

Shmanners 221: Courtly Love

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Teresa: Today we're talking about courtly love.

Travis: Wasn't she married to Kurt Cobain?

Teresa: [sighs] It's Shmanners.

[theme music plays]

Travis: Hello internet. I'm your husband host, Travis McElroy.

Teresa: And I'm your wife host, Teresa McElroy.

Travis: And you're listening to Shmanners.

Teresa: It's extraordinary etiquette...

Travis: ... for ordinary occasions. Hello, my dove.

Teresa: Hello, dear.

Travis: How be-est thou?

Teresa: ... uh...

Travis: How dost thou, mine fair flower amongst weeds?

Teresa: Uh...

Travis: Artst thou fine?

Teresa: Yep, I'm good.

Travis: Okay, great. Cool. Great.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Cool, cool. Just checking in. That's gonna do it for us, thank you for joining us. Join us again next week.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: [recites outro lines so quickly they become gibberish] So, this is Shmanners. It's week three of the MaxFunDrive.

Teresa: Yes, welcome to week three. Thank you for joining us thus far, thank you for everybody coming along with us on this journey.

Travis: Yeah. As we're recording this, we're at almost 22,000 new and upgrading and boosting members, which is really, um...

Teresa: It's touching, is what it is.

Travis: It's very touching, yes, that's the word I was looking for. It's very impactful on my heart.

Teresa: And we're so grateful for your support.

Travis: Yeah. You know, we went into this not knowing what the turnout was going to be like, because everything is so very uncertain, and you have opted to support us and the content we make in such a way that it just means a lot to us. And so, really quick plug here at the top.

If you are interested in what we are talking about, it is MaxFunDrive. It is a once-a-year opportunity for you to become a new or upgrading Max Fun member. When you do that, you'll receive rewards. You can go to MaximumFun.org/Join to see the different levels there and see if there's one that you're comfortable with, or maybe consider upgrading your membership to one you're comfortable with if you are already a member.

MaximumFun.org/Join. We'll tell you more about it in a little bit.

This week, we're talking about courtly love, and the joke at the beginning of the episode was something I'm going to be very careful about, because now that I've thought about it, the first time I said it out loud to Teresa and said like, "We're talking about courtly love," I was like "Oh, no." [laughs]

Teresa: "Oh no." [laughs]

Travis: It's going to be difficult for me to say this.

Teresa: Do please enunciate.

Travis: Yes. What... please give some brief context. What do we mean when we say courtly love?

Teresa: Refined love.

Travis: But this is like a specific time period, right?

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Yeah, okay.

Teresa: It is usually... so, probably originated around the 12th century, but goes all the way up to the 1500s, especially in England.

Travis: And remember, when we talk about centuries, it's not what it sounds like, right? So, when we say 12th century, that's actually the 1990s.

Teresa: What?

Travis: No, see, that's a joke.

Teresa: Oh. [laughs]

Travis: It's a joke, because the 12th century is the 1100s, but I wanted to,

like, subvert expectation, and so people thought I was going to say 1100s, but instead I said 1990s.

Teresa: Do you workshop these jokes before you bring them here?

Travis: No, clearly not.

Teresa: Oh, off the cuff.

Travis: Well, yes, clearly. That worked so poorly.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: You thought that I stood in front of a mirror, like, "The 1990s! The 1990s. The 19... 90s."

Teresa: I don't think it had anything to do with the delivery, darling.

Travis: Okay. You don't think that's why it wasn't funny?

Teresa: Nope.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: And thank you to our friend Gigi N., who emailed us this idea.

Travis: Oh, thank you so much. If you have an idea for a topic, you can email us, ShamannersCast@gmail.com. So, this is like Middle Ages? Medieval?

Teresa: Totally. Totally Middle Ages.

Travis: Is Middle Ages and medieval the same time? Same thing?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Medieval isn't... medieval isn't really a thing. I mean, I believe that medieval is an outdated expression.

Travis: It's relating to the Middle Ages.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Boom. Okay, it's an adjective. Rather than a time period.

Teresa: Yes, but the Middle Ages is a time period.

