

Shmanners 367: Cigars

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Travis: Hey, folks! It's probably pretty obvious from the title and subject matter of this week's episode, but just to make it clear, we wanted to do a content warning. We will be talking a lot about tobacco use and smoking in this week's episode, so if that's not something that you want to listen to, please feel free to listen to any one of our other episodes. Thank you so much.

[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? That was our second run-up—

Teresa: [simultaneously] Good. Better. Better.

Travis: —just so everybody knows. If you're like, "Wow. The vibe's weird."

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: It was our second run-up because I just left out, like, a whole chunk at the beginning.

Teresa: It's okay! We got there.

Travis: We did. We did get there. That is...

Teresa: And through the magic of editing, here we are.

Travis: How's everybody doing?

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: How is everybody?

Teresa: You know, summer is very interesting for people who are not children. I feel like my whole, like—all my skizz is upside down.

Travis: You know, I saw a thing recently where somebody tweeted, like—or posted or whatever. Whatever you call it when you just see text on Instagram. Memed? I don't know.

Teresa: I don't know.

Travis: But it's that thing of like, "We as human beings have been programmed to believe that, like, summer is a fun time because when you're a kid you get off school. But it's not. It's just hot and weird."

Teresa: [laughs] Yeah. Yeah.

Travis: Speaking of hot and weird, we're talking about cigars!

Teresa: We are! [laughs]

Travis: Now, here's the thing.

Teresa: Do you find cigars hot and weird?

Travis: One of those things, definitely true.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: So here's the thing. Here's the thing. I'm biased.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: Because I have attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, and the length of time it takes to partake in a cigar is not a length of time I as a human being am able to commit.

I've been to say, you know, weddings. I've been to bachelor parties. I've been to, I don't know, 40th birthdays or what-have-you where someone's like, "Ah, and I brought cigars for everybody."

And I'm like, "Oh, cool."

And then, much like my issues with taking a bath, I start it and then I think, "Now what am I supposed to do? Just keep doing it? No—there's no—"

Teresa: There is a way.

Travis: I mean, I know that. You can, like, put it—I'm not coming back for it. Are you kidding me?

Teresa: Oh, okay. There are some, and we can talk about this a little later, who will cut cigars, like, in half.

Travis: Y—really?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Okay. The other thing is, though, I've also experienced, like, trying to put a cigar out and then coming back for it later, and it tastes funky to me.

Teresa: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Travis: So, listen. If you're listening to this and you're like—

Teresa: We'll talk about that too.

Travis: —If you're like, "I enjoy cigars and Travis is wild." Sorry! I'm just saying, I'm not gonna walk up and smack one out of your mouth, [laughs] I'm just saying that I...

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: ... I—like, recently I was down in Miami for our Supercon, and I went down to Little Havana and I was, like, looking at cigar shops and I'm like, "Ah, this seems really cool."

And you know, like, in movies where somebody opens up the desktop humidior and they're like, "Ah, cigars straight from Cuba."

Like, that's cool. I don't wanna do it.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: But I get that the trappings are cool. Much like the idea of having, like, a bar in my office. You see that in Mad Men and you're like, "Cool." We talked about this on the home bar. And you're like, "Oh, cool!"

But in practice you're like, "What am I supposed to—am I supposed to smoke that right now, in your office?! What are you talking about? Get outta here!"

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: "You want this meeting to go three hours long? What are you talking about!"

Teresa: I don't have the same, like, rose colored glasses for cigars that I do for a pipe, because my grandfather used to smoke both of those, right? But the pipe is the one that smelled good to me, whereas the cigar did not smell good to me.

Travis: Pipe is another one, by the way, that I've tried to do, and I remember being in college. God, I was so cool. Going outside with my friends who smoked cigarettes and me being like, "I'll do this tobacco pipe."

By the time I got it prepped and ready, they were done! They were ready to go back inside and I was like, "Okay. Just wait, like, another 45 minutes, guys, and I'll be right—where are you going?" And then I'd tip my fedora and swivel my cane around! And then I was—no, I wasn't quite that far. But then I'd go back inside.

Teresa: I was just tickled by the memory of—I remember one time—

Travis: Oh, yeah.

Teresa: Way, way, way back when we were first married.

Travis: No, this was before we were married. This was while we were—I think we were dating. And I wanted to get a dog and you wouldn't let me, and I had too many glasses of wine—

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: —and I said, "Oh, well, I'll show her. I'm a grown up and I do things." Did I get a dog on impulse? No. That would—you could connect those dots. I went on Amazon I think, or eBay, I don't know, and bought some—a pipe or two. But here's the thing, my friends. When they arrived, they were miniature!

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: They were, uh, something you would give to, like, a marionette. But I believe they were actual pipes, but they were just so small!

