

## Shmanners 377: Umbrellas

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[theme music plays]

**Travis:** Hello, internet! I'm your husband host, Travis—let me check my notes—McElroy.

**Teresa:** [laughs quietly] Okay. And I'm your wife host, Teresa McElroy.

**Travis:** Yeah, and you're listening to Shmanners!

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

**Travis:** For ordinary occasions! Zig, zag. What's that? I might even zog sometimes. You don't know where I'm going. Changing up the—it's not even nine AM yet.

**Teresa:** Oh man.

**Travis:** And, listen. Can I tell you, listeners? To kind of, uh, Uno Reverso for a moment, I'm also very excited, because this week started the new Great British Bake Off season.

**Teresa:** [gasps] Yeah.

**Travis:** We haven't gotten to watch it yet, but we're really pumped to start Bake On again. If you haven't listened to it, Bake On is our watch and discuss Great British Bake Off podcast. You can find it wherever podcasts are sold. [laughs quietly]

**Teresa:** Uh—

**Travis:** Well, and McElroy Family... McElroy Family website.

**Teresa:** Website.

**Travis:** I'm very excited, because this week we're covering my favorite kind of episode, where I love an accessory-based episode.

**Teresa:** You sure do.

**Travis:** Because the history of it is always so fascinating to me. And, this is also... so, anybody with children I think can tell you... that there are just things that I think children inherently are drawn to, right? Where it's just, "What is that thing? I love it."

Right? Like a fire truck. Right?

**Teresa:** Okay, okay.

**Travis:** I think all children are like, "How exciting." Right? "This is amazing." And as an adult you're like, "Oh no, a fire truck."

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Right? And for—this week we're talking about umbrellas. And for whatever—

**Teresa:** Wait a minute.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** We have to go over this.

**Travis:** Ugh. I say it wrong, I know. My emphasis is wrong.

**Teresa:** You say it... the way that you—that your culture, I believe, says it.

**Travis:** My culture?

**Teresa:** Appalachian culture.

**Travis:** Okay. [wheeze-laughs] White people? We don't have culture.

**Teresa:** [laughs] You say *um-brella*.

**Travis:** *Um-brella*.

**Teresa:** *Um-brella*.

**Travis:** *Um-brel-la. Um-brella.*

**Teresa:** I say *Um-brel-la*.

**Travis:** I know. Listen, I know I say it wrong. I don't even know if other Appalachian people say it that way. I don't know why. Anyways. Bebe and Dot are both so drawn to umbrellas, and I think all children, there's something about it where a child is like, "Let me hold that." Like, and it's this fun—

**Teresa:** They love to hold it. Bebe loves to throw them up in the air and watch as they float down.

**Travis:** [simultaneously] Yeah, like a Mary Tyler Moore kind of thing, yeah.

**Teresa:** They love to spin them on the ground. They love to, like... I've even seen them do, like, umbrella fights, like sword fights with umbrellas.

**Travis:** Well, and the thing is, too, if you're a parent—or any adult, I guess—and you're walking, and you're holding the umbrella at, like, a human height...

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Right? So that it's keeping rain off of both you and the child, and then the child's like, "Now give it to me."

**Teresa:** "I wanna hold it."

**Travis:** And you're like, "I know for a fact that I am about to get rained on so hard." And you just hand it to the child, and they always hold it, like, on their shoulder so they're getting rained on, you're getting rained on.

And then it's like, you buy an umbrella for the child, and you give them one.

**Teresa:** Yes, we've bought child-sized umbrellas.

**Travis:** And they still want yours. And everybody gets rained on, it's great, and wonderful. So let's talk about... and it's two different things!

**Teresa:** And if you have fancy children...

**Travis:** Like us. Children that long to be boujee.

**Teresa:** They love parasols.

**Travis:** Long to be, like, uh... like, uh, what's her name, Marie Antoinette, boujee.

**Teresa:** Bebe often puts a T at the end, and I don't know where that comes from.

**Travis:** Parasolt?

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** Well, you can't just have one salt.

**Teresa:** [laughs] Indeed. Alright. So... [clears throat]

**Travis:** We're talking about umbrellas and parasols, by the way.

**Teresa:** First...

**Travis:** Are we gonna start with the difference?

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Let us answer the burning question. Are umbrellas and parasols the same thing?