Travis: Okay, great. So, we're talking about courtly love from the 1200s—no, from the 1100s to the 1500s.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Okay. Now is this what I'm thinking of when I think of, like, a courtier? And like, somebody with—this is like a very structured process of, like, I do this, you do this, then I do this, then I do that, then I can propose...

Teresa: No.

Travis: Oh, okay.

Teresa: No. It probably originates in Aquitaine, France. And the idea was—

Travis: Oh, like Eleanor of Aquitaine.

Teresa: Exactly. We're gonna go into a little more depth about her. The idea was that a person of nobility, right, so someone who would be present in court, had the ability to experience chaste love with another member of the court.

Travis: Okay. Wait, what?

Teresa: What?

Travis: What?

Teresa: Here we go.

Travis: Wait, so this has nothing to do with, like, romance?

Teresa: I mean, it does. It does. There's several distinctions.

Travis: I have no idea what we're talking about!

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Sometimes—

Teresa: This is not what you thought it was, is it?

Travis: No! I mean, but sometimes when we go into a topic—listen. Sometimes we go in and I've done the prep for it, because it was like my idea or whatever. Sometimes we go into it, and Teresa's done the prep for it, but sometimes we go into it, and I realize about five minutes in that I have no idea what it is, anything about it. I have no idea what you're talking about.

Teresa: [laughs] Okay. Let's talk a little bit about Eleanor of Aquitaine.

Travis: Please.

Teresa: Born to the Duke of Aquitaine, William X, she was highly educated, beautiful, and the heiress to one of the largest plots of land in France. Hence, Aquitaine, France.

Travis: Got it. Uh huh, yes.

Teresa: So, obviously she was very sought after, and at 15 years old, she

was married to Louis VII of France, because his father told her that's how things are gonna work out. So, like, she was—

Travis: So, her dad was like—

Teresa: No, his dad.

Travis: His dad.

Teresa: His dad was like, "You are gonna marry that lady because I want her land."

Travis: Oh, okay. So, his dad, probably a king too...

Teresa: Yeah, duh.

Travis: Was like, "Okay, you two are gonna get married. I'm King, what's up? I want that little corner of heaven there, Aquitaine. That's mine now, because I'm King and you two are gonna get married."

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: "Bada bing, bada boom. I'm King."

Teresa: Exactly. And then, in her marriage, she could expect royal protection.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: And she—we should probably do an episode all of her own, but she was a pretty awesome lady. She was around for the Crusades.

Travis: I've heard of those, yes.

Travis: She got an annulment from her first husband, the King of France, and less than a month later, married the King of England.

Travis: Now, I bet an annulment against the King of France is not an easy thing to arrange. Like, "Hey, I'm gonna leave you and annul our marriage." It's like, "Uh, don't." And it's like, "Well, tough." Now, is she the Eleanor from Lion in Winter?

Teresa: She is!

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Which is a super cool play you should check out.

Travis: Some of you, some of our listeners may realize that about 90% of my history comes from plays. If it wasn't in a play, I probably—and you know what? I bet if I was living in, like, the 1600s and 1700s, I would be in good company.

Teresa: It's true.

Travis: I bet a lot of people learned their history from plays.

Teresa: Alright, so this is where courtly love originates. In Eleanor's court.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: And it was nicknamed "The Court of Love," because she and her daughter would host poets and performers and artists and all kinds of people to come and entertain everyone at court.

Travis: Now, is this—I feel like we have, before, touched on the idea of, like, romance, right? Is this that?

Teresa: Yes, a little bit.

Travis: The idea of it originating and, like, "Before this, there was no such thing as romantic love."

Teresa: Right. Right, right, right.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: So, this court was part artistic showcase, part dating school, and part etiquette class. Right? So, we were all jumbled in there together, but, uh... so, the purpose of courtly love was to experience love that you weren't expected to experience with your spouse.

Travis: Oh.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: So wait. This is about fulfillment and not about obligation?

Teresa: Yes, yes. So, there's a legend that Eleanor and her daughter ruled over the case of two knights who each desired the love of the same woman. One was noble and true, making the case that he was the only one among them worthy to have her, and the other was down on his luck and a little less than noble, but made the case that the love of the maiden would turn his luck around and inspire him to be a better man.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: Eleanor and her court thoughtfully ruled that the maiden should go with the nobler knight. Eleanor is rumored to have decreed that the maiden need not suffer through the process of making a louse into a better man.

