

Shmanners 184: House Sitting

Published October 25th, 2019

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Travis: All my plants are dead! I thought you were going to watch my house while I was away!

Teresa: I watched it. It didn't do anything!

Travis: 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. Are you feeling better?

Travis: Uhhh, yes. I don't know how I sound.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: How do I sound? Do I sound a little stuffy?

Teresa: You do sound slightly stuffy, as I may sound slightly gravely, because—

Travis: I think you sound great.

Teresa: —[clears throat] well, the crud. The crud is happening in our home.

Travis: Think it's that seasonal crud.

Teresa: Yeah...

Travis: [sailor voice] The weather's changing. Ah, nor'easter's a-blowin'.

Teresa: What? [laughs]

Travis: [sailor voice] They're bringin' in all of the pollen. Ohh, the salty sea air.

Teresa: [through laughter] What?

Travis: [sailor voice] Here in Ohio. [normal voice] That's probably not it. But—

Teresa: I mean, barometric pressure can affect one's sinuses.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: And we did have a low pressure system come in.

Travis: So I blame nature! How could you do this to me?

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Hi. This is—this is an episode—uh, it was suggested, and I will find that in just a minute. But this is one of those of, like, I *knew* there'd be a lot of people interested in this one, and I was right! We got a *lot* of questions on this one. What was your—

Teresa: Also, there's a lot of talk about this topic in the Shmanners Fanners group. Um, there have been several questions posed of our loyal listeners, and I think that they are doing a great job offering shmannerly advice.

Travis: You know, this is—I'm gonna say, I'm a little embarrassed. I just searched the topic list, and this was suggested by Loretta, but also, Mike. Mike suggested it... let me check... over three years ago!

Teresa: Oh boy! [laughs]

Travis: Yeah. So, Mike, this one's for you.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: And—and Loretta. It's also for you. Now, what was your experience, like, researching for this one? 'Cause this is one of those of, like, I know that this

would be very actionable in terms of questions, but how do you research the history of house sitting?

Teresa: Well, I thought that I would be able to find some actionable tips and tricks and whatever from some of my etiquette books. I have several published from around the turn of the century, actually, and I also have—I have books dating up to the 1950s. And—

Travis: Yeah. She does her research, folks! Like, this is—Teresa takes this—this is serious business, so she found all the tips and tricks in those books, right?

Teresa: No.

Travis: Oh.

Teresa: Uh, so I turned to the internet, and when one searches "house sitting, a history," [laughs] online, what you really come across is how to become a house sitter. Like, how to make this a profitable thing for you, how to house sit abroad and stay somewhere for free, and, like, all this stuff.

Travis: Can I guess how you become a house sitter? You go to people's houses while they're away and you start watching them for them, and then when they come back you say "Hi, you don't know me—"

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: "—but I watched your house while you were away. Could you... pay me?"

Teresa: [laughs] No. No.

Travis: That's not how it works?

Teresa: But it has become a little bit of an internet phenomenon where there are several sites, some which are free, some which you pay a fee, where they pretty much facilitate the finding and the filling of houses.

So if you want to house sit, you can sign up on these sites, and they connect you with people who want their homes' sat. Some places they—again, they do it for monetary incentive, and some they don't.

Travis: That's so—it's interesting—not—the monetary incentive thing doesn't bother me, right? I would always pay someone to watch my house. But it feels like such a personal thing to me that I don't know that I would hire a stranger off the internet to do it.

Teresa: Well, but this is the thing, right? They facilitate background checks, and some of them, like, list references. Some of these people have been, you know—have long histories of doing this, but it still—there is a lot of trust involved, obviously.

Some of these sites—also, they have, uh, contracts, like, sample contracts that you can do. Um, and I—I don't know if, like you said, if I would ever be comfortable having someone stay in my home, but to come in and check on things, water plants, and leave? I mean, I'd be okay with that.

That said, when I was a dog walker in LA, I often went to go check on people's pets when they were away. Usually cats, because cats tend to do a little better, you know, by themselves than dogs.

Travis: Yeah, I can see where that would be different, 'cause—especially I think if everyone you knew, like, had day jobs, by which I mean literally worked, like, 9 to 5, so it'd be hard to find somebody who could go let your pets out, you know? Like, I could see that.

Teresa: So there definitely is a need, but as far as history, what we really need to talk about is the idea of servants.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: So this is—this is the thing, right? We don't think about this very much, but household work in general is kind of an unrelenting... chore.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: It's—it's ongoing, it's continuing, forever and ever.