**Travis:** Can I guess?

**Teresa:** Sure.

**Travis:** I'm guessing no, 'cause I think umbrellas have a water resistant quality where parasols are more decorative?

**Teresa:** Yes and no. Yes and no.

**Travis:** Aww, man. So I'm right and wrong.

**Teresa:** Um, yes. They are built almost identically. Parasols, however, are a touch smaller. Um, because they are, as you insinuated, they are only really used for sun, right?

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Where it's, you know... you don't need to make quite the shade pool for, say, your feet, 'cause they're often covered in shoes.

**Travis:** Often.

**Teresa:** Often. Um, but with an umbrella they are typically larger and, yes, they can be—parasols are not often weatherproofed in the way of, like, moisture, but they can be.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Um...

**Travis:** So is this like one of those, like, all squares are rectangles but not all rectangles are squares kind of deal?

**Teresa:** Sure, yeah.

**Travis:** Where like, yeah a parasol is mostly an umbrella, but not all umbrellas are parasol...

**Teresa:** Yes. Yes.

**Travis:** Okay. So in all honesty, all seriousness.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** Tell me if I'm wrong. This feels very much like sort of a subjective distinction.

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Travis:** Right? Where if I saw a covering thing, a domed covering that unfolded up, right? And if it gets rained on, rain's gonna go right through it. Right? I'm like, "That's a parasol."

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Travis:** Right? And if I saw something that was like, definitely waterproof and covered a bigger area, I'm like, "Oh, that's an umbrella." It's like, well, it might be a parasol. I'm like, oh, it's not fancy at all. There's no fanciness to it, right? It's very utilitarian. That's an umbrella. But it doesn't seem like there are qualities that are like, if it's this... right?

It seems like if rain's gonna go right through it, it's definitely a parasol. But then the distinction between parasol and umbrella past that point, you gotta follow your heart.

**Teresa:** Sure. Um... are we saying that a parasol, like, inherently has holes in it? Because it can't have holes. It has to create shade.

**Travis:** No, I'm not saying it has holes in it. But, like, if I saw something that was, like, all made of, like, gauze and lace, right? And rain's hitting then it's, like, gonna be nothing, right? It's going right through it. That's definitely a parasol, right?

**Teresa:** Let me—let me think. Let's change the frame a little bit. Let's think more of socioeconomic status defining parasol versus umbrella.

**Travis:** So if a rich person's holding an umbrella it's a parasol? [wheezes]

**Teresa:** Historically, yes.

**Travis:** Okay! Well, there we go. Thanks, everybody!

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** That's gonna do it for us! Okay.

**Teresa:** Because the fancier your umbrella, the richer you are.

**Travis:** Now, try saying it my way though.

**Teresa:** The fancier your *um*-brella.

**Travis:** Right?

**Teresa:** *Um*-brella. [laughs quietly]

**Travis:** It's fun—you're bouncing—why are you bouncing your shoulders when you do it?

**Teresa:** 'Cause I'm making fun of you. Um—

**Travis:** Oh! Hey!

**Teresa:** [laughs] Sorry.

**Travis:** Thanks for just nailing that.

**Teresa:** [through laughter] Sorry.

**Travis:** No, hey, babe. Babe? I loved the honesty in that moment. It was like my question caught you off guard and the mask slipped and you were just like, "Oh, I'm making fun of you. What?! I mean, I love you!"

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Okay. So anyways, *um-brel-la*. We're talking about *um-brel-las*.

**Teresa:** [laughs] Okay, alright. Anyway.

**Travis:** Everyone at home right now is saying it out loud as in, like, "How do I say it? Am I saying like th—do I say it like this?"

**Teresa:** They definitely are.

**Travis:** Oh no.

**Teresa:** Alright. [clears throat] History. Let's talk about history. Okay, so when I think about a parasol, I think about a fancy British person, right? Or a refined young lady taking tea in her English Victorian garden.



**Travis:** Oh, absolutely. I'm picturing... oh, what's that, like, pointillism painting? You know, where it's all the people by the, like, riverbank having a picnic.

**Teresa:** Ohh.

**Travis:** And it's all the little dots that make it up. That kind of event.

**Teresa:** All I can think of is Sunday in the Park with George, but that's not the name of the painting.

**Travis:** All I can think of is *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* when they're, like, in the museum looking at it. But that kind of image, right? Of just like, "Yeah, we're out at a picnic. We've got this parasol," and maybe there's, like, bustles everywhere. A lot of taffeta and gauze.