Teresa: [through laughter] So small.

Travis: Like, so small! Like, oh, maybe one third the size of what you would expect them to be. And I think—

Teresa: And you are a large man with large hands.

Travis: This is true!

Teresa: And it looked so funny!

Travis: And there's something so wonderfully poignant about being like, "I'm gonna show her I'm an adult and I can get whatever I want—"

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: And then I got child-sized pipes. It was a wild day. And I woke up the next morning and I was like, "I don't know why I did that. I'm so sorry."

Teresa: "I don't know what happened." [laughs] Alright. But not pipes. Cigars, please.

Travis: Cigars.

Teresa: [sighs] Okay. Historians believe that the very first cigars were smoked by the Mayan people in the 10th century and were made by wrapping tobacco in palm or plantain leaf.

Travis: Oh, okay.

Teresa: How do they know, you might say?

Travis: They look for, like, the big tobacco advertisements on the sides of barns.

Teresa: Sort of?

Travis: Ohh, what?

Teresa: Archaeologists have actually found pottery from the Mayans decorated with images of men enjoying early cigars.

Travis: Nice. Okay.

Teresa: Pretty cool, right?

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: Um—

Travis: Did they look cool? Did the guys look cool doing it?

Teresa: I guess so?

Travis: Oh, okay.

Teresa: They knew right away that they were cigars, I guess.

Travis: Yeah, and they were like "Those guys look cool smoking those cigars. It would look cooler if they were a bunch of dogs sitting around a poker table, but we'll work on that."

Teresa: [laughs] Uh—

Travis: Are those dogs smoking cigars in that picture? I feel like they are.

Teresa: I think one of 'em is.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: At least one of 'em is. But what isn't cool is Christopher Columbus.

Travis: Oh, yeah.

Teresa: When he came to the New World—

Travis: And ruined everything?

Teresa: Yep. Uh, the Mayan people showed him how they do this, and he was like, "I discovered tobacco."

Travis: Oh my god.

Teresa: And sent it back to Spain and Portugal and said "Here. Look at what I did."

Travis: He—you know what? I'm not a big fan... of Christopher Columbus.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: I'm just gonna say it. He's a doody-head. And I'm sorry! I know that that is pretty harsh language.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: But everything I learn about this man is just doody-head after doody-head thing, you know what I mean?

Teresa: I agree. Not long after that, cigar smoking became popular in France as well, thanks to a lad named Jean Nicot. and you might think that it is related, and it is, because that was what they named nicotine after.

Travis: Get outta the town.

Teresa: I mean, it's named after Jean Nicot.

Travis: [sighs] Isn't it weird? 'Cause I know you listen to Sawbones a lot. Isn't it always weird to find out, like, a term is named after a person, and the name doesn't sound like someone's name at all, right? If you had said "Where's nicotine come from?"

I would've been like, "Probably, like, a Nicot plant, or derived from something."

And you're like, "It's named after a guy."

And I'm like, "No! What? Get out."

Teresa: Yeah, he—

Travis: "This is my friend, Nicot Tina. It's named after her."

Teresa: He was the French ambassador to Portugal, where he smoked a cigar and he was like, "Hey. We need this in France."

And so... I mean—

Travis: And then he said, "Name it after me, guys!" [wheeze-laughs]

Teresa: The substance nicotine was later named after Jean Nicot. And if it had a T-E at the end instead of just a T, you would pronounce it Nicote. But he doesn't have an E, so it's just Nicot.

Travis: Sure. Sure!

Teresa: Anyway.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: The Spanish realized shortly after that—

Travis: Nicotine... from what I understand—I gotta look it up now.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: That's, like, the drug part of tobacco, right?

Teresa: That is the addictive substance, I believe.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: So yes, the drug part.

Travis: That's the drug part. Okay, got it.

Teresa: Are we gonna have to bleep that?

Travis: I don't know. What, the word drug?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: No. I think everyone understands what that is. There's gonna be a content warning at the beginning of this 'cause we're talking about smoking.

Teresa: Okay, great.

Travis: Hey, let's just say it right off the bat. Also, smoking's not cool. Don't smoke cigars. Some people will say they're healthier than cigarettes 'cause you don't actually inhale 'em, or whatever the—

Teresa: It's not healthy.

Travis: It's not. It's not healthy. And you know what? No matter if something is healthier than something that's incredibly unhealthy, doesn't make it healthy. Don't smoke cigars. You can get plenty of cancers from cigars, folks. Don't do it.

Teresa: Public service announcement. Everyone who smokes knows it's bad for you.

Travis: That doesn't mean that I can't say "Hey, I also know it's bad for you."

Teresa: Okay. I'm telling you, I'm just telling you.

Travis: And if you're listening to this and your friend's like, "Hey. It's not a cigarette. Just have some cigars with us at this party or whatever. Smoking cigars is cool."