Travis: You say you don't think about that much. I think a lot of people think about that.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: I think a lot of people think about that, and especially with the popularity of *Downton Abbey*, I think people have probably gotten very familiar with the idea of, like, "the household is a machine, and it's constantly going and constantly needs this kind of thing going."

Teresa: Right, and the burden throughout history, especially for domestic staff, has been on women. Um, whereas men often served in, like, higher capacity. Like, as we've talked about, butlers and valets and coachmen and things like that. But as f—

Travis: Where you were kind of at the ready. You weren't necessarily doing something every minute of the day, where if you think about, like, cooks and cleaners and stuff, those jobs were routinely reserved for women, and they were, like, round-the-clock working.

Teresa: And so all of this, before the invention—

Travis: See, I listen!

Teresa: —oh, great!

Travis: I pay attention! And I watch *Downton Abbey*.

Teresa: [laughs] I wanna go see that movie, by the way.

Travis: Okay. No spoilies.

Teresa: Alright.

Travis: People listening at home.

Teresa: [laughs] So, before the invention of washing machines and vacuums and... I don't know, like... like, drill brushes—

Travis: Every modern convenience, yeah.

Teresa: —every modern convenience there is.

Travis: Swiffers. Swiffer WetJet.

Teresa: Um, as late as the 1950s, with all of these being, uh, on-the-market, even American homes still had at least one servant.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Um, and... that might make you feel a little weird, and it did—it did make people feel weird at the time, too. In fact, in 1928, there was a National Council on Household Employment created, bringing together servants, efficiency experts, labor activists, and even Eleanor Roosevelt, to try and fix what was being called "the servant problem."

So here's the thing, right—

Travis: So wait, what was the problem?

Teresa: —well, the affluent people of America, mainly white people at the time, wanted cheap, reliable, enthusiastic domestic labor, right?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: But poor women, many of them Black, were like, "No."

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: The—

Travis: I'm willing to bet, just a shot in the dark, they didn't get paid enough?

Teresa: Probably not, yeah. Low pay, unlimited hours, and even the terms associated with domestic staff like "servant" and "maid" and things like that were, you know, demeaning.

Travis: Very stigmatized, very bad, yes.

Teresa: Exactly. So, it really didn't, like, do much, especially because the Council largely refused to acknowledge that race was probably a big part of this problem.

Travis: Yeah, 'cause here's the thing. As I'm thinking about it, in a utopian setting, right? I don't think that there's anything wrong with there being a—an industry of, like, housekeeping, right? 'cause you think about it like—I don't know, maybe you'd feel bad about this too, but, like, with all of the different meal

delivery services and meal prep services and everything, people are bringing you food so you don't have to, right? Because we get busy and we don't always have time to keep that up.

In a utopian society, I think maybe we'd feel the same way about cleaners? But I can see your point where, one, it's so stigmatized in such a way, because there's such a background in it in basically, you know, race and all of that. And also—

Teresa: Especially here in the US. *Especially* in the US.

Travis: —yes. And it has also come to be seen as a thing of, like, "Well, I spend money on this thing that I should be able to do myself," right? But I think if that's your set of skills, like—for example, I love doing laundry. I think I'm pretty good at it, right?

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Maybe, like—maybe in a different life, I'd be a professional laundry person.

Teresa: But in *these*—in *this* day and age, doing laundry is really the job of the machine, and you are just the filler and the emptier of the machine.

Travis: Yes. I guess what I should say is, "I like doing a thing where I only have to do basically five minutes out of every hour of work."

Teresa: Right, because the machine is doing it for you. Whereas before the invention of washing machines it, like, was an all-day chore. Constant work.

Alright. So, the Council was formed in 1928. What happens in just a few short years?

Travis: Is it... World War II?

Teresa: No.

Travis: No?

Teresa: No.

Travis: The Great Depression?

Teresa: Yes!

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: So the Great Depression was kind of a leveling ground for this idea.

Travis: Yes. Maybe that's—

Teresa: Of domestic service.

Travis: —that's probably where the "I'm paying for things that I could do myself" probably came from that, like, tightening. You know, any time America—or the world has had an economic downturn, there's probably, like, a "Where can I trim in the budget?" And probably cleaning is one of 'em.

Teresa: So this little issue occurred where people who could still afford to have domestic staff became way less willing to make concessions.

Travis: Ugh...

Teresa: Saying that they are doing people a favor by employing them.

Travis: Gross.

Teresa: Right? And some people even branded their job as an opportunity, because they offered free room and board for the domestic work.