**Teresa:** Well, like a lot of things, it didn't come from Europe at all.

**Travis:** It definitely came from China, right?

**Teresa:** Indeed.

**Travis:** Yeah!

**Teresa:** Umbrellas—

**Travis:** Boom! [imitates air horn]

**Teresa:** ... are believed to have first come from Ancient China. According to the legend, the inventor was a Chinese carpenter named Lu Ban, and was inspired to create the device after seeing children seeking shelter from rain using lotus leaves.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** The early prototypes would've been.

**Travis:** [crosstalk] cool—what a cool way to come up with an idea. I love with people mimic nature without destroying it.

**Teresa:** Early prototypes would've been made out of, like, bamboo sticks and animal skins and...

**Travis:** That's what I pictured. When I was picturing it I was picturing, like, bamboo strips, you know? [unintelligible]

**Teresa:** Sure.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Um, and so of course... like, you know, like anything awesome, it just spreads around the world, right? So probably traveled along the Silk Road.

**Travis:** Sure. Not the dark web one, right?

**Teresa:** No.

**Travis:** Like, the kind of more ancient historical thing.

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Travis:** Okay, great, got it.

**Teresa:** Yes. Uh, it traveled up to Japan and Korea, and then across to Europe and other parts of Asia, and all around. Right?

**Travis:** I would also be interested to look up—because—ugh, I hate that this is true, but another thing I associate umbrellas with is, like, tiki and, you know, like, thinking about, like, Pacific Islanders and that kind of thing. And I wonder if that has any basis in truth whatsoever. No?

**Teresa:** No.

**Travis:** I'm getting my head shaken. No? Okay, great.

**Teresa:** No.

**Travis:** Cool, cool, cool. Great.

**Teresa:** Tiki in general is an American, uh, invention.

**Travis:** Okay. That actually tracks. That tracks, yeah, completely.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** Yeah, okay. Mm-hmm.

**Teresa:** Um, okay. So, there's also artwork from Ancient Egypt, uh, to show that they were also big fans of the humble umbrella.

**Travis:** Now, see, that seems like that would be more... sun-based, right? Because there was a rainy season for sure, and there were times where, like, the Nile overflowed, but—

**Teresa:** It rained a lot more in Ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia and that area in that time period than it does now.

**Travis:** Yeah, but even then, right? It wasn't, like, raining every day.

**Teresa:** I mean, I'm not—I don't know that for sure, but I do know—

**Travis:** Well, let's get a time machine and find out!

**Teresa:** I do know that the Nile river basin of course was one of the most fertile areas, and I don't think that it could have supported the life that it supported if it only had a singular rainy season. I believe that it did rain more often.

**Travis:** Listen, we're not history scientists.

**Teresa:** Anyway. Um, so the earliest known Egyptian parasols date back to the fifth dynasty, which was around 2450 BCE.

**Travis:** Whoa! Wait. Whoa. Whoa.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** Like, 2400 years prior to year 1?

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** Wow!

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** Yeah, that's a lot farther back than I would've guessed.

**Teresa:** There are engravings of nobility traveling through the desert with ornate umbrellas shielding them from the sun. Um, and of course this was another way to demonstrate your wealth, your status.

There are paintings in Egyptian temples of parasols being held over figures of gods that are being carried in procession. Um, and so this was—it was a different kind of—they had different materials, so it was a different iteration. It was like palm leaves or colored feathers.

**Travis:** That's what I was gonna guess, yeah.

**Teresa:** On kind of, like, a long handle. So, less for shading oneself with a handle that is vertical and more for shading others, thinking more, like, diagonally held.

**Travis:** So when we picture, you know, like, the servant standing by, like, fanning people and stuff with them, there was also probably servants standing by, like, walking, you know, covering them.

**Teresa:** Exactly.

**Travis:** Right, okay.

**Teresa:** Exactly.

**Travis:** It's funny that they're so old and yet we've never seen, like, an Easter pageant with, like, Jesus and his, like, 12 disciples just strolling along with parasols. Come on, people! Someone have the courage...

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** ... to have Jesus and friends just twirling—

**Teresa:** Well—

**Travis:** —lacy parasols behind them.

**Teresa:** I believe that the whole deal was like they gave away all their possessions.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** So again, we're going back to socioeconomic status, where they probably discarded all of those sorts of things, accouterments.

**Travis:** But people were probably like, "Hey, I'm a big fan. Do you want my parasol?"

**Teresa:** Maybe.

**Travis:** I'm saying.

**Teresa:** So after trade routes became more established, the Egyptian parasol made its way to Greece and Italy, and the use of umbrellas flourished in the Mediterranean at this time, particularly in Rome, where parasols were used almost exclusively by women.

