

Shmanners 313: Coccinelle

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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: Good.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Ah, just now. My eye's a little itchy, but other than that.

Travis: Other than that, great?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Yeah?

Teresa: Yeah. I mean, I just ate a chocolate and, uh, downed some coffee.

Travis: You went for, like, a fancy dark chocolate from a box. I went for— I just stuck my maw into a bag of Peanut M&Ms.

Teresa: [laughing]

Travis: Ate it like a toddler who was about to get caught by their parents and had to eat it very quickly.

Teresa: I mean, we needed some quick hits of sugar.

Travis: Yeah. I needed those endorphins. Those sugar molecules bouncing through our hearts. Hey!

Teresa: [through laughter] That's not— that's not how sugar works.

Travis: I'm pretty sure it is. Happy Pride Month, everybody!

Teresa: Happy Pride Month!

Travis: Um, I— I hope— I'm proud of you. I hope you're proud.

Teresa: And, uh—

Travis: And I'm excited because I know we are going to talk about— so, on this show, if you're new or you just haven't been around for these—

Teresa: Welcome.

Travis: Welcome. We will often do biographies of people where it is not a name that you recognize, but it's a name you *should* recognize. It's someone who has had an impact either to etiquette or to culture. And by the end of them, I'm always, like, "One, this person's super cool, and I'm really mad that I didn't know about them before this. And two, I always feel very inspired, hearing about people who have done awesome things." So, I'm really excited.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Who are we talking about today?

Teresa: We are talking about Coccinelle. Or—

Travis: Excuse me?

Teresa: That was her stage name. Uh, her name was [French enunciation] Jaqueline Charlotte Dufresnoy.

Travis: Oh, boy! So, French?

Teresa: Yes, French.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: She was a French star. Like, shining bright like a diamond star.

Travis: Uh-huh.

Teresa: Um, who became a trans icon and cultural pioneer.

Travis: What year is this?

Teresa: Um, okay. August 23, 1931 is when she was born.

Travis: Oh! Okay.

Teresa: She was—

Travis: I— I always like to do some quick math in my head.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: That's no— 89, no wait, no. Thirty-one?

Teresa: Thirty-one.

Travis: That's 91 years ago.

Teresa: She is no longer among us.

Travis: Oh. Spoiler alert!

Teresa: Sorry. Um, and by the way this— a lot of this information is from an article written by Elliot Evans, called *The Life and Legacy of Coccinelle*, which is available on the UK site, Pressreader.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: All right.

Travis: So, she was born in August of 1931.

Teresa: Yes, raised in the [French enunciation] Temple District. [normally] I mean, Temple. Temple District. [French enunciation] The Tem-ple.

Travis: Okay. I— I'm— hey, can I say? I don't often know stuff about history, but I *do* know that here in about, hmm, 10 to 12 years, going to get real messy for her over there in France.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: In the 1940s.

Teresa: Um, and— which is very close to the now thriving gay community of [French enunciation] Marais...

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Um—

Travis: Every time we do that, here's what happens.

Teresa: What?

Travis: You nail a pronunciation—

Teresa: And then I hesitate.

Travis: Well, it's more just like, you leave room for everyone to applaud, as you should.

Teresa: [bursts out laughing]

Travis: So, you nail the pronunciation, and then you end— she does, what you can't see at home everyone, she does a very justified little, like, chin-up, Babba-ba-da. And then she's like—

Teresa: And then— [continues laughing]

Travis: ... waiting for the, "Mm. Yes, okay!" And I never know, because I think that if I said like, "That was incredible," you would just think it was, uh, it was patronizing?

Teresa: Well—

Travis: So, instead, I usually just end up going, "Okay."

Teresa: I like— I like speaking French, but French, when you read it, has a lot of extra letters.

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: As an English speaker, there's just so many letters on the page that you don't actually say.

Travis: Well, what they're trying to cover up, and I learned this from taking French lessons in 2020, is that, uh, they're trying to cover up for the fact that there's only actually ten words in the French language.

Teresa: Oh, is that it?

Travis: And they all sound the same, right? And they just spell them different ways to trick foreigners. [chuckles]

Teresa: It's like that really great— I remember seeing a reel or something about [Babbles with French accent] Ver-ver-ver-la-ver-ver-ver-ver, where that's— it's all about the word is the same—

Travis: This is what I'm saying.