Travis: Ugh, that's gross. That's opportunistic. That's gross.

Teresa: It really is! Um, but even during the Great Depression, when swathes of Americans were unemployed, these jobs still went unfilled. Nobody wanted to do it.

Travis: Huh.

Teresa: Um, and then when wages grew back up during World War II, women could find better pay in factories especially, so still, the rate of domestic service declined and declined and declined.

Travis: So how does this get us to house sitting?

Teresa: Okay. The reason that we get to house sitting is because at this point, when a household no longer has live-in staff, you begin to outsource this domestic work.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Right? Um, so in order to kind of, like, effectively sidestep labor laws, employers pay nannies and cleaners and gardeners separately, as mostly cash under the table. So they don't have full time help anymore, so everything gets parceled out individually.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Including... house sitting!

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Whereas you would normally have people who just live in your home and don't go on vacation when you go on vacation.

Travis: That's always the weirdest thing to me, by the way. I think they reference it several times in *Downton Abbey*, but it's a thing in a lot of, like, Victorian and late Victorian and Edwardian stuff of, like, "Well, that's our, like, summer house, and there's just people there all the time, taking care of it, except for the two months we need it, and then we just move everybody in, and it's ready to go."

Teresa: Right.

Travis: "And then we leave, and those people stay there for, like, 10 months out of the year when we're not there."

Teresa: Right, and they just continue the upkeep of the property and the house. And, like, I remember—there's a really great scene in the *Pride and Prejudice* with Keira Knightley when the Bingleys are closing up... Netherfield? Do any of those words make sense to you?

Travis: I mean, I'm just impressed you could pull them out of your brain! Good job!

Teresa: [laughs] And you can see the staff covering tables to keep the dust off of them, and closing off rooms, and boarding up windows and stuff to try and keep the home in good condition while they're away, and that's really what I think of. But those people that they employed at that house, they stay there, so no need to hire a house sitter, 'cause people are there anyway.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Alright. So that brings us up to modern times. We have machines that do more domestic work for us, people are no longer full time employees of households, so now we outsource this domestic work, including house sitting.

Travis: Okay. I would imagine that now—it's an interesting time to think about it, right? Because with so much... I can't think of a better word other than "surveillance" stuff, like home surveillance stuff you can have—

Teresa: Mm-hmm, nanny cams and such?

Travis: —yeah. I'm not as worried about making sure my house is safe. For us, it's about the pets. We have two dogs and a cat. We don't have any plants, because, see before, two dogs and a cat.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: A cat who just will destroy any plant. And we can't take our dogs and cats with us when we fly, and so it is—I imagine back in the day, you probably didn't worry about that as much 'cause you just took your dog and cat with you in your automocar or whatever.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: And yeah.

Teresa: Or you, um, had—like I said, you had live-in staff that would take care of your menagerie.

Travis: So, like I said, we have lots of questions to cover. But first, how about a thank you note for our sponsors?

[theme music plays]

Travis: *Shmanners* is sponsored in part this week by Quip! We love Quip here. We've talked about it so many, many times. We are a household who cares about dental health. Bebe just had her first dentist appointment not too long ago, and absolutely knocked it out of the park. I'm sure we've talked about this before.

Teresa: I think we have.

Travis: I'm just so proud. I—listen. For a long time, I didn't have great teeth. I didn't take care of them. But now I do, and I love my teeth so much, and part of that is Quip, 'cause Quip makes it easy to take care of your teeth, because it's got gentle, sensitive vibrations and a built-in timer that guide brushing for the dentist-recommended two minutes with 30-second pulses ensuring an even clean.

I promise you, folks, if you think you're brushing your teeth long enough and you don't have some kind of timer going, you are not!

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Usually about 30 seconds in I'm like, "That's—oh, wait. Nope. Okay. Oh, cool." And it automatically delivers new brush heads to you every three months for clean, new bristles right on schedule. And these thoughtful features make brushing something you actually want to do twice every day, or more. You know, sometimes I brush my teeth *three* times a day.

Teresa: Ooh!

Travis: Even four!

Teresa: Hoity-toity!

Travis: I know. And Quip starts at just \$25, and you'll get your first refill free at getquip.com/shmanners. It's a simple way to support our show and start brushing better, but you have to go to getquip.com/shmanners to get your first refill free. Go right now to getquip.com/shmanners.

