

## Shmanners 238: Black Friday

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**Travis:** [Southern accent] I don't know if we'll make it back in one piece.

**Teresa:** What, are we going into battle?

**Travis:** Worse. We're goin' shoppin'.

**Teresa:** 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:** I just wanted to say, hello, babe.

**Teresa:** Hey babe.

**Travis:** Hey babe!

**Teresa:** [chuckles]

**Travis:** How are you, babe?!

**Teresa:** You know, I'm alright. Holdin' up okay.

**Travis:** I'm... great.

**Teresa:** Oh, good!

**Travis:** Yeah, we're not traveling for Thanksgiving, we're not getting together with friends, I'm still going to cook too much food.

**Teresa:** Way too much food. What else is new for you? We have—

**Travis:** I know, what day is it? Every day? [laughs]

**Teresa:** [laughs] We have leftovers for days.

**Travis:** That's true. But I also—you—you have to admit, I am very good at using all of our leftovers.

**Teresa:** It's true, it's true.

**Travis:** It's a specialty of mine of combining—whether it's, like, turkey soup or, like, deep fried leftover balls, which, folks, just use mashed potatoes as a binder and, like, chop everything up real small, and just mix it all in there, buds. Trust me, it's great. And then, you know—

**Teresa:** It's so good.

**Travis:** —deep fry it.

**Teresa:** Yes. [laughs] Duh.

**Travis:** That also helps. And, of course, there's turkey sandwich, but you know what? We're not talking about Thanksgiving.

**Teresa:** We're talking about the day after Thanksgiving.

**Travis:** Oh, Boise, Idaho. I'll tell you, folks. I think one of the reasons I love Thanks—there are two reasons I love Thanksgiving so much. Um, and one is that growing up, my mom is a very consummate host, um, which is where I got a lot of my, like—I love hosting parties, I love—I just love having people at our house.

**Teresa:** I feel like you've said in the past that your mother and various others set up a dessert... table?

**Travis:** Correct, yes, this is correct.

**Teresa:** Growing up, we had maybe one or two desserts.

**Travis:** Oh boy.

**Teresa:** I can't believe—I—I am agog and aghast, every time you talk about the dessert table.

**Travis:** I remember very specifically there being, like—okay, at bare minimum, right? Uh, like, a cookie table—er, not a cookie table but, like, cookies, and a pumpkin roll, which I make and is one of my favorite things, uh, and, like, pumpkin pie, pecan pie, some kind of—like, chess bars was a regular thing.

**Teresa:** Oh yeah, the sugar bars. [laughs quietly]

**Travis:** Yes. And then, uh, you know, other little—little things, right? Maybe, like, a candy dish, right?

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Travis:** So it wasn't like it was bonkers, but it was, like—it was, like, the next meal after was dessert.

**Teresa:** Hmm.

**Travis:** Right? Where it's like you would eat the dinner at, like, you know, 4 o' clock or whatever, and then at, like, 6:30 it was like, "And now... round two!"

**Teresa:** It's time for dessert!

**Travis:** Right.

**Teresa:** I see.

**Travis:** Um, and also, you know, there was a—there was a small window of time for about three years where, like, I wanna say, like, five different family offshoots of my dad's family tree all lived within, like, a 20 mile radius of each other.

**Teresa:** Ohh.

**Travis:** And so we would get together at my Aunt Brenda's and, like, all the kids would play in the basement while the parents, like, prepared everything upstairs. And it was, like, a big thing. You know, watching football and, like, big table of food, and probably 15, 16 people there.

**Teresa:** Wow!

**Travis:** Um, and now we normally would do, like, a friend Thanksgiving here where it was like us and, what, five other kind of family couples kind of deal, and other people in the area. Uh, now of course we're just doing family Thanksgiving, just immediate this year. But anyways, that's not important. That's one reason.

The other more pertinent reason that I love Thanksgiving is I worked retail—

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** —for four, maybe five Black Fridays in a row, and detested so very much, I dreaded it. When the—the—so, I graduated college in 2006, in the spring of 2006. And in the fall of 2006, I got a job at Best Buy, like, three weeks before Black Friday.

**Teresa:** That is rough.

**Travis:** Yeah, it was holiday hiring, so I got the job. And then I ended up working at Best Buy for three years. Um, and so my first Black Friday, I was in the—what used to be the media area. Uh, they've since restructured, but [holding back laughter] it's when we sold CD's?