Teresa: ... but those are all spelled differently to mean something different anyway. Okay. [sighs] So, Jacqueline knew very early on— and we know this because she wrote an autobiography, knew very early on—

Travis: Always helpful when you're doing a bio on someone, if they're like, "Let me tell you what happened."

Teresa: ... um, that she— something didn't feel right in her body.

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: She was four years old when she first recalled feeling that she didn't identify with the gender that she was assigned at birth.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: And so, she always said that she had a knack for fashion and performance as well as a very, like, unflappable sense of self. She was just really *sure* about who she was and what she felt.

Travis: That's amazing. And can I just say on a different, uh, detour note? Are there people who you would describe— like, do you use the opposite of that word and be like, "Oh them? They're very flappable."

Teresa: Hmm.

Travis: Is that a thing? I think I've only ever heard it in the unflappable sense and be like, "Yeah—

Teresa: No, I think you're right. I don't know if I've ever heard it the other way.

Travis: "Oh, Jeremy? He's really skittish, very flappable."

Teresa: [giggles] No. I don't think so.

Travis: "Hey, could you guys please keep your voices down? My mom is really flappable." [chuckles]

Teresa: Yeah. Um, so—

Travis: I want to *start* using it now.

Teresa: Okay. She wrote, "As a boy aged four, I knew I was different. I was a girl really, but no one could see it.

Travis: Hm.

Teresa: And so, that sounds unflappable to me.

Travis: Very unflappable. That flap level is zero.

Teresa: Zero. Um, and so, it's self-actualization, right? Because she knew this is not where she wanted to be, and so spent a long period of her life, like, getting to be the person that she knew she was.

Travis: I also really like that idea of, like, "I already was that, and it was everyone else that was missing it."

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: That's a good way, I think, of looking at it.

Teresa: Um, she was not well off with her family, and so she had to help to earn money to support them. And so, her love of style landed her her very first job working as a hairdresser in a Parisian salon, which her father hated. Because it would quote, "Turn his son homosexual."

Travis: Mm. Mm-hmm. That's not like—

Teresa: So many of those things are wrong. [laughs]

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: After all, didn't have a son. Had a daughter.

Travis: Correct.

Teresa: Um, and she was very drawn to the vibrant cabaret performances of the Paris nightlife. That would be the 1940s now.

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: She loved the look of Marilyn Monroe—

Travis: Sure. Who doesn't?

Teresa: ... and Brigitte Bardot and all that stuff.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: And you can actually— if you look up images of her, you can *really* tell that her— especially her stage look, was modeled after those two actresses specifically. You can see that she has that, kind of like, wispy and voluminous blonde hair and, like, a very classic silhouette.

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: So, she'll do, like, the spaghetti strap, kind of like, slinky dress, right?

Travis: You're using so many good descriptive words, babe.

Teresa: Oh, good.

Travis: Voluminous. Slinky. Mm.

Teresa: [laughs lightly] There are some really great pictures and videos on YouTube.

Travis: How come— How come when you say slinky, I definitely hear, like, sexual and sexy?

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: But when I see a slinky, I'm not like, "Damn!" [chuckles]

Teresa: [bursts out laughing] Oh, no. No.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: No.

Travis: But I got you though.

Teresa: You did get me. You did get me. Um, and so, you can absolutely tell by looking at her pictures that she has a dedication to fashion, dedication to the stage, and also, like, she knows what she's doing, right?

Travis: Well, there's also a type of person, especially when we're talking about that, like, thirties to, like, sixties-era, right? That type of person where they're not just dramatic on-screen or onstage, right?

Teresa: Right.

Travis: They live a certain life of drama. Like, a light— like, a theatrical— what the word I'm looking for? They live a show, like a... artistic life, you know? They are *that* person, so even off-screen, even just looking at pictures, movies—

Teresa: Yeah. Yeah.

Travis: You're like, "I just want to see them more."

Teresa: Well, here.

Travis: Marilyn Monroe is a great example, right?

Teresa: Let me show you.

Travis: Oh, yeah.

Teresa: You can tell by looking at her that she knew exactly what she was doing, and she did a really great job. [chuckles softly]

Travis: Yeah. And— and if I may, uh, Va-voom!

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: I don't— with respect. With respect, Awooga!

Teresa: Awooga, daamn.

Travis: Yeah. Okay.