Teresa: *Shmanners* is also brought to you in part this week by Native Deodorant! Native promises fewer, simpler ingredients, so that you know everything that's in the deodorant. They're aluminum-free, and it comes in a wide variety of lovely scents. At the moment, I am into the cucumber mint, because it is—uh, it's quite subtle, but also refreshing.

Travis: The way that you're talking about it is like you're talking about, like, the notes of a white wine.

Teresa: [laughs] Well, I mean, I—when you use something every day, you get used to it's smell. They also offer an unscented formula, and a baking soda-free formula, so for people with even more skin sensitivities, there's an option for them, too. And with free returns and exchanges in the USA, there's no risk to try out Native.

I have really enjoyed it. I do want to make sure that everyone understands that Native is a deodorant, not an antiperspirant. I do not sweat very much. I don't... do very much. [laughs]

Travis: Well, you're pregnant right now, so... you're not doing much for two.

Teresa: That's true. Um, so it works great for me, because what I need is a very subtle scent to—[through laughter] to make those around me feel pleasant about my presence.

Travis: Lovely.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: So, what do our listeners need to do?

Teresa: Well, for 20% off your first purchase, they can visit natedeodorant.com and use promo code "shmanners" during checkout. That's natedeodorant.com, promo code "shmanners."

[bluegrass music plays]

Tusk: Hello, my name is Tusk Henderson, and I am an outdoorsman.

Benjamin: Are you looking for a new comedy podcast? This month's episode of *Beef and Dairy Network Podcast* has, as its guest, the wonderful Nick Offerman, playing the part of Tusk Henderson, adventurer and outdoorsman.

Tusk: Think about fittin' yourself, a month's worth of provisions, and a half-ton cow into a kayak.

Benjamin: So, if you've never listened to the show before, this might be a good place to start.

Tusk: I string a bowstring between her horn tips, and I can fire a spear off the top of her head. And, uh, took in some very delicious cod.

Benjamin: So, if you're after a new comedy podcast, why not try *The Beef and Dairy Network* from Maximum Fun. Download it now!

Tusk: You flip a cow upside down, they make an excellent toboggan.

[dramatic music plays]

Justin: We're the hosts of *My Brother, My Brother, and Me*, and now, nearly 10 years into our podcast, the secret can be revealed. All the clues are in place, and the world's greatest treasure hunt can now begin.

Griffin: Embedded in each episode of *My Brother, My Brother, and Me* is a micro-clue that will lead you to 14 precious gemstones, all around this big, beautiful, blue world of ours.

Travis: So start combing through the episodes. Uh, let's say, starting at episode 101 on.

Griffin: Yeah, the early episodes are pretty problematic, so there's no clues [through laughter] in those episodes.

Travis: No. No, not at all.

Griffin: The better ones, the good ones? Clues, ahoy.

Justin: Listen to every episode repeatedly in sequence. Laugh if you must, but mainly get all the great clues. *My Brother, My Brother, and Me*: it's an advice show, kind of, but a treasure hunt, mainly. Anywhere you find podcasts or treasure maps. *My Brother, My Brother and Me*: the hunt is on!

Travis: Okay. Like I said, lot of questions. *Lot* of questions. This was probably the most common—sort of something like this, uh, question that we got. Kenziebone asked:

"When someone leaves perishable food in their fridge while gone that will go bad by the time they get back, is it up to you to eat it? *Should* you eat it, even if they didn't say anything about it?"

So we got a lot of questions that were like, "When someone says 'Help yourself,' can I use the ingredients in the kitchen to make meals? How much can I eat? What should I eat?" Any of that.

Teresa: Okay. Um, I think that this is about setting clear expectations before you leave—before the homeowners leave. But most of the time, people are able to be in touch by phone anyway, text and whatnot. So if you have a very specific question, like, "This prime rib in here, is it cool if I eat it?" Or "These strawberries are gonna go bad. May I eat them?" All that kind of stuff.

I think it's appropriate to definitely ask. But, like I said, setting clear expectations is important for everyone's comfort. If you are the homeowner and you have something that you don't want people to eat, I think that it's fine label it appropriately, also to mention it specifically. "Hey, the birthday cake in there? That's for when we get back. Please don't eat any."

Travis: Yeah. I think this is one of those cases, as Teresa said, of the expectations, and I think that goes both ways. Of, like, if the homeowner says "Help yourself," or if the homeowner says "Eat anything you want," I think you should take that at face value, right? That's what they said. And not think, "Oh, this is a trap!"