**Teresa:** Oh boy! [laughs]

**Travis:** It was, like, one—like, half of the job was CD's, half of it was video games. And so, like, that was my first Black Friday. My second Black Friday, I was on the, like... uh, I'm trying to think of the best way to describe it, but, like, the customer service, ringing people out and, like, handling returns and stuff like that, and at that point I was, like, an assistant supervisor.

**Teresa:** And then you were—weren't you, like, security, or... ?

**Travis:** Well—so, yeah, I did that too, loss prevention.

**Teresa:** Loss prevention.

**Travis:** Maybe that was my second one? And then my third one was that, and then my fourth one was, uh—was working the warehouse, and then I also, after that, worked a Black Friday at the Lands' End department in a Staples.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** So... and for those of you who have never experienced one in person—

**Teresa:** I've never worked retail before, so—

**Travis:** Yes, I know. I know this.

**Teresa:** —so I remember, I had to life—

**Travis:** Not a lot of Black Friday specials at the lifeguard stand?

**Teresa:** No, but I did remember having to work all day Christmas Day once.

**Travis:** As a lifeguard?

**Teresa:** 'Cause the pool was still open.

**Travis:** Okay. I guess it was indoor, huh?

**Teresa:** Yep.

**Travis:** Yep. Oh, right? You worked at the Jewish Community Center! Probably not closed on Christmas. [laughs]

**Teresa:** Nope!

**Travis:** That just clicked! Okay, great. Huh.

**Teresa:** Not closed on Christmas.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Open regular hours at the Jewish Community Center.

**Travis:** Makes a lot of sense. Okay. Um, so, here's the thing. Here's how Black Friday works, for the uninitiated. At least, here's how it was when I worked at Best Buy, which I think is a pretty good cross section.

**Teresa:** Yeah, certainly. I mean, Best Buy is one of the big box stores that people talk about, like, people lining up and camping all night, or, like, getting there when it's still dark and, like, all that stuff.

**Travis:** More than that, I remember one year, I don't know what the deals were, but people started lining up Wednesday morning?

**Teresa:** Whoa.

**Travis:** Um, and so by the time I got there Friday morning—and I always, uh, worked the—like, the morning, the early morning shift on Black Friday—my bosses really liked having me around, and I did a good job, which sometimes was great, but not when it was like, "Well, of course we want Travis on the team!"

**Teresa:** Of course!

**Travis:** Oh no! So I would get there at, like, 5 AM on Thanksgiving morning, which is one of the reasons I dreaded it, 'cause that usually meant, like, on Thanksgiving I wasn't drinking, and I was going to bed at, like, 8 PM, right? 'Cause I—

**Teresa:** Oh, you mean the—on Black Friday morning.

**Travis:** On Black Friday I had to be there 5 AM, so I'm going to bed at 8.

**Teresa:** Right, right, right.

**Travis:** You know, so I could get a good night's sleep. Uh, and I get there, people had been, you know, waiting all night, sometimes longer, they're cold, they're cranky—

**Teresa:** Oh yeah.

**Travis:** —uh, so a big part of my job the first year was I was, uh, on line duty with me and another guy named Jeff, where basically our job was to keep everyone's spirits up till we opened? So we're just, like, on megaphones like, "Are you ready for some great deals?!"

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** [laughs] Which was... [stammers]—and so then, what we did is we would hand out, like, tickets where it'd be, like, "Here's a TV for 150 dollars or whatever."

Um, and at this point, this was still, like, we still sold some CRT, like, tube TV's.

**Teresa:** Oh, wow!

**Travis:** Right? And so, like, this was when, like, LED and plasma and, like, all these things were new. I say LED—LCD. Ugh. Past Travis would be so disappointed in me.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** And so, like—

**Teresa:** And I'm just nodding along like I know what that means!

**Travis:** And so imagine this, folks. Imagine you have waited, uhh... I don't know. You've waited 36 hours, right? Hoping to get this TV. And there's, like, 25 tickets for it, and you're the 26th person in line who wants of those tickets.

**Teresa:** [groans]

**Travis:** Right? So what would happen was then that person would sit there and wait and hope that somebody didn't claim one, or took a ticket and didn't buy it or whatever, or that they'd get in and there would be some other deal. And then it was just pandemonium. Like, we had, like, tape out lines and, like, tell people where to go, and when I worked loss prevention, part of my job was not stopping people from stealing, it was keeping people from getting hurt.