Travis: Yeah. Yeah. Yes, agreed.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: No one needs a project. We're all busy enough, you know what I mean? If you wanna do a project, learn to bake. That's what I did. Take up Sudoku or whatever, you know what I mean?

Teresa: [laughs] Okay.

Travis: We're all working hard enough to fix ourselves, you don't gotta fix no man!

Teresa: So, this is probably a legend, and this goes back to the original purpose of, noun, courtly love, the court of love, where Eleanor would preside over kind of like—

Travis: Romantic things?

Teresa: Dear Abby situations.

Travis: Okay!

Teresa: Right?

Travis: Yes, yes, yes!

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Cut the love in half.

Teresa: [laughs] Indeed. So then, this concept is what turned into courtly love as we know it from, you know, legends and stories. So, in the Middle Ages, courtly love is all about romance, and the cheesier the romance is the better, right?

Travis: So, very presentational, very deep bowing and flowers—

Teresa: Favors and giggling and fan, you know, waving, and things like that.

Travis: Yes, very performative.

Teresa: Exactly. It's not really about sexual contact.

Travis: Okay. You know what this is? Hey folks, you know what this is in modern day? This is like work spouses. When someone says, like, "Yeah that's my work wife. My work husband." Very performative, no action required.

Teresa: Hmm. I can see that. So, then the two people were called lovers, although, again, it was not about physical intimacy. They would do things like gossip and tell secrets, they would giggle together, they could eat together, hold hands, things like that.

Travis: Work spouses.

Teresa: Yep, but engaging in a "spousal duty" would break etiquette. So you weren't allowed to do that.

Travis: No kissing.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: Now, do you think, and maybe you have research for this, but was this strictly the lovers, like, male-female partnerships? Or was there any indication of it being like, yeah, anybody.

Teresa: From what I can tell, it was mostly male-female, but there are examples of two males and a female, so making, like, a triangle, or two females and a male.

Travis: Okay. I ask because it sounds like this is more about, like, as you said, performative... though, I imagine even at this point it was not, like, performative romance between two guys would probably still be a problem for these very religious folks.

Teresa: I think probably.

Travis: But performative between two women... I don't know. As I said earlier, I have very little grasp on history.

Teresa: It always seems more acceptable, historically, that two women could be seen being, like, holding hands or giggling or, you know. It's more of a feminine historical trait.

Travis: Yes. Yes, thank you.

Teresa: Okay, so... [clears throat] It is said that it is impossible to experience courtly love with your spouse.

Travis: Now, why do you think that is?

Teresa: Well, we've talked about this, and you mentioned it at the beginning, that marriage was more of a business opportunity.

Travis: Uh-huh.

Teresa: Right? People who previously didn't know each other, didn't even care to really get to know each other, married for power and money and, you know, all that kinda stuff. And so—

Travis: And a lot of them probably didn't even live in the same place.

Teresa: A lot of times they didn't. I mean, the wealthier you were, the more acceptable it was to have several properties and, you know, never really see each other. So, the idea was, it was acceptable to have a lover in the courtly love sense, because your "spousal duties" were to procreate, and that was completely business. Strictly business. And then, all of the fun things that you get to do, the talking, the walking, you know, holding hands...

Travis: Having things in common.

Teresa: Having things in common, yeah, exactly, was something that you could do under the guise of courtly love.

Travis: Now, this is such an interesting concept to me, right? Because if

you think about it, there, in modern day pop culture, right, one of the most common things in like movie and TV shows is like, "I married this person, and I'm so unhappy, and I met this person and we have so much in common and now we have this, like, strife."

Or not even marriage, but just like partnership, right? Of like, "But this is the person I'm truly happy with, what am I going to do?" And it's interesting to me that there was a time where it was like, "Oh no, that's completely normal. Do not sweat it. It's totally cool that, like, you've fallen in love with this other person. No doin' it, but—"

Teresa: No hanky pankies are allowed.

Travis: "But other than that, it's fine that you don't like your married spouse. That's totally cool. Don't worry about it."