Teresa: Yeah. Um, so, as a teenager, this is where her stage name, Coccinelle, came in.

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: Which means "ladybug."

Travis: Oh! Okay.

Teresa: So, uh, at first, when I typed in, on YouTube, Coccinelle, you know what came up?

Travis: The Rodney Dangerfield movie, *Ladybugs* in French?

Teresa: No.

Travis: Oh.

Teresa: There is a French children's cartoon of a tiny ladybug, uh, you know, like, doing, like, the learning stuff.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: Singing ABCs and stuff.

Travis: Oh, yeah. Hey, babe? As soon as you said, like, cartoon, I'm immediately going to assume that. I have children.

Teresa: Oh, okay. Okay. [chuckles softly]

Travis: When I was in Phoenix, I had got a lift back to the airport, and I was talking with my driver, and he also had two kids. And he was, like, well, you know, he asked me if I was, like, able to relax away from the children. I was, like, "The problem is I've forgotten what I do when kids aren't around."

Teresa: [bursts out laughing]

Travis: And he was like, "Oh, yeah. Same thing happens to me now. Like, if kids aren't in the room, I'm like, what do I watch? What TV do I watch when the kids aren't here?"

Teresa: What— what music do I like?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Is it the pony songs? [giggles]

Travis: I literally just turned on *Big City Greens* while I was in the hotel, 'cause I was, like, I know this show. This is good. [chuckles]

Teresa: Yep. Um, and so, what happened was, she attended a party in a red evening dress with black polka dots.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: Which everyone was, like—

Travis: She was ladybug bounding.

Teresa: That's right. "You look like a ladybug." And she's like, "That is a great stage name."

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: She made her stage debut in 1953 at Madame Arthur in Paris.

Travis: At 22. I like doing math.

Teresa: She sang the role of a young ingenue in the song [French pronunciation] "Premier Rendezvous."

Travis: Hey, good job! [claps] That is a great pronunciation. And on that note, let's give a thank you note to our sponsors.

[theme music plays]

Travis: Diapers! At some point, we all used them.

Teresa: [burst out laughing]

Travis: I don't know. That's probably true.

Teresa: I mean, I think so.

Travis: Statistically, yes. And I'll tell you what, man, there is so much, so much to think about when you have a kid.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: You know? And the last thing you want to worry about is their comfort, right? I mean, that's not true, 'cause you worry about their comfort all the time, right?

Teresa: I mean, you don't want to have to worry about if the thing you are putting them in makes them uncomfortable.

Travis: Okay, there you go.

Teresa: That's what you mean.

Travis: That's a good way to look at it, right? Anywhere where you *can* do a little bit, right? If you can do something. This is what I—

Teresa: If you can do just a little bit more. That's why all of those, like, onesies and stuff are, like, so soft and stretchy.

Travis: Also, why did we lose that? I've been thinking about this all the time, right? If I get a jumpsuit, why does it have snaps up the middle?

Teresa: I don't know.

Travis: Like, up the inside. I should have snaps on the inseam. Come on.

Teresa: Yes. It's true.

Travis: Everything should have snaps and knots overs, by the way. Anyway, it's not important. Okay.

Teresa: Continue talking about our sponsor, please.

Travis: Yes. So, if you can find something, right? That might improve, right? That *can* help. You'd do it, right?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: That's what I've found as a parent. So, if you want to try to help your kid get a better night's sleep, and in turn, maybe, *you'll* get a better night's sleep, why not let Coterie try to help? Right? Coterie has up to two times more liquid capacity and up to four times faster moisture wicking versus other brands.

Coterie diapers are made with clothing-grade material. Giving your baby a cashmere-like feel, so they're more comfortable for longer, day and night. They are dermatologist tested, plus Coterie wipes are National Eczema Association approved. And Coterie has been awarded best diaper and wipes by both TheBump and Parents.com.

Teresa: I'm very excited to gift a friend of ours who is having a baby shower this weekend—

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: ... this *beautiful* package of Coterie diapers that we received.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: I'm *very* excited to give it to them, and I'm gonna feel proud doing it.

Travis: Right now, Coterie is partnering with our podcast to offer you 20% off your first order, plus free shipping at Coterie.com/shmanners. That's Coterie, spelled C-O-T-E-R-I-E.com/shmanners for 20% off and free shipping. Coterie.com/shmanners.