**Teresa:** Right. And that's what makes the news every year.

**Travis:** Yes.

**Teresa:** Here in the US. Is, like, a Walmart opens and three people get trampled or whatever, right? Um—

**Travis:** I will—one last thing I want to say, just to paint a different light in this, because I think when people talk about Black Friday, um, there's a lot of, like, people who want to judge people for, like, "Why would you wait in line like that?"

**Teresa:** Just because I don't wanna do it doesn't mean there aren't people out there who don't wanna do it.

**Travis:** Well, what I'm saying is—the thing—and people are like, you know, sometimes it gets hectic and people get hurt and everything. I talked to many, many people over the years on Black Friday where the gifts that their kids wanted for Christmas, the only way they could afford it was the deals that were being offered on Black Friday, so—

**Teresa:** Exactly.

**Travis:** So it became a—a thing about, like, wanting to be able to provide those things for their family, and not just, like, "Ooh, a great deal!"

**Teresa:** Exactly. Like, I've never been in the position where I have needed a Black Friday sale to purchase, what—what I envisioned as a Christmas gift for my family, or even what I needed the rest of the year. There are lots of people who shop Black Friday to get the deals for things that they need, not just for gifts.

**Travis:** Right.

**Teresa:** Um, but I—yeah, I totally agree. There are people who need that.

**Travis:** That didn't happen so much in the Lands' End department at Sears, let me be clear.

**Teresa:** Oh, really? [laughs]

**Travis:** We didn't have as much foot traffic as perhaps the rest of the Sears store did.



**Teresa:** Right.

**Travis:** Yes.

**Teresa:** Um, so let's do a little history about Black Friday.

**Travis:** Okay. Oh, I also should mention one more thing for context.

**Teresa:** Oh, okay.

**Travis:** Uh, we—I'm trying to remember what the exact numbers are, but I can't, so I'll preface this by saying I am—I am probably making this up. But I remember at Best Buy, like, that one weekend, the Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, was, like, one quarter of the yearly budget or something. Like, that was where Best Buy—at least our store made a huge chunk of its, like, yearly goal.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm. Um, which begs the question, are a lot of electronics you think at Best Buy overpriced?

**Travis:** No, actually! Exactly the opposite. So, here's the facts, is when you're talking about computers or televisions, they're a loss leader. When someone is selling a TV, it's at cost, right? Because that's not what gets people in the door. What you're doing is you're selling a TV or computer, something like that, at cost. A console, for example. And then you're selling the accessories that they need, and that is where the markup is.

**Teresa:** Ohh, that's where the markup is.

**Travis:** Like, an HDMI cable—I remember selling HDMI cables for, like, 40, 50, 60, 70 dollars, and we, on our employee discount, could get 'em for, like, 5 dollars.

**Teresa:** Hmm.

**Travis:** 'Cause, like, that is where the huge markup is.

**Teresa:** I see.

**Travis:** And so you would do those Black Friday deals where you would get people in the door, you would lose a bunch of money selling a TV, but you would

sell the home installation, you would sell the accessories, you would sell services, and that was, like, how they made their money.

**Teresa:** Okay. Um, like we've alluded to, in order to talk about Black Friday you have to talk about Thanksgiving.

**Travis:** Indeed.

**Teresa:** Um, and Abraham Lincoln finally succumbed to the letter writing campaign in 1863, uh, asking for a day of thanks, and making it a national holiday. Um, and he said that the Thanksgiving holiday would fall on the last Thursday of November. Okay?

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** That makes sense, until 1939—

**Travis:** Until...

**Teresa:** —until...

**Travis:** I'm trying to find more catchphrases—

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** —for us. We don't have as many as, say, some other McElroy shows.

**Teresa:** It's true.

**Travis:** So how can we incorporate more branding?

**Teresa:** That's a great idea to do right now.

**Travis:** Thank you!

**Teresa:** Uh, so in 1939, FDR signed an executive order to move Thanksgiving, instead of the last Thursday in November, the fourth Thursday in November.

**Travis:** Seems a little fiddly to me.

**Teresa:** It is a little fiddly, and I'll tell you why: because sometimes November has five Thursdays, and sometimes it has four Thursdays.