Teresa: So, a lot of these tropes that we think about belonging to the Middle Ages, things like giving a knight a favor, singing to someone in a courtyard or their balcony, any kind of chivalrous act during that time, all go back to courtly love.

Travis: Which I also now—okay. Another thing that I will say, to the credit of the, like, you can't experience Courtney Love—[laughs] *Courtly love*, with your spouse, right?

I think the other side of this, as we're discussing it, like I said, this sounds very performative to me, where I think being in an actual committed relationship with someone has to be deeper than just that performative thing of like, "Okay, cool, you brought me flowers but I asked you to do this thing 16 times yesterday and you still haven't done it," right, you know what I mean? Like, it feels to me like that performative is great, but you're not actually being a good partner.

It's like, I bet it was easier to be performatively romantic with people that, like, at any moment you could just walk away from, right? And like, it was all light and surface level and fun without ever having to like, well, we don't have to fight, because I'm not committed to you at all, I'm just like

whatever. Now I'm gonna be in Courtney Love with this person. And that time I did it on purpose.

Teresa: [laughs] I know you did. Well, so let's talk about some of these rules, then.

Travis: Well, you know what, we should. But first, let's talk a little bit more about MaxFunDrive. What do I get—now say, Teresa Murray, that I said I'm gonna be a five dollar a month member. I'm comfortable with that, I can afford it, and I love Max Fun shows and specifically Shmanners, I'm going to become a Max Fun member. What's in it for me for five dollars a month?

Teresa: For five dollars a month, you get access to over, what, 200 hours plus, 250 hours maybe...

Travis: Whoa!

Teresa: Of bonus content. Strictly for Max Fun members.

Travis: Wow.

Teresa: There are videos, there are podcasts, there are, what, live shows and things like that. It's all up there for you to enjoy, special, because you are a five dollar a month member.

Travis: And you're worth it. You're worth it, baby. Now, Teresa, say that I said five dollars, bonus content, that sounds great. But now I'm gonna be a \$10 a month member, and I still want that bonus content.

Teresa: Absolutely.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: You do still get that bonus content. But you also get the chance to pick your favorite pin from the enamel pin set that has one for each Max Fun show. And get this – because you're a \$10 a month member, not only can you pick one pin for free, you can buy as many other pins as you want.

Travis: Well, that's pretty great. Now, say I wanted to get a game night pack that included, let's say like, a Max Fun dice bag, and Max Fun dice, and maybe Max Fun cards. Is that something I would have to go to the store to buy or...

Teresa: No.

Travis: What?

Teresa: All you have to do is become a member at the \$20 a month level.

Travis: Now, do I still get the bonus content?

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Do I still get the pin?

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: [gasps]

Teresa: And you can purchase as many additional pins, still.

Travis: Now, Teresa, say that I have been a \$10 member for a while now, and over the past year, I have come to rely on Max Fun shows more and more for information, education, and entertainment. What do I do? You know, I wanna give more, I'm ready to give more and I'm able to give more. What do I do?

Teresa: Well, if you're not ready to go up to the \$20 a month level, you can go bonus! Pew, pew, pew!

Travis: I can boost it.

Teresa: Pew, pew, boost it.

Travis: Now, how does boosting it work?

Teresa: Well, boosting it allows you to go kind of like in between the levels.

Travis: Yeah, you can incrementally increase without having to go to the next level. It won't qualify you for the rewards, but you can give a little bit more to support the art and artists you love. But now, what if I am ready to move up to the next membership, can I do that too?

Teresa: Absolutely.

Travis: There we go. So, it is, if you're ready to do any of these things, MaximumFun.org/Join, or if you're already a member, MaximumFun.org/Manage. And listen, we understand. These are confusing times, uncertain times, financially and just like, you know, spiritually.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: And if you're not able to, we totally get it. But if you are able to and you are interested in doing these things, please go do it now. MaximumFun.org/Join or MaximumFun.org/Manage.

[theme music plays]

Travis: We wanna say thank you to Quip this week for sponsoring our episode. Listen, if we haven't told you already – Quip is great. You know, before Quip, I wasn't brushing my teeth right and I'm willing to admit it. I was one of the 75% of folks who use old, worn out bristles that are ineffective, and even more, I was one of those people who forgot to floss.