It's not cool. You know what's cool? Keeping your grades up... being kind to the elderly—unless they're being doody-heads... [laughs quietly]

Teresa: [muffled laughter] Alright. Don't @ us, you guys. We know.

Travis: No!

Teresa: You're adults.

Travis: You can @—@ Christopher Columbus. Booo!

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Not the director—actually I don't know if the director—

Teresa: No, don't do that.

Travis: I know nothing about him. He might be a good guy. I don't know. Might be a bad guy. But just maybe #christophercolumbusisadoody-head, how about that?

Teresa: Alright, fine. Anyway. So, the Spanish realized that they could wrap their tobacco in paper instead of leaves, which makes it a lot easier to make cigars. And soon many European companies began to grow tobacco to mass-produce cigars.

But tobacco grows best in fertile and warm climate, so one of the best places to do that is still Cuba.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: And when the Cuban tobacco industry got rolling, um...

Travis: Ah?

Teresa: Ahh?

Travis: Got rolling?

Teresa: Did she do that on purpose?

Travis: Ah, Alexx. You catbird.

Teresa: Alexx who writes the copy, thank you. They began distributing the product throughout Europe and Asia. Um, and these Cuban cigars, could you believe that they were very popular?

Travis: I've heard that!

Teresa: [laughs] And, um, Spain got greedy.

Travis: What?

Teresa: And they since claimed—the country of Spain claimed that since Columbus claimed Cuba for Spain, they were entitled to all of the riches of the tobacco crop.

Travis: I don't think... I'm not a legal expert. But I don't think that was true.

Teresa: It worked for a very long time, though.

Travis: Aww, b—aww, beans.

Teresa: Because the Spanish monopoly on Cuban tobacco lasted until 1817.

Travis: That's a long time!

Teresa: Yeah!

Travis: Way longer than I thought you were gonna say! Okay.

Teresa: I know. I know. I know. Okay. So, once the mono—

Travis: [simultaneously] You know, that—

Teresa: What?

Travis: That distance and with no internet or computers? Hey, Cuba? I'm gonna travel back in time. Travel back and hey, it's the year 1720 or whatever. Just don't tell 'em how much you sold. Just don't—just don't tell 'em!

Teresa: I'm certain that that happened a lot.

Travis: I hope say. You lie—hey. I give you full permission to lie to them.

Teresa: [laughs] Okay, so nobody's allowed to smoke, but everyone's allowed to lie.

Travis: No—yeah—yeah. Lying is awesome.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Lying never hurt anyone! [laughs]

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: But I'm saying, if your colonizers are trying to steal money from you... you should lie to them. Lying to colonizers, this is true, doesn't count as a sin. [laughs quietly]

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: That's what Jesus told me.

Teresa: Oh, sure. Oh, man. This is a really extra special episode for us.

Travis: It is. It's gonna be a good one!

Teresa: [laughs] Okay. So, once the monopoly was over, cigar mania really took over, especially in New York City.

Travis: Oh yeah, I get that. Man, doesn't that feel like a... [sighs] Okay. I know I've said a lot of inflammatory things, but when I think of, like, industrial big wig fat cats, right? In, like, the 1800's or even 17, like, I think of, like, that New York City guy telling, like, the Newsies, like, "Get outta here," and they've got cigars, right? That feels real. That feels right.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: This was still a very much by-hand industry at this point, and in 1883 cigars were being manufactured in 127 apartment houses all throughout New York.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: It was a full blown industry, employing 1962 families, which included 7924 individuals, many of whom were German immigrants.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Interesting factoid. And trade unions attempted to bring a trade statute into effect that would ban the home cigar rolling, but it was ruled unconstitutional.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: And so the industry relocated to Brooklyn and Long Island. Uh, but once it came down officially that it was unconstitutionally they went back to Manhattan. And in 1880's, New York City was the cigar making capital of the United States.

Travis: Okay! I wouldn't have expected that. I expected the consumption of it in New York to be high, but I did not think that that is where the manufacturing would be based.

Teresa: At that time, yes.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Um, it also shaped the culture, I'm sure that you could tell, in Florida, like, when you were there. Um, in 1869, Vicente Martinez Ybor established a cigar factory in Key West, and he had been very successful in Cuba at the same thing, but was forced to flee the country after authorities discovered he had connections with revolutionaries.

Travis: Hmm.

Teresa: So in 1885 he moved his operation to Tampa, which was then a pretty small town. And—

Travis: Did you know that it was named that from the tamping down of the tobacco?

Teresa: Yeah, that—

Travis: And I made that up.

Teresa: Oh.

Travis: That's not what that is.

Teresa: I was—

Travis: I just wanted to—I wanted to make it sound like it sounded like a thing, but that's not what it is.