**Travis:** And one time it had eight Thursdays—

**Teresa:** No, that's not—

**Travis:** —and we're still not sure...

**Teresa:** Nope.

**Travis:** ... what happened there.

**Teresa:** That's not how it—

**Travis:** We kind of blinked, and there were a couple Wednesdays that became Thursdays, but a couple Sundays became Tuesdays and balanced out. [pause] And that's history, folks!

**Teresa:** I stopped listening to you—

**Travis:** That's fair.

**Teresa:** —because it doesn't make any sense. So, uh—and it was passed by Congress in 1941, and the reason that this was necessary at the time, even though they were in the middle of a war, right?

**Travis:** Yes.

**Teresa:** They wanted to get—

**Travis:** TV's.

**Teresa:** No.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** [laughs] They wanted to get Congress to change the holiday because this is when Christmas shopping in the—you know, the late 20—the mid 20th

century, Christmas shopping became the period between Thanksgiving and Christmas, right?

**Travis:** Yes, except for Mike Wellman, Teresa's dad—

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** —who does my favorite thing, that I wish I had the discipline to do.

**Teresa:** He's so amazing, my dad.

**Travis:** I wish I—all year long! Starting December 26th—

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** —to December 24th, if Mike Wellman sees something he thinks you would like, he buys it.

**Teresa:** That's right!

**Travis:** Just—and so then at the end of the year, come December, you know, whate—15th or whenever, he starts wrapping. He ten has to remember where he put everything. [wheezes]

**Teresa:** Well, he is not the gift misplacer in the family. That's my mother.

**Travis:** Yes.

**Teresa:** But my dad—it's amazing. Um, first of all—

**Travis:** This is a very personal filled episode so far. I don't know why, but go on.

**Teresa:** I think we've talked about this before, but my dad is a very strong, silent type.

**Travis:** Yes.

**Teresa:** But he always buys twice as many gifts for my mother than he does for the other people.

**Travis:** His—his love language is gifts.

**Teresa:** Yes. So by the time—we do a kind of, like, round robin, one gift at a time, like, Christmas, and by the time everyone else is done opening all of their gifts, my mom still has, like, a pile of, like, ten presents to go through.

**Travis:** Yeah. Like, twice as many as everyone else for Becky.

**Teresa:** Because he does that! He sees something that he thinks she would like, whether it's January or November. He gets it, and wraps it for Christmas.

**Travis:** Yep! It's great.

**Teresa:** It's beautiful. She cries and complains, but she loves it, and we all love it, because we love the way that he thinks about her.

**Travis:** All year long. I only think of Teresa—

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** —like, maybe two months before Christmas. I'm like, "Oh yeah, Teresa! Oh, right. Um... "

**Teresa:** Anyway, okay. So... [sighs] this period of the mid 20th century, at one point in 1939, Thanksgiving fell on November 30th, meaning that there were only 24 days of the shopping season. And, I mean, even less at that time, because a lot of stores were still closed on Sundays. Um, and so this caused retailers and, you know, other Christmas season affiliates to panic, thinking that the holiday shoppers would just shop less if they had a shorter season.

**Travis:** Which I guess makes sense. I mean, 'cause I—I have not started Christmas shopping. I haven't even started—we haven't done any decorating yet.

**Teresa:** Not yet.

**Travis:** Um, it's hard for me to change gears pre-Thanksgiving, so I guess that makes sense.

**Teresa:** Yeah, yeah. Um, but that's not—that's not what they told FDR, of course.

**Travis:** No.

**Teresa:** They said, "There's a depression on! We just got through the depression and it was really terrible, and now we're at war, and so a longer holiday season would be good for the American economy! We need it! The country needs it!"

**Travis:** Yeah. This one's for the troops.

**Teresa:** Exactly. Um, and you know, they really harnessed their powers at be, you know, all of these tycoons, Macy's and whatnot, and so Roosevelt acquiesced, and now we have the fourth Thursday in November, no matter, like, how many Thursdays Thanksgiving—no matter how many Thursdays November has, it's the fourth one instead of the last one.

**Travis:** That makes total sense. We should talk more about this.

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Travis:** But first... how about a thank you note for our sponsors?

**Teresa:** Okay.

[theme music plays]

**Travis:** Hey, Teresa?

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm?

**Travis:** Do you like to consume food for sustenance?

**Teresa:** Every single day.

**Travis:** Okay. Now, let me ask you this. Do you ever find yourself looking at the food that you have in your home and saying, "I don't want this food," or perhaps saying, "None of this food makes food that I want."