[music plays]

Jesse: Hi, I'm Jesse Thorn, America's radio sweetheart.

Jordan: And I'm Jordan Morris, boy detective.

Jesse: Our comedy podcast, *Jordan, Jesse, Go!* just celebrated its 15th anniversary.

Jordan: It was a couple months ago, but we forgot.

Jesse: Uh, yeah, completely. Our silly show is 15 years old. That makes it old enough to get its learner's permit.

Jordan: And almost old enough to get "the talk."

Jesse: Wow, I hope you got the talk before then. A lot of things have changed in 15 years. Our show's not one of them.

Jordan: We're never changing, and you can't make us.

Jesse: *Jordan, Jesse, Go!* the same forever. At MaximumFun.org or wherever you get your podcasts.

[music fades away]

[new music begins]

Jackie: I'm going first! It's me, Jackie Kashian.

Laurie: Man! She's always this bossy.

Jackie: [bursts out laughing]

Laurie: I'm Laurie Kilmartin. We're a bunch of stand-up comics, and we've been doing comedy, like, 60 years total with both of us, but we look amazing. And, uh—

Jackie: We've been working out. We drop every Monday on MaxFun, and it's called *The Jackie and Laurie Show*. And you can listen to it, and learn about comedy, and learn about anger management, and all the things.

Laurie: And Jackie is married but childless, and I'm married but child full.

Jackie: [laughing]

Laurie: So, together we make one complete woman.

Jackie: Is that just what's going to head it? [laughing]

Laurie: Yeah.

Jackie: And we try to make Kyle laugh, just like that, and say, "Oh, my God," every episode.

Kyle: It's a good job.

Speaker: *The Jackie and Laurie Show*, Mondays only on Maximum Fun.

[music ends]

Travis: Okay. So, she's made her de-butt.

Teresa: Her de-butt? Her debut.

Travis: Oh.

Teresa: And it was instantaneous.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: Everyone in the room could auto— could, like— they just fell in love with her.

Travis: I believe the word you're looking for is they automagically fell in love.

Teresa: Automagically.

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: Aw, that's cute. Um, and before she was—

Travis: It's also what *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* is. [laughs]

Teresa: [laughing]

Travis: Automagic.

Teresa: She was performing at Le Carrousel de Paris, where audiences adored her.

Travis: And that's French for The Parasol of Cary. [laughs]

Teresa: What?

Travis: I switched them.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: I didn't mean to.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: And I blew it.

Teresa: Here— here's the complicated stuff, right? Jacqueline was a performer within the thriving scene of what are called transformistes.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Okay. Um, so, they were Parisian performers who were, in a general sense, regarded as female impersonators.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: So, like drag?

Teresa: Sure. Sure.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: And many of them— I mean, there was a whole— a whole galaxy of people within this scene, right?

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: So, some identified as just loving, uh, drag, right?

Travis: Uh-huh.

Teresa: Some, um, you know, enjoyed the performance. Some enjoyed the blurring of conventional gender norms, right?

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: But for many others of this performance group, it was deeper, right? They felt an affinity with the female gender expression that extended beyond the performance.

Travis: Okay, so, they were— there were transgender folks in there, right?

Teresa: Sure.

Travis: For whom this, uh, transformitiste? Right?

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: It was a more socially acceptable way of living that way during this time. Right?

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: So, the community of trans women that was formed around this performance scene was just amazing, right? Um, it was unheard of and, kind of like, a— in an outward sense, right? There wasn't— people talk about how there are so many ways to express yourself today, right?

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: And how this wasn't a thing in the past, but the truth is it *was* a thing. People did express themselves. They just didn't have the words, and the labels, and, like, the freedom.

Travis: Or we didn't have the words. Like, they didn't say— the words were not commonly known, right?

Teresa: Sure. Yeah.

Travis: Because the persecution... [sighs] it's hard to say, 'cause there's definitely still persecution today, right?

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: There's still judgment today, but, uh, I guess was even *more* then, right?

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: I'm trying to think of a way to say it, 'cause it's not like, "And now, everything's great, and it's totally safe to be transgender!"

Teresa: Right.

Travis: That's obviously not the case.

Teresa: The fact of the matter is, many of these performers were women. They were just assigned a different gender at birth.

Travis: Right. Okay.

Teresa: And so, this community was brand new at the time, and these are people who would normally be excluded, right? They found a home together. And this was where—

Travis: Which we talked about in drag as well.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: The found family aspect is a big aspect.