**Travis:** Hmm, interesting. I make that noise because normally when we learn about these things, like? There's always, like, a surprising twist of like, "Well, you think about this thing as being traditionally feminine, but actually—" like, we talked about that with makeup and, like, high heels and, you know, like, wristwatches used to be considered inherently feminine, and now they're, you know, seen as much more masculine.

And it's interesting to me that it's like, no, even back in, like, Ancient Rome, the idea of, like, a parasol and being, you know, protected from, like, sun and rain was like, "Ha ha, what a womanly desire."

**Teresa:** Um, I think again, yes it was definitely used almost exclusively by women, but wealthy women, right? So this wasn't just a gendered accessory. It was, again, socioeconomic.

**Travis:** Well, that's another thing we see a lot, isn't it? You know, when we talk about, like, finishing schools and stuff. This was not like, "Oh yeah, every single person was going to finishing school."

When we talk about, like, handkerchiefs and folding fans and everything, it's like, yeah, they were used exclusive by, like, this chunk of society to separate this chunk of society from the other chunks of society.

**Teresa:** Yes. That's it.

**Travis:** Speaking of separating things... let's take a break for our thank you note for our sponsor!

[theme music plays]

**Travis:** Hey, everybody out there. Listen. Gather round. Gather round. Come in here. Yeah, you too. Yeah, scoot in, scoot in, scoot in.

**Teresa:** No. The booth is too small.

**Travis:** Too close? Too close. Scoot back, scoot back, scoot back. I'll just project.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** I want to tell you about Zola. Yes, even you in the back. Zola. I want to tell you about Zola. From beautifully designed save-the-dates to invitations to a beautiful wedding website with a built-in registry, Zola's design sets the scene for the kind of wedding it's going to be.

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**Teresa:** But what if they did?

**Travis:** Oh...

**Teresa:** It would be so nice. [laughs]

**Travis:** Well, assuming that everybody—like, that you knew it was coming, I guess it would be nice. Not if you, like, woke up in some kind of, like, time twist movie, right? Where, like, "Well, this one decision you made back there, and now you're married!"

And you're like, "What?!"

**Teresa:** "What?!"

**Travis:** Um—[laughs] Anywho, it's about all the days along the way and Zola's here for all of them. And it's not just like, you know, the online stuff of, like, sending invitations and save-the-dates and stuff. They can also suggest venues and vendors to make the experience more memorable.

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**Teresa:** I think that—

**Travis:** Is it even a real marriage?

**Teresa:** Well, I mean...

**Travis:** I really expected you to answer—

**Teresa:** That was a decade—

**Travis:** —clearer. Okay.

**Teresa:** That was a decade ago. So I don't think that Zola existed. Or if they did, they didn't advertise on podcasts like this that I listen to.

**Travis:** Okay, then I guess we're still allowed to be married. But at that point we had to figure out everything. You know, we were like, "Oh, what are we not thinking of? What's a thing?" And we talked about it a bunch where we had this, like, big spiral bound notebook of, like, what are we forgetting? What's the stuff we're not thinking of? Asking our friends and family and people who had gotten married, like, what are the things we're not planning for?

Now imagine that was just all in one place, and not only could you see what you're not planning for, you could also then use that same place to do that planning. It's incredible.

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**Teresa:** [laughs] Is that it? Is that their tagline?



**Travis:** It is now!

**Teresa:** [laughs]

[music plays]

**Laurie:** Hiii! This is Laurie Kilmartin.

**Jackie:** And I'm Jackie Kashian. And we have a podcast called The Jackie and Laurie Show on Max Fun and it's very exciting, 'cause what do we talk about?

**Laurie:** Comedy!

**Jackie:** Stand-up comedy. We both do stand-up comedy, and have since the dawn of Christ.

**Laurie:** Well, Jackie—

**Jackie:** Is that offensive?

**Laurie:** It is offensive to me, because you've aged me.

**Jackie:** [laughs]

**Laurie:** We started in the late 80's and we're still here! You can't kill us!

**Jackie:** So go to the Jackie and Laurie Show on Max Fun and listen to that.

**Speaker 3:** The Jackie and Laurie Show. New episodes Monday, only on [Maximumfun.org](http://Maximumfun.org).

[music and ad end]

[Star Trek comm noise]

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[Star Trek comm noise]

[music and ad end]

**Travis:** When last we left our heroes, we were exploring umbrellas and parasols in Ancient Rome.

**Teresa:** Well, after Rome fell...

**Travis:** What?!

**Teresa:** Uh, yeah.

**Travis:** This is how you tell me?

**Teresa:** This is what happened.

**Travis:** Now, listen. Can we address something?

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Big discussion going around these days where people are like, "Yeah. Ask the men in your lives how often they think about Ancient Rome."