**Teresa:** Not every single day, but quite often.

**Travis:** Well, not—yeah, okay, but quite often.

**Teresa:** Okay. [laughs]

**Travis:** So what if you could pick up a piece of metal and plastic, about hand-sized...

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Travis:** ... and put your finger on it...

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** ... and then food would come to your house.

**Teresa:** I have one of those, and I want to do that!

**Travis:** Okay, well, good news! You can do it with DoorDash.

**Teresa:** Yay!

**Travis:** DoorDash is a way to have the food that you want come to your house today—I mean, I guess depending on when you're listening to this. But you know what? I'm just gonna say go ahead and check. Don't worry about it!

**Teresa:** I think you could even schedule, like, an early morning. Didn't you do that once?

**Travis:** I do that sometimes. Perhaps [holding back laughter] I've imbibed one too many beverages, and then was surprised by pancakes. It happens!

**Teresa:** It happens.

**Travis:** It happens! So, with DoorDash, you can get the food you're craving right now, right to your door. Ordering is easy. You just open up the DoorDash app, choose what you want to eat, and your food will be left safely outside your door with the new contactless delivery drop off setting, and as an added benefit, many of your favorite local restaurants are still open for delivery, and with the DoorDash app you can support the local restaurants you love.

**Travis:** So, right now, our listeners can get 5 dollars off their first order of 15 dollars or more, and zero delivery fees for their first month when you download

the DoorDash app and enter code "shmanners." That's 5 dollars off your first order, and zero delivery fees for a month when you download the DoorDash app in the app store and enter code "shmanners." Don't forget, that's code "shmanners" for 5 dollars off your first order with DoorDash.

Now, Teresa?

**Teresa:** Yes?

**Travis:** I have another question for you.

**Teresa:** I'm ready.

**Travis:** How does my hair look?

**Teresa:** Always amazing.

**Travis:** Correct. How's it smell?

**Teresa:** Delicious.

**Travis:** That's correct! Do you know why?

**Teresa:** Why is that?

**Travis:** I have been using Function of Beauty, uh, their line of products. And I know what you're saying. "Which products?" Well, if you look at the label, Function of Travis.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Is what it says on the label, 'cause they let you personalize it, and I love that very much—

**Teresa:** Yes you do.

**Travis:** —and I got a shampoo, I got a conditioner, a got a leave-in hair treatment as well as a hair mask.

**Teresa:** Ohh, you love those leave-ins and masks.



**Travis:** Oh boy, do I ever! Do I ever! Do I—I like it when my hair kinda has a nice shine and bounce. And, as many people may know, my hair is purple colored. I use that purple dye. And so when I was signing up for Function of Beauty they asked me questions, right? And I love a quiz, too. You know I love a personalized product.

**Teresa:** Indeed.

**Travis:** And they said, like, what kind of hair do you have? Is it often dry? Is it oily? Do you find yourself with split ends? That kind of thing. But also, like, is it colored? Do you need color treated—do you need, you know, the dye protecting things?

And so then they crafted a product specifically for my hair. There's, like, so many different combinations that they can use to make a perfect product for you, even down to, like, the color that the shampoo and conditioner and stuff is. And it smells great!

**Teresa:** It does smell good.

**Travis:** I got, like, a peppermint kind of thing, which makes my scalp a little tingly.

**Teresa:** Oh, you love the tingle too.

**Travis:** I do! Oh boy. And they use only clean ingredients, all their formulas are vegan and cruelty-free. They never use sulfates, parabens, or any other harmful ingredient.

So, what are you waiting for? Go to [functionofbeauty.com/shmanners](https://functionofbeauty.com/shmanners) to take your quiz and save 20% off your first hair care order. Go to [functionofbeauty.com/shmanners](https://functionofbeauty.com/shmanners) to let them know you heard about it from our show, and get 20% off your hair care order. That's [functionofbeauty.com/shmanners](https://functionofbeauty.com/shmanners).

[music plays]

**Jesse:** Hey, friends! Jesse here, the founder of Maximum Fun, and I have some really great news to share with you. This year has brought a lot of changes for all

of us, and one tradition that we were grateful to be able to hold on to is our annual pin sale to benefit charity. This year, through your generosity and love of pins, you helped raise 95,400 dollars for GiveDirectly.