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Because, like, for example, as people who do travel a lot for, like, tours and stuff, I often feel bad that we get back and have to, like, throw away food that was just sat in the refrigerator. So if somebody's watching the house for us and we say, "Please—like, you know, we had a meal delivery service come the day that we were leaving, right? Feel free to make those meals. Feel free to eat them."

It makes me feel not so bad about that food going to waste, right? Especially if this is a case where it's like, you have a friend or family or somebody coming to watch that you know. And, like, you want them to feel comfortable in the house. That to me is, like, "Make yourself at home" kind of deal.

Teresa: Right. So, like, something that I would suggest is if you are going to, say, makes cookies or whatever from the things in their home... leave some for them. [laughs]

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Don't—don't, you know, bake a dozen cookies and eat all of them. Leave some for the homeowners when they get back, and then it feels a present. It feels like a gift.

Travis: And I would also say, like, if they're gone a long time, like, they're out of town for a month or something and you're staying there and you use up everything in their house, you can also, you know, maybe go shopping for them before they—or ask them, you know, ahead of time, like, "Would you like me to go shopping for you so that you have food here for you when you get back?" Right?

Teresa: Right. And I do think that if you use up all of something, like if you use up all the milk in the refrigerator and the milk wasn't, you know, spoiling or whatever—that's different—you use it all up, you drink it, you need to replace it, because that's something that people need. That's, like, a necessity people need every day, so if you got back and you found, "Oh, there's no milk in the refrigerator," that would be kind of a hassle.

Travis: Yeah. I think, especially if you're doing this a professional job and not just, like, a friends and family deal—so this is the opposite of what I said before—you're doing it as a job, treat it like a job, right? If you were working at an office job, you would ask where stuff was, you would ask how to do spreadsheets, you would ask when things were due, you would ask questions to be better at your job, right?

Teresa: Right.

Travis: So I think if you are doing this for a job, ask the homeowners, like, "Okay, what is okay to eat? Would you like me to replenish the things that I eat?" Like, ask que—don't be afraid to ask questions.

Teresa: Agreed.

Travis: This is from Meg.

"How much should I offer to pay a friend for watching my pets while I'm on vacation, and does that amount change based on how close the friendship—" [coughs] excuse me.

Teresa: Excuse you.

Travis: "—does that amount change based on how close the friendship is, how many cats there are, etc?"

Teresa: I think the amount changes on how much labor is expected. Um, are any of the cats ill? Are you going to be expected to administer medication, or—

Travis: Do you have to make their food special, or..

Teresa: —right. Is it just, like, a kibble thing? Or is it like—like you said, you need to make chicken soup or whatever for the cats.

Travis: Right. Are they emptying the litter boxes? Are they—whatever.

Teresa: And how much time are you expected to stay with the cats? Is it something where they just need you to check in on them, refill food and water, scoop litter box and go? Or you expected to stay several hours and play with the cats and cuddle and do all those kinds of things? I mean, that's what I would want to do, is play with the cats and cuddle. [laughs]

Um, so the amount of labor involved, I think, ups how much you would compensate someone.

Travis: I am going to make a bold and brassy hot take.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: And I don't normally do this on *Shmanners*. *Shmanners* isn't normally a place for hot takes. But I would say... you should pay friends and family the same amount you would pay a professional—like, a stranger off the internet to do it, because I think the added bonus of a friends and family hire is not that you get it for cheaper, it's that you get someone you know and trust and can depend on right out the gate, right? And I think that not paying them what they're worth is a good way to not have them available to you as much in the future.

Teresa: Also—

Travis: But now—

Teresa: —but friends and family are more likely to refuse payment as well. But I think it's the offer.

Travis: I think that that's different if the friends and family give *you* a discount and say, "Normally—" you know, if they would house sit—or they say, "Yeah, I'll do it for whatever." Offer an appropriate amount and let them talk you down, instead of just assuming you'll get them cheaper because they're your friend. That's a good way to lose that friend.

And, you know, you can compensate them in other ways by saying, like, "And I filled the refrigerator for you, go to town."

Teresa: Or, "Feel free to use my hot tub."

Travis: Right. Or, you know, "Go to town—use our laundry. I know that your apartment has paid laundry, use ours for free."

Like, that kind of thing. But I think monetarily you should offer the same amount that you would if you were hiring someone.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Um, this is from @ironissac. I don't think I said that correctly, but that's alright.

"How much time is appropriate to be in their house after you've finished watering the plants and bringing in the mail? Should I just leave after I finish doing my job?"

Teresa: Um, I think again this is, like, an expectations thing. But I think that if you are just gonna, like, go home and watch TV, you might be able to do it there. If you're not expected to spend the night—like, when we have someone house sit, we expect them to stay overnight.