And I got blindsided by this question. I didn't see this coming. My friend Alex was like, "Travis, how often do you think about Ancient Rome?"

And I was like, "Uh, quite often."

She was like, "How often?"

I was like, "I don't know. Uh, probably once a day."

And I did not know that that was, uh, what she was looking for. And apparently, like, her husband was like, "Three times a day, three to four times a day."

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** And the thing is... you've just gotta remember, people, that especially, like, going through history classes and the way people refer to everything, so much of, like, comparisons in my life have been compared to Ancient Rome. Right? Where, like, we see it as this, like—they had all these things, right? Like—

**Teresa:** It also lasted a long time. The Roman Empire was very long lasting.

**Travis:** And we taught—like, we see it in all kinds of movies, right? It referenced so much. Ask me how often I think about pirates. I think about pirates, like, twice a day. Ask me how much I think about cowboys. At least twice a day. Right? Like, these things where it's just like, those are the touch points that I use to, like, understand these things as I was growing up.

Which is so much of why it's now, like, so difficult to untie the huge knot of, like, toxic masculinity, 'cause so much of these things are used as, like, "Hey. Let me teach you about a code of honor... by showing you cowboys! And pi—" right? It's all that. So it's—yeah. We think about Rome a lot. Too much.  
[wheezes]

Hey, fellas. Let's see if we can get it down to once a week.

**Teresa:** I saw a video about how the female touch point is the Victorian Era.

**Travis:** I think that's absolutely true. I saw another that was like, "How often do you think about that moment in the Pride and Prejudice movie when Darcy clenches his hand?"

**Teresa:** [gasps]

**Travis:** Yep, there you go. See? Yes. Listen, we're all there.

**Teresa:** A lot. [laughs] I think about it a lot.

**Travis:** We're all there. Right. Okay. I'm saying, there's other examples.

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Travis:** What do non-binary people think of? I don't know. But they don't think in computer code, 'cause that's binary.

**Teresa:** Wah wah.

**Travis:** Wah wah wah!

**Teresa:** Okay. So, um, the Mediterranean still very much into umbrellas. Um, and so... even as the Middle Ages cast its shadow across Europe, places like Italy were still using parasols. But they didn't become popular throughout the rest of Europe until about the 1500s, the early 1500s, and that is because of one person.

**Travis:** Napoleon.

**Teresa:** No.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** [laughs] Catherine de Medici.

**Travis:** Oh! Yeah, okay. Yeah, that'll happen.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm, mm-hmm, mm-hmm. Um, so... she is often billed as the Queen of France, but she, you know—

**Travis:** She was one of the Medicis.

**Teresa:** She was from the Medicis.

**Travis:** It was, like, this huge, uh... not even, like, royal fa—I mean, like... a huge family in, like, Italy and that area that, like, basically controlled everything.

**Teresa:** Yes. Um, and—

**Travis:** I learned about them from the Assassin's Creed games.

**Teresa:** Ohh. She was very complicated. Um, like you do.

**Travis:** Mm-hmm.

**Teresa:** But very fashionable, and people really wanted to be like her. Her extreme wealth and, um, the family was a well-known artistic patron, right? And so she brought lots of trends to France with her.

**Travis:** Also it's, like, a very powerful—I mean, it was very much like... influential family in, like, the pure meaning of the word, but also in the way that we think about influencers now, right? Where it was just like, everybody wanted to be like—it's like when you get into Marie Antoinette and, you know, your Louies the 'teenths.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** Right? Where everybody was like, "I would like to be like that, please. Please allow me to copy them, please."

**Teresa:** Uh, so she brought with her in her luggage when marrying Henry II of France in 1533, she brought in her luggage a dainty Italian-style parasol, which then spread to the rest of European royalty. Again, another way to delineate yourself from the plebs.

**Travis:** Yeah. We've talked about that with, like, the purple dye, right?

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

**Travis:** Where I think it was in Egypt but it was like, it was illegal for anybody that wasn't in the royal family to wear purple.

**Teresa:** Something like that, yeah. Um, so then fast forward to the mid-1700's. Umbrellas are manufactured on a commercial scale, right? They are sold to ladies of esteem. Again, something usually relegated to women of high status. But it was becoming more and more common for the use of umbrellas in the rainy climates of northern Europe. And it is actually credit to a singular man in London. Jona—

**Travis:** [simultaneously] Sherlock Holmes.

**Teresa:** No. [laughs]

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Jonas Hanway.