If you're a member and you bought pins, they'll ship in January. In the meantime, your support will provide direct cash relief to families impacted by COVID-19 across the United States. Even in this incredibly tough year, the Max Fun community remains extraordinarily kind.

And whether or not you bought pins, you can continue to help by heading to [givedirectly.org](https://givedirectly.org).

And, as always, thank you.

[music and advertisement end]

**Travis:** So, when we last left off, we were still talking about the same thing that this episode's about.

**Teresa:** [laughs] It's about Black Friday.

**Travis:** Correct.

**Teresa:** Now, do you know—do you know what it's called Black Friday?

**Travis:** Uhh, no! I do remember that there was a weird push from Best Buy HQ that they thought it had, like, negative, dark, grim connotations.

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Travis:** And they wanted us to call it Green Friday, but that did—obviously did not stick.

**Teresa:** Mmm. No. Okay, I can—I can understand that. Um, and there are other countries and regions around the world that have changed the name, but kept the... sentiment. [laughs]

Uh, but—so, like a lot of things that we talk about here on *Shmanners*, there are a couple of origin stories.

**Travis:** Okay. It was—it was bitten by a radioactive Friday.

**Teresa:** [laughs] Uh, so according to the History Channel, the first time Black Friday was used as a term was in 1869.

**Travis:** Wow, really?!

**Teresa:** Right?

**Travis:** That's pretty far back!

**Teresa:** I know! I always surprise you with that. Um, and it had to do with two greedy oligarchs.

**Travis:** Oooh!

**Teresa:** Who cornered the American gold market, which back then we had the gold standard, where money was backed up in gold. And when they cornered the market on Friday, September 24th, the US financial markets fell into such a tailspin that even members of the President's own family were affected with the economic downturn. And that day became known as Black Friday.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Maybe.

**Travis:** Oh. Okay.

**Teresa:** Because here's another one. [laughs] Uh, the other theory would be that one is that, quote, "In the black" is an idiom that refers to a business making money as opposed to, quote, "In the red." Correct?

**Travis:** Yes.

**Teresa:** Um, and so many people assume that retailers took to calling the day Black Friday because it was a day that they made their highest profits!

**Travis:** See, that makes more sense to me.

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Travis:** That—that tracks to me.

**Teresa:** I mean, or that the retailers refer to the day as Black Friday because they get away with as much money as the two dudes who... did the—

**Travis:** Ehh, that one doesn't make as much sense to me.

**Teresa:** I mean, yeah, it's a little more convoluted.

**Travis:** Now, why do they call it small business Saturday?

**Teresa:** Um—

**Travis:** Which, by the way, is the day after Black Friday. Check it out.

**Teresa:** Because, uh, you should shop small businesses.

**Travis:** Well, yeah. You should do that in general, as much as you can. [holding back laughter] What about Cyber Monday?

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** I think there's one for Sunday, because I can't remember what it is, 'cause small business Saturday is the day after Black Friday, where a lot of small businesses in your area will have, like, special deals. Now, I don't know how much of that you can do this year, uh, but I would recommend, if there are local businesses that you love, go to their websites, or call them if they don't have websites, and see if they're offering any curbside pickup. Uh, and then Cyber Monday comes the Monday after Black Friday, and it's usually when there are a lot of online shopping deals.

**Teresa:** Right. Um, so with now Black Friday being an advertising tool, it became a celebration, right? Something fun for the shoppers. Uh, so areas outside of urban centers would dress up their shopping districts, or big department stores, who were usually, like, the anchor of a city block, right? Um, they would do, like, big tree celebrations, [under her breath] Macy's—[normal volume] um—

**Travis:** [gasps] What?!

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** This year, by the way—we're recording this the day before Thanksgiving. This year, Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade says they're doing one, but just for TV. And I do not know how you keep people away from it. It seems like I'm not—hey, Macy's? It's not what I would do.

**Teresa:** Is it a—maybe a clip show?

**Travis:** That's what I would do! I would do a clip show of the past forever Macy's Day Parades. But I don't know if they're gonna do that. Whew!

**Teresa:** Um, anyway—so, uh, the day after Thanksgiving became kind of a natural time to start shopping anyway. Uh, most families were still together from the food beforehand. Um, and many middle class folks actually had that Friday off of work, so it wasn't, like, Thursday off, and then Friday come back in, and then—it was—

**Travis:** And kids, kids have that day, so you could take your kid shopping with you if you need something to do with them.