Teresa: Oh nooo!

Travis: I know. But with Quip, it's not only easy, it's fuuun! [laughs] I don't know why I said it like that, but I did.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Quip electric toothbrush has timed sonic vibrations with 30-second pulses to guide a dentist-recommended two minute routine. There's even a sized-down version designed for kids. You can pair it with Quips anti-cavity toothpaste in mint or watermelon, and you'll get the ingredients teeth actually need and none that you don't.

Plus, Quip brush heads, toothpaste and floss refills are automatically delivered on a dentist-recommended schedule every three months for just five dollars each. A friendly reminder when it's time to refresh and to stay committed to your oral health. And shipping is free.

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Teresa: [laughs] I like the little sky grab that you did.

Travis: Yay!

Teresa: Sky punch.

Travis: Nobody can hear it, but it's kind of like Never Ending Story, riding Falcor. It's like, "Yay!"

Teresa: "Yeah!"

Travis: Is it Falco? Doesn't matter.

Teresa: Whatever. [laughs] Shmanners is also sponsored in part this week by Betabrand. Okay. A lot of people are now working from home, right?

Travis: I am.

Teresa: They're used to going into an office, maybe you need an office mindset in order to do your work to the best of your ability.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: This is where Betabrand comes in.

Travis: Okay. They'll put on my pants?

Teresa: Uh, no...

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: But they do sell real dress pant yoga pants.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Okay, so they look professional and stylish, just like your favorite dress pants, but they're as comfortable as your favorite sweats.

Travis: So, they won't put my pants on for me, but they'll do the next best thing.

Teresa: The next best thing. The thing about Betabrand is, they combine customer experiences with their expertise to make work wear that is functional, comfortable, and as inspiring as your favorite workout gear.

Their customer favorite dress pant yoga pants are made of wrinkle-resistant stretch knit fabric, so these are perfect for working long days at the office, or working from home to get in that mental state that you need to be successful. There are lots of different colors and style to choose from. You got the boot cut, the straight leg, the skinny, the cropped, the eight-pocket. I mean, there's just a ton of different things. Something for everybody.

So right now, our listeners can get 25% off their first order when they go to Betabrand.com/Shmanners. Once again, listen to that great deal. 25% off your first order for a limited time at Betabrand.com/Shmanners. So, you can find out why people are buying five different pairs of these excellent pants. Go to Betabrand.com/Shmanners for your 25% off.

[theme music plays]

Travis: Okay, so. Tell me about these rules?

Teresa: So, Andres Cappalanus wrote The Art of Courtly Love sometime during the 12th century. Here's the deal though, right? He didn't say whether or not it was satirical or if it was real. Some of these, gosh, I hope that it's satire. So, here we go.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: This list is found in book two of the three-part series.

Travis: Okay. Book one is all setup, and book three is where the big space battle finally happens.

Teresa: [laughs] Yeah.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Mm-hmm, and, you know, book two is full of all the romance stuff.

Travis: It's all the romance stuff. You know, you gotta get that in there. Okay, so tell me about these possibly satirical rules.

Teresa: Here are some of them titled, "How Love May Be Retained." Here's one, "When made public, love rarely endures." So, love should be secret?

Travis: Mm, okay. I don't agree with that, obviously, but—

Teresa: This is the courtly love thing, right? It's more fun if it's a secret?

Travis: I don't see a certain level of—yeah, it's more fun. Once again, already, I'm seeing a pattern of fun. Fun, fun, fun. Light and frivolous, keep it light.

Teresa: "The easy attainment of love makes it of little value. Difficulty of attainment makes it prized."

Travis: Well, see, it might be satirical, but it also might be the rules for writing a romantic comedy in the '90s, right?

Teresa: [laughs] Yeah.

Travis: Secret and hard to get, okay.

Teresa: Mm-hmm. Listen to this one. "Real jealousy always increases the feeling of love."

Travis: This is what I'm saying. There are people today who think this is true. This is like, straight out of Cosmo 2006, you know what I mean?

Teresa: Mm-hmm. "A true lover considers nothing except what would please his beloved."