Teresa: This is where Coccinelle made a lot of her lifelong friends. And also had a, um... I almost want to describe it as, like a, um, almost like a sister, right?

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: Mariepierre Pruvot, whose stage name was Bambi.

Travis: Aw!

Teresa: So cute. Elliot Evans said that, "This was a place where their gender expression was not simply tolerated but admired and valued, even rewarded financially. The community surrounding it also provided a network of care and communication, as well as a means of sharing tips regarding possible support and medical interventions."

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: Which specifically I want to go into because gender-affirming surgery was very, very new at this point, right? We're talking the mid-50s.

Travis: Oh, yeah.

Teresa: And it was extremely controversial, in fact. There was no such thing as a trans person in France. It legally did not exist.

Travis: Ah.

Teresa: Not to say there were against it at this time.

Travis: You're— so, you're speaking within, like, the government view.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: The government didn't even acknowledge the existence of, right? Not that they didn't exist, but, like, they weren't on the books anywhere. There wasn't the concept in the government.

Teresa: In the government.

Travis: Got it. Okay.

Teresa: Right. And so, uh, Coccinelle went on tour in Nice. And she heard about a doctor called Dr. Georges Burou, who was a French gynecologist who ran the Clinique du Parc in Casablanca, Morocco.

Travis: I've heard of that place.

Teresa: And this was one of the very, very few clinics throughout the world that even offered gender-affirming surgery.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: At the time. Which isn't to say that there weren't people who dedicated their lives to providing medical care to trans patients. Um, there were a couple of other doctors. Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld, who we should definitely do an episode on, but had done unbelievable medical work a few decades earlier at the Institute of Sexology in Berlin. Um, you know, which provided treatments and affirmative surgeries for trans women. The Dora and Lili of the— the movie *The Danish Girl*—

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: ... is based on these women.

Travis: Got it.

Teresa: And so, he was doing— that doctor was doing really great research and care until Hitler—

Travis: [snickers]

Teresa: ... came to power in 1933, right?

Travis: I do like— listen, it's obviously not funny, but the way you say, "You know, until Hitler."

Teresa: Hitler, that guy. Um, and so, when the Third Reich came into power, that center was destroyed, and archives were burned, and wouldn't reemerge until 1973.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: So, there was a gap at this point.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: Is what I am trying to say.

Travis: I understand. I just figured out that word I was looking for earlier when you showed me pictures.

Teresa: What?

Travis: Bombshell.

Teresa: Bombshell.

Travis: That's what it is. Yes.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: Blonde bombshell. Yes! Okay.

Teresa: So, no gender-affirming surgery could be performed in France at this time.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: So, Morocco is where it's at. And, um, because of this, this was kind of like, "the" hip place to go. And I— you know, it looks beautiful in movies.

Travis: Well, doesn't everything?

Teresa: I mean, sure, but—

Travis: I mean, I guess not everything. There are definitely some movies where you're like, "Oh, that place is gross."

Teresa: [chuckles softly] Don't want to go there. Um, so, in 1958, Coccinelle traveled to North Africa to get the care that would affirm her gender to the world. And became the first French citizen to undergo gender confirmation surgery.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: And there are some interviews on YouTube that are in French, um, but translated. She speaks so kindly of Dr. Burou. Um, and she says, "Dr. Burou rectified the mistake nature made, and I became a woman on the inside as well as on the outside."

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: So sweet. Um, and gosh, it sounds like a terrifying situation to go under the knife like that. And even particularly vulnerable is because the surgery was so new.

Travis: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

Teresa: Um, but everything went well for Coccinelle, and she said that she knew that the surgery was a success right away when the doctor said, "Bonjour, Mademoiselle."

Travis: Hmm.

Teresa: How sweet. So, when she returned to France, this is when she legally changed her name to Jacqueline Charlotte Dufresnoy.

Travis: Could you spell her last name, by the way? It occurred to me if people want to look her up.

Teresa: Oh, sure. D-U-F-R-E-S-N-O-Y.

Travis: Okay. Done.

Teresa: [French enunciation] Dufresnoy.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: Okay. So, this is where her star really blows up, right?

Travis: Oh, no!

Teresa: [laughs] No, in a good way.

Travis: It's a supernova!

Teresa: In a good way.

Travis: Soon, it will be a black hole!

