editor. Again, could not do this show without her. Also, if you have idioms that you would like to submit to us, we love doing the idioms show, or if you have other topics that you would love to hear us discuss, you can email us at shmannerstcast@gmail.com, and say hi to Alex in those emails. She reads every single one.

Travis: 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: [sighs] Manners, *Shmanners*. Get it.

[theme music plays]

[chord]

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