Teresa: You didn't even let me finish. I said, "Yeah, that sounds like it was right."

Travis: But it wasn't.

Teresa: It wasn't.

Travis: I was lying.

Teresa: [wheezes]

Travis: It was a lie. I just wanted to seem like I knew something, and...

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: You said, like, the nicotine thing, named after a guy, and I wanted to have a thing that surprised you, but it was a lie. But it's okay, 'cause lying it totally cool!

Teresa: Oh boy. We are deep in it.

Travis: You know what else is totally cool? A thank you note.

Teresa: [laughs] Okay.

Travis: No, wait.

Teresa: What? I thought you were gonna lie to me again.

Travis: No, it's just a word for another—like, another Max Fun show... is what I meant. It's cool.

[theme music plays]

[music plays]

Justin: Hey, Sydnee. You're a physician, and the cohost of Sawbones: a marital tour of misguided medicine, right?

Sydnee: That's true, Justin.

Justin: Is it true that our medical history podcast is just as good as a visit to your primary care physician?

Sydnee: No, Justin. That is absolutely not true. However, our podcast is funny, and interesting, and a great way to learn about the medical misdeeds of the past, as well as some current not-so-legit healthcare fads.

Justin: So you're saying that by listening to our podcast, people will feel better.

Sydnee: Sure.

Justin: And isn't that the same reason that you go to the doctor?

Sydnee: Well, you could say that, but—

Justin: And our podcast is free?

Sydnee: Yes, it is free.

Justin: You heard it here first, folks. Sawbones: a marital tour of misguided medicine, right here on Maximum Fun: just as good as going to the doctor.

Sydnee: No, no, no. Still not just as good as going to the doctor, but pretty good.

Justin: It's up there.

[music and ad end]

[music plays]

Speaker 1: Hi, I'm Ketchup.

Speaker 2: And I'm Socks.

Speaker 1: And I'm Ball Bearings.

Speaker 2: And I'm Pigeons.

Speaker 1: And I'm Water Towers.

Speaker 2: And I'm Cardboard?

Speaker 1: Surprise! We're actually humans.

Speaker 2: Humans making a podcast about those kinds of topics!

Speaker 1: 'Cause those are real episode topics on the podcast Secretly Incredibly Fascinating. That's a podcast where we take ordinary-seeming things, like ketchup and socks and cardboard, and bring you the little-known history and science and stories that make those things secretly incredibly fascinating!

Speaker 2: Secretly Incredibly Fascinating!

Speaker 1: The title of the podcast! Hear the back catalog any time, and hear new amazing episodes every Monday at Maximumfun.org.

[music and ad end]

Travis: Okay. So, this guy.

Teresa: This guy.

Travis: He was making cigars in Tampa.

Teresa: Indeed. And his—at one point, his Tampa factory was the largest in the world, in 1929. Um, and they named a whole city about it, Ybor City.

Travis: Oh!

Teresa: Which earned the nickname of the cigar capital of the world, and at its peak, that's right were 150 cigar factories in Ybor City.

Travis: Wow! That is a lot! In one city?

Teresa: Yeah, in one city.

Travis: I wonder how that city smelled! 'Cause I want to think good? Like, intere—'cause tobacco, they put them notes in all kinds of, like, colognes and candles and stuff.

Teresa: Sure.

Travis: Or did it smell like burning. [wheezes]

Teresa: I mean, it didn't smell like anything for long, because depression and general hard—

Travis: Oh.

Teresa: The—The Depression.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: And the general hardship associated with that time in the 1930's, I mean, pretty much cleared out all of those factories.

Travis: You know, it's funny. Before you clarified with the definitive article of The Depression and just said depression, my brain did fill in, "Yeah, I bet being depressed would make people not want to buy cigars."

Teresa: [laughs] The Great Depression.

Travis: Yeah. But then again, maybe being depressed you're like, "You know what would help?"

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: "A medicinal prescription cigar from my cool doctor, Dr. Smokes."

Teresa: OMG. Alright. So, that was talking about how most cigars at the time were rolled by hand, right? Those outputs. Now... most cigars aren't rolled by hand. But premium hand-rolled cigars are still available, especially in South America and Cuba. And if it is hand-rolled, it will say on the box, *totalmente a mano*. Totally by hand.

Travis: Totally by hand. Totally by hand. I love that. Hey, this is just a reminder, by the way, 'cause you just reminded me with the word. If anybody says *mano a mano*, it doesn't mean, like, man to man.

Teresa: Hand to hand.

Travis: It means hand to hand. Just important—every time. But it's interesting, isn't it? Because there are things that become known, like, in general parlance to be, like, quality. This is a term for quality, right? You're like, hand-rolled. And it's like, I know that if somebody says that about a

thing, I am supposed to hear that as, "Higher quality." I have no idea if that's true or not, right?