Teresa: So, this is where we want to make sure that we talk about the difference between celebrating someone's talent and treating someone's humanity as a spectacle.

Travis: Sure. Yeah. We've had to deal with that before.

Teresa: Yeah. There's a—

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: There's a very fine line because Coccinelle was a public figure at this point.

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: Um, so, tabloid fodder, absolutely. Um, happened around this point, and her public persona seems to be very welcoming—

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: ... of the kind of attention, but I'm not exactly *sure* if she was a fan of how far it went.

Travis: And also, you've got to think about at the time, how much room do you have to say like "Okay, we'll drop that. Leave that alone," and expect to still get... you know what I mean?

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Like, you don't want to cross these tabloids and journalists and stuff and hope to get coverage for the other stuff that you *do* still want to get coverage for. I will also say that it's also a running problem that I've heard about now, uh, just doing general research on trans icons and stuff. Is that there is also a very common rhetoric problem of associating, like, it's the concept of, like, passing, right?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Of saying, like, "And she's so beautiful." And connecting that within elevating this person within, like, trans history, right?

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: As this connection of, uh— well, in order to be taken seriously or get this kind of attention—

Teresa: You have to look a certain way.

Travis: You have to be beautiful, right? And look a certain way. And the problematic nature of that, right?

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Of connecting it that way.

Teresa: Absolutely. Um, but her star really took off. She began taking her cabaret show on the road. She toured internationally. And she was showcased in a variety of films throughout the late fifties and sixties. Um, and she had a hit revue in Paris called *Chercher la Femme*, which means look for the woman.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Um—

Travis: I feel like I've heard that phrase somewhere else too.

Teresa: You definitely have. The origin is sexist.

Travis: Oh.

Teresa: And she knew this, right?

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: So, her *Chercher la femme* was the play on the sexist nature of this because it's a cliché that you can find in a lot of detective novels and films, and it's meant to demonize the femme fatale character.

Travis: Oh. Okay.

Teresa: Or even the female love interest. It roughly means, "If there's a problem—

Teresa and Travis: [simultaneously] "Look for the woman."

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: 'Cause she's probably the source.

Travis: Then that is— now that you say it, I can 100% guarantee I have heard Hercule Poirot say it before.

Teresa: [laughs] But in naming her revue this, I mean, she—

Travis: It's a play on it.

Teresa: She put a play on it.

Travis: Okay. She put a play on.

Teresa: Put a playing on. Okay. So, in addition to being the first French person to have a gender confirmation surgery, she also became the first trans person in history— in the history of France, to legally marry. Um, gay marriage specifically wasn't legalized in France until 2013. But Coccinelle was accepted as a woman because she was a woman.

Travis: Okay. Yes. It's like, "Yes, but also, hmm." [chuckles] It's just one of those things of, like, I just don't expect to hear that about anywhere in, like, you know, the fifties and sixties.

Teresa: And so, she married several times.

Travis: It's almost like when people weren't thinking about it, it just made sense.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Right? Until someone said like, "Well, let's make it not make sense by making a big deal out of it."

Teresa: Right. She married several times, and her marriages, at least the first one, was approved by the Roman Catholic Church in France.

Travis: Oh, wow!

Teresa: And all that they wanted was, they wanted her rebaptized with her new name Jaqueline.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: And I'm not saying that that made things easy. They were never easy.

Travis: But just— I mean it— I will say, right? Like, it is, I think, maybe, so far, the most surprising part of this biography.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: To have them be like, "Yeah, it's fine. Who cares? Yeah. Just rebaptize, 'cause we recognize your new name. Anyways, we'll probably walk back on this policy in, like, a decade or so, so—"

Teresa: In a very— in the same way, I mean, her, um— her marriage was highly publicized. It was in all the tabloids and stuff, and there was some pretty nasty stuff printed about them, um, her and her husband. And one of the things that makes this point in history so interesting, is that France's government had not had to deal with any of this, sort of like, legalization before.

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: Like I said earlier. Um, and it was so public, right? And her—Coccinelle's refusal to, kind of like, live in the shadows.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Wanted to be in the starlight.

Travis: She was unflappable.

Teresa: Uh, infuriated the government, and so, in retaliation, political officials cracked down on legal loopholes and blind spots—

Travis: Oh.