Travis: 'Cause of the puppies.

Teresa: 'Cause of the puppies. Um, but if you are not expected to stay overnight, I think that you could stay there for as long as it takes to have a glass of water, watch maybe a TV program... upwards to an hour or so.

Travis: Because I think that there is an argument to be made of if you're just watering plants and bringing the mail, what does it matter how long you stay there? But, especially if it's, like, a house—I think having the lights on, having somebody in there, having people see someone going in and out like that would matter to me as a homeowner.

Teresa: Yeah, the presence of someone else.

Travis: Like, "There could be someone in there and you don't know, so please don't break into my house!" Right? Like that, I think, is important. But, I also will say, I've done this for people, let their dogs in and out and, you know, checked on their house or whatever. And it can be uncomfortable, you know? Like, you don't feel like you can settle in, 'cause you're sitting on someone else's couch, watching someone else's TV, drinking out of someone else's glasses.

So I would say, like, as Teresa said, say "Do you want me to stick around after I've done it?"

And if they're like, "Nope! Just bring in the mail and water the plants." Then take off when you're done.

Teresa: When I was doing checking in on cats and dogs professionally, like I've mentioned now a couple times... that was a self-eye roll. I eye rolled at myself.

Travis: Why? You did it and you were good at it.

Teresa: Um, I was *required*, from the second that I stepped in the door to the second that I locked the door again, I had to stay 30 minutes, no matter if it was just a cat that I had to, like, feed and scoop for, or if I was supposed to go out in the backyard and play fetch with dogs.

So I had to stay 30 minutes, and sometimes I would just have to sit on the couch and play Candy Crush on my phone, because I was expected to stay 30 minutes, and that's where clear expectations, I think, come in handy.

Travis: Indeed. This is from @dearjudence.

"I'm I'm staying the night and there is no guest room and no prior instructions on where to sleep, should I sleep in a bed, or on a couch?"

And I assume here, since you're saying there's no guest room, a bed would be someone's bed, right?

Teresa: Right. Um, I'm gonna put myself in this situation, and I would sleep on a couch. Um, because, you know... you may not know this person's habits. If I wanted somewhere, you know, cleaner to stay, I'd put down fresh sheets on the couch and use a blanket there.

Also, bedrooms are highly personal spaces, so it might feel a little more invasive to sleep in somebody else's bed, so I would feel better sleeping on the couch.

Travis: I think I would feel better sleeping on the couch as well, especially, as you've said here, if there was no prior communication about it, 'cause I think if you asked after the fact, even if they weren't okay with it, they would say it was okay to sleep in their bed, right? Like, because if someone asked me as I was, like, heading out a vacation, like, "Should I sleep on the couch or in your bed?" I think I would say, like, "Oh, of course the bed!" Even though, like, it might be weird, you know?

Teresa: But I would wanna have changed the sheets—

Travis: Right, yes, that's what I'm saying.

Teresa: —and made sure that there were no, like, dirty dishes, or dirty underwear on the floor, and the bathroom next to it was clean, and... I would want to set that out as a homeowner and make sure that I was making someone comfortable in my bedroom.

Travis: Yes. If there's no guestroom, I think I would just always opt to sleep on the couch.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Um, this is from Sammy.

"If the homeowners give you access to their streaming service, is it appropriate to watch your shows on their profile, potentially messing up their algorithm, or should you create a temporary profile, and delete before they get home?"

Teresa: I would do the second one, create a temporary profile. And a lot of these streaming services have guest profiles available, and that's what we've done, is we've created guest profiles so that when we have house sitters, they can watch whatever they want, and not worry about messing things up or—I don't know. I never go in there and look at what people have been watching. I don't care. Uh, so—

Travis: I just don't want people to finish a show *I* was watching you know?

Teresa: [laughs] That's what *you* worry about.

Travis: That's the only thing *I'm* worried about.

Teresa: [laughs] You don't want 'em to skip ahead on your eps.

Travis: No, I don't want to start an episode and be like, "Wait, *what* ha—what is going—" No. That's mine.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Uh, this question is from, uh, @mammoryfoam. [quietly] Good.

"Is it considered rude to tidy a friend's home while house/pet sitting?"

Teresa: I think that there's a limit. Rearranging things is different from tidying. Picking up, you know, any mess you have made... say you, I don't know—you missed the trash can several times and you've got dirty tissues on the carpet. Pick those up.

Travis: Right.