Travis: Okay. Hey, listen, thinking about others is great. But nothing but what would please—come on.

Teresa: "No one should be deprived of love without the very best of reasons."

Travis: Hmm. A good reason would probably be fine. It doesn't have to be the very best of reasons.

Teresa: And, "Every true lover turns pale in the presence of his beloved."

Travis: Man, no, not that.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: If anything, you would think flush, right? Blush. Turn pale is like, [gasps] "Oh no!" [laughs]

Teresa: [laughs] "I'm afraid. I'm a ghost."

Travis: "I'm terrified of my beloved!" Are you kidding me? Unless your beloved is some kind of soul-sucking banshee, I think blush would be a better way to go.

Teresa: Sure.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Unless it's a vampire. And then you don't wanna show the blush.

Travis: You don't wanna show that you have blood in your body.

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: You're trying to keep that on the—hold on, real quick, let me dial in to what my wife just said.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: You think a vampire would walk in the room and if you had looked pale enough they'd be like, [Dracula voice] "No, they don't have any blood! They're very empty!" [laughs]

Teresa: [laughs] No, but you might not be as attractive.

Travis: That's fair.

Teresa: I can see how a very red-faced person would look delicious to a vampire.

Travis: It's like they say, if you and another person are running away from a bear, you don't have to be faster than the bear, you just have to be faster than the other person. So, if you're trying to get away from a vampire, you

don't have to have no blood. You just have to look like you have less blood than the other person.

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: That old idiom.

Teresa: Okay, so at the end of his piece, Cappalanus advises men that they should never fall in love with women, because women are horrendously flawed.

Travis: Huh.

Teresa: But if they should happen to fall in love, then they can feel free to throw all the rules they just mentioned out the window. [laughs]

Travis: Okay, see, that's what makes it seem very satirical.

Teresa: Satirical. [laughs]

Travis: That is like, "But don't do it, but if you do it, just have fun out there, kids," you know what I mean? Well, but—okay. Maybe this is—maybe this is, we're talking two different things. Right? We're talking about your beloved and all these things, but then falling in love is different, right? Maybe what he's saying is, like, you can do all these performative things and its very, like—

Teresa: Fun.

Travis: Fun, and silly, right? But if you actually fall, if you catch feelings, well... you know, throw the rulebook out the window.

Teresa: Well, you know why? Because... everybody caught feelings. [laughs]

Travis: Oh yeah?

Teresa: So, the whole idea goes with the idea of chivalry, right?

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: It's this set of rules that aren't really real and nobody really follows.

Travis: So, was this all just like an excuse to have affairs?

Teresa: Kind of.

Travis: Was it all just like, "Oh no, no, no, terrible husband, I'm not cheating on you. This is just courtly love. They're just a work wife." [laughs]

Teresa: Yeah. So, the amount of which courtly love was actually experienced in the Middle Ages is hotly debated, because probably, these were just rules everybody said that they were going to follow, and then didn't.

Travis: Uh huh. 'Cause you know how people don't follow rules.

Teresa: Exactly. So, the thing about how, like... [sighs] Let's talk about another great example of courtly love in the way that it probably ended up.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Lancelot and Guinevere.

Travis: Ah, yes, yes, yes. Okay.

Teresa: Right. So, Lancelot was supposed to be Arthur's right-hand man and he was Guinevere's champion. So like, she would give him favors to go and do jousting or whatever.

Travis: You know, knight stuff.

Teresa: That stuff, while Arthur was busy with his king business, yeah?

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: Well, look what happened, they caught feelings.

Travis: They caught feelings.

Teresa: And this is a cautionary tale, because shortly after Guinevere and Lancelot described their feelings and acted on their feelings, King Arthur's court and, you know, everything, disintegrated.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: So, don't catch feelings, or everything bad will happen to you. This has a lot of levels of problems. Not just because the idea of courtly love is virtually impossible... this impossible, like chivalry, unattainable...

Travis: There's also a level of it where it's blaming the fall of the court on Guinevere.

Teresa: Exactly. So, women in this courtly love scenario are more, even just described as objects.