Teresa: I mean I guess like all things I guess it depends whose the hands were, right?

Travis: Right.

Teresa: Like—

Travis: And also what your taste is. Did they do a good job or were they like, "Ah, I'm Butterfingers McGee hand-rollin'—whoa, no! Ah, my watch fell in. It's fine." Right? You don't know.

Teresa: I guess, I guess. Um, so the cigar has become and has been from the last 200 years a status symbol, right? Among powerful men. Things like—

Travis: It is not that the—your standard, when you're thinking about, like, a Cuban big old cigar, that's not a smoke of the people, right? That's not what you're thinking about.

Teresa: No, no. Uh, giants like General Ulysses S. Grant.

Travis: Heard of him.

Teresa: Sigmund Freud.

Travis: Oh yeah.

Teresa: King Edmund VII.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: They all have very powerful, like, allure in the cigar—

Travis: Well, Winston Churchill, right?

Teresa: Absolutely. That's true.

Travis: That guy would eat cigars left and—he said it gave him fuel. Um, he would eat a cigar every morning just to prove that he would.

Teresa: What?

Travis: That's not true. That's not true at all. I don't know if he ever ate a cigar. Though one time—so, I had a great-aunt—and this is true. And I know I've lied a lot. A great-aunt—

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: —um, on my mom's side. I believe it was great-aunt. But my dad talks about, like, when he was first meeting my mom's family and they're like, you know, 20's, young. And my mom, like, as they're walking out through the door is like, "By the way, my aunt eats cigars. Eats, like, tobacco. It's weird. Just don't talk about."

Teresa: Okay!

Travis: And it's like, okay! And then literally, like, there was a point where she was just sitting there—and I don't know if it was, like, a chewing tobacco thing, but she was using cigar tobacco to do it. She would, like, unroll the cigar and just, like, pop some in her mouth. And dad's like, "I was sitting there the whole time like, 'What is happening? What—oh, but don't say anything, don't say anything, it's fine'"

Teresa: [laughs] Excellent.

Travis: That one is true. That wasn't a lie.

Teresa: Okay. Alright. So, the general kind of feeling we get when we see someone with a cigar is that the person is rich or powerful or important.

Travis: And has time on their hands.

Teresa: Sure.

Travis: There's a luxuri—right? It's a luxur—when you see—think about if you see someone light up a cigar in a movie versus when somebody lights up a cigarette in a movie, right? You see someone light up a cigarette, especially nowadays with perception of it, the story that's told from lighting up a cigarette is almost always "They lead a stressful life. They're taking—" like if you watch an episode of *The Bear*, right? And they go out to have a cigarette, that is stressful. "I just need five seconds to stand out here and quietly, like, before I go back to my work."

But when you see someone in a movie or something light up a cigar, it's almost always celebratory. It's almost always like, "I'm a man who things happen for! I don't have to make them." Right? That kind of deal. It's become a different storytelling device.

Teresa: Speaking of one of those men... President John F. Kennedy in 1962—

Travis: [simultaneously] I think I've heard of that one. Yeah.

Teresa: —imposed an embargo on Cuba, which means that you halt any trade that the country would have with the United States. Right? However, before that embargo properly took hold, JFK ordered his press secretary to buy up every Cuban cigar he could find.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: By the time the trade embargo started, JFK had stashed around 1200 Cuban cigars.

Travis: You know what?

Teresa: For himself and his friends.

Travis: That was weekend. It was one smoke-filled weekend.

Teresa: Lies.

Travis: But—

Teresa: I don't like it when you tell lies on our program. Can I just—

Travis: Oh baby, have I got bad news for you.

Teresa: Can I just say that?

Travis: I'll try to be brutally honest from this point forward. But also we can acknowledge that whenever we talk about any kind of, like, prohibition, especially of, like, "fun," quote-unquote, substances, not really for the rich. Right?

Teresa: That is what happens.

Travis: Not really for the rich. It's not really a restriction for them.

Teresa: Unfortunately, this trade embargo, still in effect. So if you are going to enjoy a fine Cuban cigar, the government wants you to have to go to Cuba, or go to another country that trades with them. Under the Obama administration, it became legal for someone to travel to Cuba and bring back up to 100 Cuban cigars as long as they were for personal use and not resale, but in September of 2020 it became illegal again, with another caveat being that you couldn't bring Cuban cigars into the United States regardless of whether you got them in Cuba or not.

Travis: Okay. That's weird. I mean, like, I understand. Here's why it's weird.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: 'Cause it is such a famous example of, like, an embargo, and there's not a lot of other things I can point to, so much as it's like, Cuban cigars. Like, that's a reference, once again—

Teresa: Oh, definitely.