Teresa: For real. Um, or if you spill, or a plant topples over, or an animal makes a mess, please do clean those up. Uh, but as far as, like, tidying, I don't think that there should be much more than what you would expect from, like, a cleaning service, where you're—the piles are left alone. If it can be picked up easily, it's dusted underneath, and then it's put back in the same spot, if that's something that you wanna do for them.

Travis: If it's something you wanna do. I don't think its expected, is what I was gonna say.

Teresa: Right, absolutely.

Travis: Like, I would say that if you want to tidy up, the area that would be the most, like, "Yes," like, no one would be upset, is the kitchen.

Teresa: Certainly.

Travis: Right? Like if you ran the dishwasher—as long as you know what you're doing, 'cause there are some dishes that can't go in there!

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: There's pots and pans that can't go in there!

Teresa: Well, wash the dishes as well, that would be easy.

Travis: Right, wash the dishes, right? Because I think that there's plenty of, like, Venn diagram crossover of, like, "I used dishes, and there were dishes that needed washed, so I just washed both of them at the same time."

Teresa: Absolutely.

Travis: I think that makes sense.

Teresa: Clearing off surfaces from crumbs, maybe sweeping up those crumbs again, that kind of stuff.

Travis: Right. But if I came home and someone had, like, made our bed and cleaned our bathroom, I would be like, "Oh, you *did* not have to do that."

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: And not in, like, a nice way, but just like, "Tha—okay? Um... cool." Like, I think that—

Teresa: There's that personal line.

Travis: Right. This is from Nicole, and following the same vein:

"What is the cleaning protocol? If I make dirty dishes, should I clean them all? Do I vacuum the carpet I walked on? How should I leave it?"

Teresa: Um, well, I believe in the Girl Scout code where you should leave it slightly tidier than you left it—than you—sorry, you should leave it tidier than you *found* it.

Travis: Right.

Teresa: So, like I said, any spills or messes that you make, please clean up. As far as, like, vacuuming carpet that you walked on, I would say, like, that specific instance—if you, like, dragged dirt in, sure. But would I expect someone staying in my home to vacuum all the floors? no.

Travis: Yeah. Um, and I also I think this comes down to... I would never expect that from friends and family. I think that it is a question of, like, if it is a service like a website or something where that is offered, right? Then that seems like a completely different situation altogether.

Teresa: Again, it's the setting of expectations.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: I think that is just so important, and the more of these questions that come up, the more you'll have for the next time you do it, and next time and the next time.

Travis: So, we have a couple more questions that I definitely wanna get to before we wrap up.

Teresa: Okay, okay.

Travis: Caden asks:

"What's the etiquette on friend over when you are house sitting? Don't do it? Ask permission from the owners first?"

Teresa: Ask permission, and I think that you are able to ask for *one* friend to come over.

Travis: Right.

Teresa: Uh, no parties, please! Unless the homeowner is like, "Hey, I bought all these bottles of wine! Please have a party!" [laughs]

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Uh, one friend coming over is not a big deal. That's company. That's just, like—

Travis: But I think especially if you're talking about, like, a partner or a significant other who might stay the night with you, that is definitely something that you need to ask before the owner even leaves, right?

Teresa: Sure.

Travis: Like, is it okay if my boyfriend comes over?

Teresa: It never hurts to ask.

Travis: Right. And I think that—I think getting the verbiage is very important. Of, like, uh, "Would you be comfortable with..." right? Rather than, "Is it okay if..." right?

Teresa: Okay, I can see that.

Travis: Because I think "Is it okay if..." the, like, knee jerk reaction is—

Teresa: "Well, of course!"

Travis: "Yeah, yeah, that's fine." Right? "Would you be comfortable" makes it like, "I understand that you would not be comfortable, so I accept—"

Teresa: You *might* not be comfortable.

Travis: "—I accept that no is an answer here," right?

Teresa: Okay. I can dig it.

Travis: Yes. I think it makes it—they're able to say, like, "I'm not comfortable with that," rather than, "I don't trust your boyfriend."

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Um, this is from, uh... let's see. This is from Bobby.

"Are you allowed to touch the thermostat, temperature within reason? I spent a miserable week house/dog sitting because I was constantly cold. Do I have to bring my own space heaters?"

Teresa: Oh boy. Um... it's true that a lot of people set the thermostat either, you know, lower or higher, energy save-y, business stuff while they leave, and even some thermostats are programmable for, like, while you're gone at work, to lower or raise the temperature.