**Travis:** Okay?

**Teresa:** I mean, this might not be true. Okay? Lots of things on the internet are blown out of proportion.

**Travis:** What?!

**Teresa:** Um, but he—the claim to fame for this gentleman is that he was the first man in London to rock the umbrella.

**Travis:** Powerful if true.

**Teresa:** Indeed.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** So he first came across—

**Travis:** Where'd he get it?

**Teresa:** Persia.

**Travis:** Oh, okay.

**Teresa:** Yeah. Apparently he went on a business trip to Persia and saw that these parasols, that he knew already, right? Had actually been waterproofed to keep the rain out. He became a lifelong fan of the accessory.

And walking around London with an umbrella was extremely controversial at this point. People harassed him in the street, uh, calling him a Frenchie.

**Travis:** Oh no!

**Teresa:** Because, you know, when you're a Brit, the worst thing that people can call you is French. [laughs quietly]

**Travis:** Oh my god, yeah.

**Teresa:** Um, but apparently he was never deterred and continued using it for the rest of his life, regardless of ridicule. Now...

**Travis:** And now that umbrella sits in the museum.

**Teresa:** Here's the thing, right? You can look at this account and think about, I mean, the obvious homophobia, right?

**Travis:** Sure.

**Teresa:** That's inherent in this. Like, that he was a man using something that was generally relegated to women. He was being hurled insults at, things like that.

**Travis:** Yeah. I mean, it's definitely... uh, homophobia, misogyny.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** There's stuff there, yeah. A lot of internalized—

**Teresa:** And there definitely is. But there is something even stranger at play.

**Travis:** He was a vampire.

**Teresa:** A lot of people were nervous about the umbrella because they thought it would hurt the economy. Now, go with me here.

**Travis:** Okay. I'm with you.



**Teresa:** Go with me here.

**Travis:** Yeah, okay.

**Teresa:** If you are a person living in London in the 1700's, when it rained you either got wet, or you took a coach where you were going. So you got wet walking to where you needed to go, or you took a coach taxi.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Right? And it rained all of the time. So coachmen relied on people giving them fares when it was raining to keep them in business.

**Travis:** Interesting.

**Teresa:** So he proudly—Jonas proudly walked around, flaunting his umbrella in the rain, saying "Oh, no. I need not take a carriage, kind sir. I will not get wet with my umbrella."

**Travis:** Hmm.

**Teresa:** Yeah?

**Travis:** And that people were like, "You're a communist!" Or whatever they would've said at that point. Anti-capitalist.

**Teresa:** I guess. But, you know, this, quote, "portable roof," right? Um—

**Travis:** This bumbershoot.

**Teresa:** Yes. Made it more... made it more accessible for people to not spend their money on coaches. If you—you know, even if you were, let's say, poor, right? If you had an umbrella, that was a one-time investment that would help keep you dry every time it rained, instead of constantly either getting wet or splurging for a coach.

**Travis:** Especially if you had a big enough umbrella and it's like, "I can use this for, like, me and my family or, like, me and friends," right? And now it's like, now I don't have to get a coach big enough for, like, us and three other people, right? We'll just huddle under this umbrella while it's raining.

**Teresa:** Well, I mean, big enough. They were quite small in the day. I mean, these taxi coaches.

**Travis:** Oh, okay.

**Teresa:** Anyway. Who would have thought down the road, right? That this— it's almost an act of rebellion, right? Against—

**Travis:** If true.

**Teresa:** Against the capitalism of the coach industry?

**Travis:** I guess take that.

**Teresa:** Take that? So—

**Travis:** Get those horses outta here!

**Teresa:** Uh, he passed away, Hanway, Jonas Hanway, the umbrella man. Passed away in the late 1700's, but he had an impact, because the 1800's brought us an intense spike in umbrella innovation and popularity.

**Travis:** Okay. I love the idea of umbrella innovation. Like, I'm sitting there. The only innovation I can think is, now you pushed a button, it pops open on its own.

**Teresa:** That's when it happened.

**Travis:** Yeah, I knew it!

**Teresa:** In the 1800's. Um, also when people started moving to regular silk, waterproofing silk using wax and lacquer, which made it more portable, less heavy, right?