Travis: —that, like, in books, movies, TVs, like, pop culture reference that if someone's like, "Yeah, from Cuba." You're like, "Oh. That person." It tells a

story about that person, and it's like, they bend rules and they have connections and they're above the law. And it's weird that just the fact that, like, there's no other thing like that, right? Except for, like, yeah, that's a—a Cuban watch, right? There's no, "Oh, that's, uh, Cuban tires."

Teresa: I mean, technically anything from Cuba in the United States, you can't.

Travis: But this is what I'm saying, is—

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: —there's no other thing.

Teresa: Oh, right, yeah.

Travis: In this example. So much as it's just like, "Oh, you like this belt? It's a Cuban belt."

"What? Oh my god, this guy bends rules and he's above it. He will stop at nothing to get a belt back."

But, like, cigars are just such a famous example of a thing to reference.

Teresa: Yeah. So, I mean, you can buy a Cuban cigar in England, which is a country that trades with Cuba. Uh, but you have to smoke 'em there, in London. You can't take 'em home. They'll confiscate 'em on the plane.

Travis: Yeah, if you bring it back. It's like a dad who catches a kid smoking a cigarette and makes you smoke the whole pack before you can come inside. Teach you a lesson.

Teresa: Luckily, Cuba is not the only place that makes fantastic cigars, although less famously, right? Um, Honduras, Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic, Mexican cigars are also said to have a kind of peppery earthy flavor to them.

Travis: So this is like a champagne thing, right?

Teresa: Yeah. I mean—

Travis: This is like that—"Well, we call it champagne if it's from the Champagne region. [unintelligible]"

It's like, okay, cool. But that doesn't mean—like, it usually just means that if it's from the Champagne region it costs \$50 more than if it was from somewhere else, right? Like...

Teresa: Well, I mean... I suppose I understand what you're getting at.

Travis: I'm asking you a lot of questions about this, but you have, like, the devil's gasp, and you've never had a cigar in your entire life.

Teresa: [laughs] That's true.

Travis: Yeah. Or, as you would call it, asthma.

Teresa: Asthma.

Travis: My b—like, my Appalachian people don't believe all that fancy talk.

Teresa: [simultaneously] Your people call it the devil's gasp.

Travis: It's the devil's gasp, but I'm just saying. So you've never had a cigar in your life.

Teresa: No, I haven't. But, I mean, the fact is that in the same kind of area of the world, people also grow tobacco, and you can also roll cigars there, so the only place that we in the US are not allowed by the government to get them from is Cuba.

Travis: I guess it would also be weird. To... buy a cigar from Honduras that was called a Cuban cigar.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: That would be weird.

Teresa: That would be weird.

Travis: But they do do that with champagne! Okay, it's weird. 'Cause it's from—okay.

Teresa: [laughs] Back to champagne.

Travis: How about can we talk a little bit about, like, the etiquette of it, I guess? The process of it? Like, what do you got?

Teresa: Absolutely we can. Absolutely we can. So, let's do some dos and don'ts. Alright?

Travis: Okay. Don't smoke.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Also—

Travis: Unless you're like Will Smith and you just light it. Right? He makes a big deal about that in... Willennium, I think? That it's like, he holds the cigar for effect. Don't smoke it. I don't [unintelligible]—I just—anyways.

Teresa: Anyways.

Travis: It's a thing.

Teresa: There are lots of local cigar clubs and local shops. I can think of two that I have seen that I've driven past here in Cincinnati, and it's good to have someone to guide you, because there are a lot of cigars. Um, just like you might go to a whiskey tasting, people who know more about it will tell you about it. I wouldn't suggest doing a cigar tasting?

Travis: No.

Teresa: I don't think there is that. But—

Travis: Unless they make tiny, like, half-inch long, but still the same diameter, and they're just like, "Smoke it a little bit? Okay. Grea—ooh! Don't touch it! It's so hot!"

Teresa: Uh, here's a don't. Don't light up anywhere, because there's a great website called Cigar Advisor, and it's hilarious and informative, and that's where we got a lot of our information, because you may have gathered from this conversation that we don't smoke cigars.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Is it a celebration? A nice back porch with nature, or unwinding after a long day? Okay. Go ahead. If you can smoke there, smoke a cigar there. But they said, "Are you at a kid's birthday party? Stuck in an elevator, or sitting in church for your grandma's funeral? Put it away!" [laughs]

Travis: Yeah. Don't do that. Don't do this.

Teresa: It's a read the room situation, right?

Travis: Also, do we have to tell people about the cap and the cutting it?

Teresa: Yes, we do.

Travis: I ask that sincerely, 'cause once again, it's such a thing shown. It would blow my mind if there are people who are like, didn't know that you had to cut the end of a cigar, but—

Teresa: But you do.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: So you cut it, and it's a guillotine style cutter, like, a straight cutter, right?