Um, I—[sighs] I would hate for anyone staying in my home to be perpetually uncomfortable.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: Um, once you have found that maybe the homeowners like their home a little cooler or a little warmer, you can dress appropriately, but if someone had to wear, like, mittens and a hat and a scarf in my home—

Travis: I'd feel terrible.

Teresa: —I would feel terrible! So I would really—I think that the best thing to do is to reach out to the homeowners and say, "It's been really cold this week. The thermostat is set at 55. Can I please move it up to 60?"

Travis: Right.

Teresa: You know?

Travis: I think in general we're finding a pattern here of "Ask," right?

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Unless it's a situation in which—like when we go on the JoCo Cruise for example, we don't have a lot of service out there on the sea, so I think... [sighs] I would—being us, I would always skew towards "Do what you need to do to be comfortable, and we'll figure it out later." So at that point I think best judgment comes down, but if you can reach the people, asking is the way to go.

One last question, and this is from Jenna.

"Is it okay to use their shower?"

Teresa: I would say yes, it is okay to use their shower.

Travis: I would say if they expect you to spend the night there and it's gonna be a couple days, it's... yes. Like, you're staying in their home. I think it is a lot to ask to expect you to leave, go back to your place, shower, and come back there. I think that—I would say, going against all the advice we've given up to this point, that is such a specific thing that if they have not said, "You're not allowed to use the shower," then I would just assume—you're staying—that, like—that's like saying "Can I use the bathroom?"

Teresa: Right!

Travis: Like, "Can I use the sink?"

Teresa: "The toilet?"

Travis: Right.

Teresa: Um, I would say that if you are staying for a few days to bring your own toiletries.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: Um, because you wouldn't want to use up something that was, you know, super expensive or specific or anything like that. But, I mean... in our bathroom, I put out toiletries for people who stay. We have a lot of those little, like, hotel business.

Travis: Yeah! We steal all those.

Teresa: [through laughter] So... so I leave those out for people. Um, and sometimes they get used and sometimes they don't, but, like, a dollar bottle of Suave is not gonna set anybody back too much.

Travis: Alright folks, that's gonna do it for us. Thank you so much for joining us. I just wanna say, these last four episodes I've been really, really proud of. The

charcuterie, the cheese board, and now house sitting. I feel like we're taking on some pretty heavy topics.

Teresa: [laughs quietly]

Travis: And if you enjoyed these, I think it matters that you go out and you tell people. You say, like, "Hey. I know—I heard you, Doug, talkin' about charcuterie the other day. Here's your one stop shop to find out everything to know about it."

"Hey, you're goin' on vacation, right? So you're probably worried about house sitting? You should check out this episode."

Teresa: You could also go to iTunes and rate, review, and subscribe!

Travis: It really helps.

Teresa: That would also help us out and, you know, let other people in on some of your favorite stuff that we do.

Travis: And every time an episode goes up, we put up a link with a little sound clip on it, a little video clip—well, I mean, it's a video clip of our sound.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Uh, but if you would share that or retweet it, that would be great.

Teresa: If you wanna tweet at us, we are @shmannerscast. Thank you very much to Kayla M. Wasil for that little thumbnail art.

Travis: And of course, special thank you to our research assistant Alex, without whom we would not be able to do this show, so thank you, Alex!

Teresa: Um, and if you wanna submit a topic, you can email us at shmannerscast@gmail.com.

Travis: Thanks again, by the way, Loretta and Mike, for suggesting this topic! And so—yeah, if you have topics mail them to us, shmannerscast@gmail.com. Uh, thank you Maximum Fun, our podcast home, where you can go find a bunch of other podcasts. You're gonna like 'em all. I guarantee, 100% rate.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: What else?

Teresa: You can also go to mcelroy.family, that's where we post all of our upcoming tours. That's where you can get links to all the McElroy shows. That's where you can find McElroy merch, and there's new stuff going up all the time.

Also, please go on Facebook and join our Shmanners Fanners group. This was a hot topic in our fan-run Facebook group, and I hope that those fanners got their questions addressed.

Thank you to Bruja Betty Pinup Photography for that beautiful cover—what do they call it? Cover banner? Cover... art?

Travis: Banner? *Shmanners* Banner Fanner art?

Teresa: [through laughter] Yes.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Uh, and also, thank you to Brent "brentalfloss" Black for our theme music? Yeah? Have you said that yet?

Teresa: Yeah! I haven't said that one yet, you're right.

Travis: Yes!

Teresa: Which is available as a ringtone where those are found.

Travis: Uh, 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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