**Travis:** I bet it made it stinky though. Putting lacquer on there? Are you kidding me? Whew!

**Teresa:** I mean... maybe. Small price to pay. Historically there had been, like, wooden frames or kind of like baleen ribs and things, but this is in 1852, Samuel Fox invented the steel ribbed umbrella.

**Travis:** Ooh la la.

**Teresa:** Um, and—

**Travis:** About the same time, probably started using the... uh, spring steel for, like, hoop skirts and stuff, right?

**Teresa:** Certainly.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Certainly. Um, and by 1928 the foldable umbrella was invented. And to this day, umbrellas continue to be widely used all over the world. But there are so many enthusiasts, especially in the United States, for umbrella innovation.

**Travis:** Oh?

**Teresa:** That the US patent office is inundated with potential upgrades and designs. There are over 120,000 entries at the patent office with the word "umbrella" attached.

**Travis:** Oh boy!

**Teresa:** Redesigns that have things like sun trackers, or interchangeable tops, or umbrellas for dogs, right?

**Travis:** Well, yeah. Umbrella hats.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** Uh, umbrellas for kids. Umbrellas with solar panels built into them.

**Teresa:** Sure. You name it. [crosstalk]

**Travis:** Yeah. I'm trying to. Let me see if I can [crosstalk]—

**Teresa:** You're—come up with—

**Travis:** Umbrellas for shoes.

**Teresa:** Come up with six more.

**Travis:** Okay. Umbrellas for shoes. Umbrellas for your plants. Umbrella... umbrellas for your umbrellas. A bigger umbrella that goes over your umbrella so you can umbrella while you umbrella.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** I think that's six.

**Teresa:** Author Susan Orlean once wrote in a piece for the New Yorker that they are, quote, "So ordinary that everyone thinks about them, and because they're relatively simple, you don't need an advanced degree to imagine a way to redesign them, but it's difficult to come up with an umbrella idea that hasn't already been done."

Now, I have something that I actually texted Alexx about, because I was so stoked. Here's some umbrell-iquette.

**Travis:** Ahhh! I love it.

**Teresa:** Um, okay. So, Business Insider published a really great article with umbrella-isms to keep in mind.

**Travis:** Mm-hmm.

**Teresa:** First, choose an umbrella size that fits your frame. Too small an umbrella, not only is it not gonna work for you, you're gonna look a little silly, right? If it's too big, it's gonna seem a little obnoxious to everyone else while you're walking on the sidewalk, right? So choose something that is appropriate for your size.

Also, wait until you're outside on the sidewalk to open your umbrella.

**Travis:** Do you know why it's bad luck to open your umbrella indoors?

**Teresa:** Because you—

**Travis:** 'Cause you're gonna knock stuff over.

**Teresa:** You knock stuff over and poke people in the eye.

**Travis:** Yeah. That's where that came from.

**Teresa:** [laughs] Um, when approaching someone shorter than you, it is customary to raise your umbrella so they can pass, right? So if you're passing someone on the street, the taller person raises their umbrella, so you effectively kind of, like, go over top of the shorter umbrella. And if you are the same—roughly the same height, the person with the larger umbrella raises theirs so that you don't poke the other person.

**Travis:** Now, is there etiquette related to, like, when you walk up to, like, an intersection or something and you're standing there and you have an umbrella and the person next to you doesn't? Like, do you offer, or do you just, like, shift over so it's covering both people? You know what I mean?

**Teresa:** Um, I think it's never unkind to offer. You don't know, like, where they're going, so if you are standing, like, waiting for the light to turn so that

you can cross the street, I think that's a great idea, but don't, like, try and follow them. You know what I mean?

**Travis:** Hmm, yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Teresa:** Like, it's a momentary respite for them.

**Travis:** Yes.

**Teresa:** But I think that's enough.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** As soon as you enter a building, close your umbrella and put it in the nearest receptacle or plastic bag. A lot of places have little bags available.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Um, sometimes even there's, like, an umbrella holder at the door, right? That you can place your umbrella in, and come and pick up your umbrella later.

Um, because you should always take the one you brought, not the one you wish was yours.

**Travis:** It's bad etiquette to steal, yes.

**Teresa:** Indeed.

**Travis:** Let's establish that.

**Teresa:** This isn't like, leave an umbrella, take an umbrella. [laughs]

**Travis:** Yes, I agree.

**Teresa:** Like you do with pennies. When you are holding a dry umbrella, try not to stick it under your arm horizontally.