Travis: Yeah. This is also, by the way, this is just a side note, but I really did just think of it. Everybody, lay off Yoko Ono. You know what I mean? The Beatles had problems on their own, she didn't bring down The Beatles. [sighs] Okay.

Teresa: Oh, is this because of Guinevere?

Travis: Yeah, because of Guinevere. You don't wanna be like, you know, "Yoko Ono is like the Guinevere of The Beatles." Don't be like that.

Teresa: People are like that? Still?

Travis: Oh, for a long time. Oh, but get over it, folks. The Beatles had all their own problems. Yoko Ono just happened to be there.

Teresa: Anyway, okay.

Travis: I'm just saying that King Arthur is like, that King Arthur's court is like The Beatles.

Teresa: Is like The Beatles and Arthur is John. No, wait, Lancelot is John. But then who... who is Arthur?

Travis: Well, Yoko Ono was married to Paul McCartney and a lot of people don't know that. [laughs]

Teresa: That's not true. That's not true.

Travis: Married to Ringo?

Teresa: No.

Travis: Married to Pete Best?

Teresa: [laughs] Maybe? No, probably not.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Anyway... so, the idea of where we actually, one of the ways that we get our modern idea of chivalry is the idea of a knight showering a woman with affection while abstaining from any kind of sexual act, is kind of like, to a tee, chivalry plus courtly love equals the best thing there is.

Travis: Well, it just, it seems like a re-writing of history to make the past seem ideal.

Teresa: Mm.

Travis: A thing that we have done countless times, that people do when they mostly don't like the progress that's being made, because it conflicts with their privilege or with their understanding of things. So they say, "Things used to be better."

So this idea of chivalry and courtly love being about it used to, you know, "Romance used to be about the guy doing this and the girl doing this, and it was better, because look at this," right? And treating it like it was this ideal situation, rather than like, no, no, no, it was all a mess anyways, but this was a thing written about it more or less after the fact and made it up.

Teresa: And actually before the fact. There were ballads, and, you know, poems and songs propagated by troubadours and things like that, that you know, focused on this unattainable perfection of courtly love. And everybody wanted to participate, but you know, with participation, you got more than a participation ribbon, sometimes.

Travis: And folks, that repeats throughout history forever, right? 'Cause if you look at it, right, that was like the 19... let's say '40s, '50s, '30s, '40s, '50s of celebrity culture, of like, "Look at the rich and famous and how happy they are, don't you want to aspire to that? If you were rich and famous and beautiful, you would be happy, too."

And that wasn't what was going on. Everybody was like, you know, had stuff going on and were very unhappy. But making things ideal is more interesting to selling things to the public, whether it be troubadours performing songs or selling magazines or anything like that. And I don't know why I went off on this rant of a tangent, like, and we're doing it today, we're slapping it on the lunchbox.

Teresa: [laughs] Well, it continues this kind of propagation of these double standards. So, in this time of chivalry and courtly love, it seems to be over and over in the literature that it's all fun and games when a knight is doing it, and is like, having a courtly lover, and then going to a brothel, but then it brings the downfall of King Arthur's court when a woman does it.

Travis: Yeah. Like I said, it's the people who will buck against stuff when it affects their privilege or their understanding of how the world should work in a way that benefits them. And when it's like, "Oh no, no, no, but you see, the problem wasn't when he was doing it. It's when *she* was doing it. And let that be a lesson to you." Yeah.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Yeah, yeah.

Teresa: Okay. So, the more we learn about courtly love and admit that it was a weird time in history where marriage was different and the church didn't want people to engage in anything that wasn't savory, we have to... we have to kind of let go of it. In the same way that we let—

Travis: [sighs]

Teresa: [laughs] Let go of chivalry. There's some really sweet ideas regarding courtly love. You know, cheesy romance and, um...

Travis: That's about it.

Teresa: Playing things, like, playing a solo on a lyre, or, you know, flowers and candy and cards a lot of the things that we associate—

Travis: If that is the love language of the person, then sure. But I—listen. I love you very, very much. If I, in public, got down on one knee and started, like, singing a ballad to you, I don't know that that would be as good as, like, being a good listener and being there for you when you needed me.