Teresa: ... in the French judicial system that made it easier for, you know, trans people to exist. For example, hormones were previously unregulated and available to buy.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: As anyone could at any French pharmacy. Um, so the French state said, "Nope, not doing that anymore."

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Um, and they also made it illegal for trans individuals who have undergone gender-affirming surgery to obtain new identity papers.

Travis: Of course, happens.

Teresa: So, it wasn't illegal before because...

Travis: They weren't worried about it.

Teresa: They weren't worried about it. And all of a sudden, somebody comes who challenges their— their notions, and so, it becomes illegal.

Travis: That's so... Okay. Infuriating.

Teresa: Infuriating. Yes. So, this did not ever flap Coccinelle.

Travis: Ah! Yeah.

Teresa: And she lived her—

Travis: Like a penguin, she was unflappable.

Teresa: [giggles]

Travis: Is that anything?

Teresa: She lived her entire life and career without secrecy or shame. She was always out, always open, and always talked about how she loved being a woman. Uh, and she, like I said, married a couple of different times. Her last marriage was to a trans rights activist, Thierry Wilson, in 1996. And at this point, Coccinelle was in her mid-sixties.

Travis: Yeah. Wait. Okay, yeah.

Teresa: And Thierry was in his mid-twenties.

Travis: Oh, boy. Okay.

Teresa: That was definitely a scandal at the time.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: Um, but they knew that would garner lots of media attention, so they televised it live on French television.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Their marriage.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: It's like the original Kardashian wedding, right?

Travis: Sure. I don't know very much.

Teresa: Don't you— don't you remember when Kim Kardashian married that Chris guy on their show?

Travis: Hey, babe? I don't. I don't remember. I didn't watch it.

Teresa: No? Some of the people that listen will remember.

Travis: I'm sure they will, and this is not me saying, like, "Uh, I don't watch that." I just didn't watch it. I've never seen it.

Teresa: [laughs softly] I mean, *I* didn't watch it, but I know about it.

Travis: It sounds like you did!

Teresa: I didn't.

Travis: All right. No, I *know* of it. I know what you're talking about.

Teresa: Okay. Okay. The pair were together for 20 years, and together they founded and ran the venue Cabaret Coccinelle in Marseille. Um, and they performed together, they lived together, they were an activist couple, and they seemed to be, you know, very happy and open in the spotlight. So, that's a, I think, a good— I don't want to say ending to her life, but it seems—

Travis: I mean, it makes sense, right?

Teresa: It makes sense. It seems like things could be very hard for her, and this was a very happy time.

Travis: It was probably pretty warm, though. It had to be warm. Being in the spotlight all the time. It gets really sweaty.

Teresa: Ah, yeah, with all that heat on you.

Travis: Yeah, man. It gets really sweaty. Have you ever been under the spotlight? 'Cause Lord knows I have.

Teresa: I— I've been on stage.

Travis: You're staring straight at the light for hours and hours and hours. Saying, "Whose out there? Show yourself!" You know, that kind of thing?

Teresa: In 1994—

Travis: [burst out laughing] 'Kay.

Teresa: ... she founded the organization, [French pronunciation] Association Devenir Femme, which means "to become a woman."

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Which is not, like, completely correct because you are a woman.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: If you're a trans woman, you're a woman.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: You don't become. You are a woman.

Travis: Womens is womens.

Teresa: Womens is womens. Um, and as well as the Center for Aid, Research, and Information for Transsexuality and Gender Identity. Again, a little bit of an outdated term at this point.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: And they were meant to support and uplift those seeking their truest gender expression.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: She continued to perform. She—

Travis: Can I say? Like, three different times now, I thought the next thing you were going to say was like, "And then she passed away."

Teresa: Not yet.

Travis: And it's just, like, "Well, then she did another thing. And then she did another thing. Oh, guess what? Did another thing." All right.

Teresa: And in 2005, released a "Best of" album of her greatest hits. And—oh, and then she died. [laughs softly]

Travis: Oh, okay. That's the time to do it, though, right after you release your "Best of," 'cause then you know for sure that that statement is true. 'Cause wouldn't it suck to release the "Best of" and then release, like, an album next, and you're like, "Oh, that was actually better than all that stuff!"

Teresa: Right.

Travis: But I don't have time now. [voice fades away] Oh, no.

Teresa: It's the perfect legacy to live, right?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: In addition to her autobiography, which was out in the eighties—

Travis: Mm-hmm. *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* wrote one of those too.