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: Um, and, you know, you can find them wherever you find cigars. And you—

Travis: Don't bite it. That's a thing that sometimes they show in, like, cartoons—

Teresa: [simultaneously] Absolutely, don't bite it.

Travis: —or things. But man, if you've never done it before, and if you don't know, tobacco is very, like, uh, flaky and shre—like, it's shredded, right? And very dry, right? So if you end up doing that, it gets stuck in your teeth. It's gritty. It's not pleasant. It's not a thing. I have not done it, but I watched one of my friends drunkenly do it 'cause we didn't have a cutter, and it was gross, my dude.

Teresa: Um, so where you cut it is called the shoulder of the cigar, right? It's the cap where the head starts to, like, taper off, right? And don't cut it too deep or you'll get that loose tobacco in your mouth. Um, but if you prefer a tighter draw, it's called, you can use a punch cutter or a V-cutter, which will increase the intensity of the cigar. If you forget your cutter, don't be too proud to ask for help. I mean, I guess you could use a steak knife or scissors or something, but it's not gonna be as good, right? Think about it like opening a wine bottle without the corkscrew. You can do it, but it's not fun for everybody. [laughs quietly]

Travis: If that happens, by the way, best thing to do, just push the cork down in. You know? Push the cork all the way down in instead of digging it out or whatever. Better to have a whole cork in there than be filtering lots of chunks of cork through every pour.

Teresa: Isn't that what you've done before?

Travis: Yeah! I don't wanna talk about it! [laughs]

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: I tried to make a corkscrew out of a coat hanger wrapped around a pencil. It hypothetically worked in that I was eventually able to drink the wine. But it was, uh, more like I tortured the cork into submission than removed it.

Teresa: [laughs] I've seen those, uh, videos on the internet where you can hit—you use a shoe. You put the wine bottle in the shoe and you hit it against the ground until the cork pops up. I think that's also probably a great way to destroy a bottle of wine. [laughs]

Travis: Yeah, high risk. High risk solution there.

Teresa: I think that I have also seen where you, like, hammer a nail into the cork, and then you use the remover side?

Travis: See, that's what I'm saying is like, then the chances of just chunking up the cork or something—

Teresa: And if you have a hammer and a nail, why don't you have a corkscrew? Like...

Travis: That's a great point. That's a great point, babe.

Teresa: It is. Okay. Uh, it's recommended that you light your cigar with a match, or a cigar lighter, right? And what you do is you hold the cigar over the flame and rotate it gently to maintain a glowing ring around the tip. This is so that you don't overheat it, right? And you're also supposed to wait for a white drop of ash when you first light it, which is indicative of high quality tobacco. But you should not use the BIC lighters, right? The cigarette lighters. Um, because they can taint the end of the cigar and give an unpleasant aroma.

Travis: So when she says a cigar lighter, it's one of those that's like a torch that's like, fwoom, you know? Instead of that you just, like, strike the thing and do it. You want one of those that's like a blue flame, uh, tiny torch if you're gonna use that for it. Once again, can't stress this enough, I don't do it. I have friends who do it and I know that that sounds like I'm a 12-year-old lying to my parents, but it's not. I'm just too bored for cigars. [laughs]

Teresa: So, um, we mentioned earlier eating the cigar. Don't do that. Also—

Travis: Like chewing on it?

Teresa: —don't lick your cigar.

Travis: What?

Teresa: This is something that has been portrayed in movies and stuff. But it's a better idea, instead of, like, sticking your unlit cigar in your mouth like a lollipop, you can take a cold draw, which should give you a sense of some of the flavors, right?

Travis: Uh-huh.

Teresa: And, you know, there are a lot of flavors you can use. Like, when you are picking a cigar, there's a couple of things that people talk about as far as, like, is the wrapper silky? What does it smell like? Is it blemished at all? Like, and that will help you figure out what the quality of the cigar is, right?

Travis: Uh-huh.

Teresa: Um, also, it's recommended—a lot of cigars are really great pairings with whiskey and scotch and stuff. But you shouldn't dip it in the whiskey.

Travis: That's what I was actually just looking up, 'cause I've seen people do that before. And I wanted to th—yes.

Teresa: It's a great way to ruin both a cigar and a glass of whiskey.

Travis: Yeah. I just found a thing that says "Think of it like putting ketchup on an expensive steak." [pause] Of the dipping it in whiskey, yeah. So.

Teresa: Oh, okay. Well, but you can also ruin the ketchup that way, right?
[laughs]

Travis: Yeah, well in this thing, I think of the whiskey as the steak, so.

Teresa: I see. I see. Um, you can take a sip of your preferred spirit between puffs, right? And let the flavors kind of meld in your mouth, not in your cigar.