So, I'm saying performative love only works—you know, it's like you think about marriage proposals, right? If your partner, potential spouse or whatever, wants that big, like, surprise, like fireworks—

Teresa: Jumbotron...

Travis: Great, perfect, awesome, do it. But if they don't, it will achieve the exact opposite effect. Like, you know?

Teresa: Yeah. Okay.

Travis: I used to think that performative romance was the only way to go, when I was like a young man. Y'know, 22. Of just like, these big professions of love, and like writing, you know, running through the rain to catch the person at the train station or whatever. And it's like, well sure. If the person wants that. But if they don't want that, now you're just wet.

Teresa: Well, this image is definitely reflected in our media, and then, the media influences our feelings and lives, but—

Travis: Listen, I've watched a lot of John Cusack movies, you know?

Teresa: It's starting to change. I would like to bring up Frozen 2.

Travis: "My love is not fragile."

Teresa: "My love is not fragile." "I'm here, what do you need?" those are both lines that Kristoff says to Anna, and it is a reflection of our moving away from the performative and into the sincere.

Travis: If you haven't seen Frozen 2, it's basically—there's a lot that goes on in there, but it goes through arcs, but Kristoff's arc is learning that he's not the most important thing in Anna's life, and that's okay.

Teresa: Yep.

Travis: And hey, good job, Frozen 2.

Teresa: [laughs] So here's what we need to do with the idea of courtly love. A lot like we did with chivalry, we need to just kind of like, refine it. Modernize it. And it can, you know, evolve into a template for modern relationships, instead of serving as the unhealthy model of fairytales.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: So, wouldn't you love to see two real people with flaws who use silly things to show and shower their love and affection for each other?

Travis: Sure, as long as—

Teresa: And it would deepen their love?

Travis: As long as it is what both partners wanted, or I would say, let me rephrase, what all partners involved wanted. And as long as then, there was, like, deeper levels to it where they were also, like, learning how to be good for each other and discussing real world topics, but they were still able—man, isn't that the thing? Like, hey, listen. I don't care how jaded you are, how sour you are, but when you see, like, some old folks being silly and romantic together... gets ya, right?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: It gets ya. It will always get ya, because it's like, hey. They're still there, they still care about each other. Yeah! And that's gonna be you and me, baby.

Teresa: I love those. It is.

Travis: It's gonna be you and me.

Teresa: So, when I get so old and blind I can't do my hair and makeup, you're gonna do it for me?

Travis: No, I was more talking about going dancing. I don't know how to do your hair. Maybe I'll have—I guess I have time to learn it by then.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Okay, cool, cool, cool. Alright, you know what? That's gonna do it for us. Thank you so much for joining us.

One last time, this is week three of MaxFunDrive. If you would like to become a member, if you would like to upgrade your membership, or if you would like to boost your membership, you can go to MaximumFun.org/Join, or you can go to MaximumFun.org/Manage.

And so, next week is going to be an Ask Shmanners. So, you can email us your question, ShmannersCast@gmail.com, with the subject line 'Ask Shmanners.' Or you can send questions via Twitter with the hash tag #AskShmanners.

So, these questions, they can be clarifications on things we've talked about before, or they can be very, very specific, like, "What do you think about this kind of thing? What should we do?" right? Where maybe we wouldn't do a whole episode on it, but it is actionable advice that you are looking for. And then we will do that next week.

And let's see, what else, Teresa?

Teresa: We always thank Brent "Brental Floss" Black for writing our theme music, which is available as a ringtone where those are found. Also, thank you to Kayla M. Wasil, who did our Twitter thumbnail art. Again, that's @ShmannersCast. Side note, if you join Max Fun as a member, if you tweet at us and let us know, we'll tweet you a thank you.

Travis: And our Twitter account, by the way, is @ShmannersCast, if I hadn't said it before.

Teresa: We've said it like four times.

Travis: Okay, yes.

Teresa: And then, also thank you to Bruja Betty Pin Up Photography for the

cover picture of our fan-run Facebook group, Shmanners Fanners, which you can join if you love to give and get excellent advice from other fans.

Travis: And of course, we also want to say thank you to Alex, our researcher, without whom we would not be able to make this show!

Teresa: Yes.

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]

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