Teresa: Oh, did he?

Travis: An [through laughter] autobiography... 'cause he's a car. [pause] I'm sorry! I just— I don't have a lot to add to this.

Teresa: [laughing]

Travis: Except like, "She sounds great."

Teresa: Um, so, she passed away in 2006, and left a rich history.

Travis: Yep.

Teresa: A beautiful legacy. And it continues to provide inspiration and affirmation to people in her circles, her community. Um, and then there's a—

Travis: And in the world!

Teresa: In the world. So, her legacy is large, and I—

Travis: And in charge. One might say.

Teresa: And in charge. And I'm, you know— like you said at the beginning, these are people that we should know about. And I am very glad to now know about them and just a little bit angry that I didn't know about them before. [chuckles softly]

Travis: I am as well. I am as well. Um, one, I like learning about interesting people.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Two, I like learning about pioneers.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Um, and three, one of the things—I don't want to blow someone's life down to this because clearly, this is an amazing life, right? But one of the things that I always love about this show is the ability to take whatever you've learned from it— the information, and then go to a gathering, or to just to hang out with a friend or whatever, and have some piece of information to be like, "Hey, did you know about this person?"

And it's like this interesting thing, and you can spread that information, and be the most interesting person in the room. That's what I like. I love—

Teresa: You *love* doing that.

Travis: ... being the most interesting person in the room, and I'm just so good at it.

Teresa: And I would suggest that if you enjoyed this, you go and enjoy some of her performances. There are many recorded in film and also on YouTube.

Travis: I've heard about that place.

Teresa: It is... it's mesmerizing, really, to watch some of these performances. Um and—

Travis: Speaking of watching performances—

Teresa: Oh!

Travis: ... tickets are on sale for the McElroy tours. You can go to bit.ly/McElroytours to get tickets to our Fancy Takes Flight Tour. Next up is Boston on June 17th and June 18th. We'll be doing *Adventure Zone* on the 17th, and *My Brother, My Brother, and Me* on the 18th.

Teresa: Wow, that's close now.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: [giggling]

Travis: It will be at Foxwoods, on June 19th with *My Brother, My Brother, and Me*. The rest of the year, we have stops at Salt Lake City, Portland, San Diego, Washington DC, Detroit, and Cincinnati. So, all those tickets are for sale now, bit.ly/McElroyTours. Mask and proof of full vaccination or negative Covid test within 72 hours of event start is required.

Also, we got new merch over at [Mcelroymerch.com](https://mcelroymerch.com). We got a Count Donut pin, which is from *My Brother, My Brother, and Me*, designed by Kevin Budnik. We've got a *TAZ* sticker sheet which is the same style as our

temporary tattoo sheet, which is also there in the shop, done by Lin Doyle. And 10% of all merch proceeds this month will go to Fairness West Virginia.

Fairness West Virginia is the statewide civil rights advocacy organization dedicated to fair treatment and civil rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender West Virginians. So, one more time, you can get all that stuff and more at Mcelroymerch.com.

Thank you so much for joining us. Thank you to our researcher Alex, without whom we would not be able to make this show. Thank you to our editor, Rachel, without whom we would not be able to make this show. And thank you to you for listening. We can make the show without you, but why?

Teresa: [giggles softly]

Travis: We also want to say thank you to our podcast home, MaximumFun.org. Check out all the other amazing shows there. And check out all the other shows and other things at Mcelroy.family. Find all the McElroy projects there. What else, Teresa?

Teresa: Thank you to Brent "brentalfloss" Black for writing our theme music which is available as a ringtone where those are found.

Travis: I should say, speaking of Brent, he just launched a Kickstarter for Use Your Words 2. The sequel to his *super* fun party game, Use Your Words. So, go to Kickstarter and, you know, fund that right now. It's a great game, and I want to play it, and you can do that at [Useyourwords2](http://Useyourwords2.com), that's the number two, .com. Go now!

Teresa: Thank you to Kayla M. Wasil for our Twitter thumbnail art. That's @shmannerscast. When we want your questions, that's where we get 'em from, so tweet at us @shmannerscast. 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, we are *always* taking submissions for topics, and we love to hear those idioms. You can email them to us shmatterscast@gmail.com. Say "hello" to Alex 'cause she reads every single email.

Travis: And that's going to 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]

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