Um, you also need to use an ashtray, right? But don't grind out the cigar in the ashtray, because a cigar will emit a kind of smoldering and stale aroma if they get mashed or twisted in an ashtray. Um, and so basically when you're done with your cigar, place it delicately in the ashtray, and sit and wait until it goes out.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Most quality cigars are humidified, meaning that they'll burn out in a few minutes on their own. Um, and you know, make sure you sit there, because fire safety, right?

Travis: Yeah. I think that... I feel like this is one of those things—maybe I'm making this up. But, like, old timey ashtrays and stuff used to, like, close and, like, have room to put a cigar in and then close over. I bet that also helped it go out.

Teresa: I bet so. Yeah, kind of starve it.

Travis: But you mentioned humidi—uh, like, a humidor, right?

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: If you ever hear about this. So, it's to store cigars, simply put, to store cigars at a humidity where the cigar will not become damp or, like, mildew or anything like that, rot, but also not so dried out that it's, like, crumbling and unusable, right?

Teresa: Right.

Travis: It's just like a way—because they're not, like, shelf-stable. I mean, they're leaves, right? They're dried out leaves.

Teresa: Well, paper. Oh, oh.

Travis: Inside, I mean, tobacco, yes.

Teresa: Inside, the tobacco leaves, yes.

Travis: Um, and so that idea of like, just keeping 'em in just a box or whatever, they'll go bad. You know, think about leaving paper, as you said, like, in a... go find, like, papers you wrote in middle school now as an adult and you're like, "This is all, like, crunchy and weird." It's like that. So a humidor is just a box that stores them. Unless you are, like, a cigar person who, like, is storing cigars and, like, collecting cigars, you don't need a humidor. Like, you're not going through it that fa—like, if you're a person who has, like, two bottles of wine in your house, you don't need a wine cellar. It's that kind of thing, right?

Teresa: [laughs] Um, here's another do. Do be mindful of how a cigar affects you. Some people get what they call a cigar high, which is kind of like sleepy headed and, like, kind of a relaxed feeling. So if you know that's the way that you feel, and after you smoke a cigar you need a nap, you should plan for that. Right?

Travis: Yeah. And don't inhale, like, into your lungs. Uh, at least this is what people have told me before. Of like, you puff a cigar, you hold in your mouth, you let it out, but cigar smoke can be really, really brutal. Uh, and inhaling into your lungs can hurt and be bad. Not—as I've said before, holding it in your mouth is also bad. But from what I understand, you're not supposed to actually, like, inhale cigars.

Teresa: Not a lot. It could make you sick. Okay. Here is the thing I was talking about with you earlier. You can cut a cigar in half. Should you do that with, like, a very fancy Cuban cigar? No. Why would you do that? [wheezes] That sounds... ruined.

Travis: [crosstalk] I know—I'm almost certain you mean in half... long ways? No, crosswise.

Teresa: Crosswise.

Travis: Right across the middle. Not, like, cut it open down the middle. [laughs]

Teresa: Right.

Travis: Right? You're saying now you have two shorter—

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Which could be—like, so, could be a good way if you wanted to start smoking cigars but you didn't want to waste half a cigar, right? You could cut it in half. Um, and so you can ease into the habit a little more.

Travis: Or don't.

Teresa: Or don't.

Travis: Hey, you know what? One more time. If you don't already, don't smoke. And if you do smoke, do you need to? Okay! So, we have some announcements. Let's do the announcements real quick.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: If you're listening to this this weekend, right? So the 17th, 18th, 19th, whatever, or I guess it would be 20th, 21st, 22nd, 23rd? Anyways, me and the brothers and Dad are in San Diego with special—we're doing an Adventure Zone show on Friday with special guest Game Mom Brennan Lee Mulligan running the game, and then Saturday night we're doing a My Brother, My Brother, and Me. You can find out the details—I think the Adventure Zone show one is sold out. I think there's a handful of tickets for My Brother, My Brother, and Me maybe. But you can go to

bit.ly/mcelroytours, or you can go to mcelroy.family and click on I think it's Appearances or Events and find it out there.

Speaking of events upcoming, we're going to be in Seattle, Washington on August 31st and September 1st, and we're gonna be at New York Comic Con on October 12th and 13th. All those tickets one more time at bit.ly/mcelroytours.

What else do we always say? What am I forgetting?

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 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 to Alexx, our researcher and writer, without whom we could not make this show. Thank you also to Rachel, our editor, without whom we could not make the show, and thank you to you, without whom, why would we make the show?

Travis: You're much more pleasant than me. Alright, that's gonna do it for us, folks. Join us again next week.

Teresa: No RSVP required.

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

Teresa: Manners, Shmanners. Get it?

[theme music plays]

[chord]

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