**Travis:** You're gonna poke somebody behind you.

**Teresa:** You are gonna poke somebody behind you.

**Travis:** Hook it over your arm like they would in, uh—in Kingsman.

**Teresa:** Indeed. And—

**Travis:** Unless it doesn't hook over your arm. But just hold—you get it.

**Teresa:** Hold it, but try not to use it—

**Travis:** Have a sheath like for a sword.

**Teresa:** [laughs] Try not to use it as a walking stick. Um, because one, you're gonna break your umbrella, and two, they're often made with, like, metal tips at the end, and you can scratch up people's floors that way.

**Travis:** Yeah. Why do you think they make 'em with a metal tip? That just seems to be calling for lightning, doesn't it?

**Teresa:** I don't know.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** I don't know. You would think you'd put, like, a rubber stopper on the top or something.

**Travis:** Yeah. Yeah. Protect you from lightning.

**Teresa:** I don't know. Um, and so you mentioned the, uh, superstition of opening an umbrella indoors. You are right. It probably is about knocking

things over and hurting people. But there are a couple of other superstitions I want to go over.

**Travis:** [crosstalk] Before you get into it, though, doesn't it feel exactly like when you have a kid and the kid wants to open the umbrella and you're like, "Don't open it indoors."

And they're like, "Why not?"

And you're like, "I don't wanna get into a whole explanation. It's bad luck! Because it's bad luck. Okay? 'Cause it's bad luck!"

**Teresa:** [laughs] I mean, it's like mirrors and salt.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** You just—they're—

**Travis:** Don't walk under a ladder. "Why not?"  
"It's bad luck. Don't worry about it."

**Teresa:** People might drop stuff on you.

**Travis:** Yeah, but that's too long to explain to, like, a six-year-old. Just say bad luck.

**Teresa:** [laughs] Um, okay. So... uh, perhaps there is a superstition further back. Um, especially with... there are some theories regarding Ancient Egypt. One was that if you opened an umbrella indoors you were angering the sun god Ra because the sun god felt like you were cheating him.

**Travis:** Once again, doesn't that feel like something you would say to a kid? Right? Like, "Hey, we don't want to anger the sun god Ra, okay? So take the umbrella outside... Imhotep," or whatever. I don't know any...

**Teresa:** [laughs]



**Travis:** I guess, like, a kid's name would be. But...

**Teresa:** Another goddess, Nut, was the goddess of the sky. Some believe that the early Egyptian parasols were crafted to mirror and honor how she protected the Earth. Therefore, the shade the devices created was considered sacred. So if someone of non-noble blood used one, the person supposedly became a walking beacon of bad vibes.

**Travis:** Hmm. That seems like a classist superstition.

**Teresa:** Indeed, indeed. But probably it's just awkward, right? If I picture, like, a Victorian parlor, right? There's knickknacks everywhere. People, like, shoved in tiny spaces when it's raining.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** I open the umbrella inside, I'm gonna knock something over, I'm gonna hurt somebody.

**Travis:** [simultaneously] Yeah, don't do it.

**Teresa:** Just don't do it.

**Travis:** Just do it outside. And get rained on for .3 seconds. You're gonna be okay.

**Teresa:** What if I'm made of sugar and I'll melt?

**Travis:** Okay, well, that's gonna do it for us. Thank you so much.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Thank you to our editor, Rachel, without whom we would not be able to make this show. Thank you to our researcher, Alexx. Without her we

would not be able to make this show. And thank you to you for listening. We don't want to make this show without you, so thank you for being—

**Teresa:** Please don't make us. [laughs]

**Travis:** Thank you so much for being here. Um, and we've got some live shows coming up in October. We're gonna be at Philadelphia I believe on the 11th, October 11th, doing My Brother, My Brother, and Me. Then we're gonna be at New York Comic Con doing My Brother, My Brother, and Me and The Adventure Zone.

Teresa is coming to New York Comic Con as well. I think we have, like, a signing and, uh, some other stuff. I don't know. It's all gonna be on our website, [mcelroy.family](http://mcelroy.family). Check the events page. You can find the calendars there, where we're gonna be, all that stuff, how to get tickets. Thank you so much.

What else, Teresa? 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. 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.

As always, we are taking topic submissions, questions, and idioms.

**Travis:** And if you have any etiquette TikToks you want us to respond to or any, like, short questions, we could maybe do that on, like, the McElroy Family TikTok page. I don't know.

**Teresa:** I don't know, maybe! Email those to [shmannerstcast@gmail.com](mailto:shmannerstcast@gmail.com), and make sure you say hi to Alex, 'cause she reads every 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:** Manners, Shmanners. Get it!

[theme music plays]

[chord]

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