**Teresa:** Right, it's a long weekend.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Wear 'em out. Um, and so everybody would figure out that hey, we can make a lot of money if we run those sales, like you were talking about.

**Travis:** Oh, so it happened the other way around. It wasn't, "We're gonna do the sales to encourage people to come in." It was "People are coming in, and if we want those sales to happen we need to incentivize them."

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Travis:** Yeah, it was already a natural shopping day to begin, and so they wanted to amp it up.

**Teresa:** But also, they lobbied Congress.

**Travis:** Also that.

**Teresa:** Right. Um, and so things got a little more interesting—

**Travis:** Oooh!

**Teresa:** —when the mall appeared.

**Travis:** The capital M Mall.

**Teresa:** Mall. So this is post World War II. Everyone is moving out to the suburbs. We've talked about this before. And so downtown shopping districts kind of took a backseat, right?

**Travis:** if you want clear evidence of this, you need look no further than Huntington, West Virginia!

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** My hometown, where they were like, "Hey, we should build a mall here!"

And the chamber of commerce or whatever, the downtown business owners were like, "Uh, I don't think so. That's gonna hurt our business downtown."

And so the town of Barbersville, which is now, I believe, incorporated into Huntington, was like, "You can build it here!"

So the Huntington mall is in Barbersville, and it pulled all the business away from downtown, and really hurt downtown business!

**Teresa:** Yeah. So, over the next three decades, hundreds of malls popped up all over suburban America. Um, and that was the time that Black Friday really became a thing, right? So they would advertise, like, blowout sales, and clearance prices, and, you know, super early opening hours. You said 5 AM. I know that there are some—I feel like a couple years ago people were like, "Our Black Friday starts at midnight on Thursday!" Right?

**Travis:** Well, that is actually happening now, this year. There's a lot of cyber deals, because so much has moved to online that, like—I know Walmart is putting

up Black Friday specials tonight, Wednesday night. Uh, at which point kind of starts to lose a little bit of meaning!

**Teresa:** Exactly. At this point, Black Friday is starting to, you know, kind of be—the waters are muddied, you know? It's less of a tradition now. Um, I mean, it's still kind of, you know, fun. A lot of families, prior to the pandemic, would camp out together and have a great time. Um, because basically there's just more ways to shop. It used to be you would go to your local mall, or you would go to your local downtown. Um, but more and more people are turning to online shopping. Um—

**Travis:** Especially this year.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** And, I mean, as they should. I'm glad that a lot of those deals are moving—you know, I say that about Walmart and stuff, but I do think it's good that a lot more of those deals are available online, without having to go to a store that is full of people, wait in line full of people, anything. And we'll talk about some, like, general etiquette and stuff regarding Black Friday, but I want to preface it by saying that this year especially, don't do it if you can avoid it, and... ugh. I—more than ever, I feel bad for any retail employee that has to work.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** Um, but, you know, there are people who don't have the option of not going in to work.

**Teresa:** Exactly.

**Travis:** Uh, and still being able to, you know, pay bills and stuff. So... ugh.

**Teresa:** Um, so then, while Black Friday has at this point become synonymous with, like, extra extra clearance, I mean, there are—

**Travis:** For some reason I thought you were about to say "Read all about it."

**Teresa:** No. [laughs]

**Travis:** I know what you mean, but, like, it's just—that's all I can hear when someone says "Extra, extra."

**Teresa:** Extra, extra. But, like, there—I feel like there have been Black Friday, quote, "sales", since Halloween, right? Like you said—

**Travis:** [simultaneously] It's become a branding tool, you know?

**Teresa:** —they're starting tonight. Like, all this kind of thing. Anyway—

**Travis:** It's the same as, like—you used the word clearance, right? And I think it's just a word—like, a phrase that people know. So they'll say, like, you know, "Close out sale, clearance sale," these terms that have lost a lot of their meaning, and are now just, like, buzzwords that let people know, like, this is a big sale.

**Teresa:** Yeah, yeah. Um, so... um, Black Friday.

**Travis:** Uh-huh?

**Teresa:** Around the world. Romanians have become big Black Friday fans, starting in 2011. Um, that's when the Romanian Black Friday tradition is, uh, traced back to.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Um, also in the UK. Now, originally, Black Friday meant the Friday before Christmas, and it was kind of, like, the first—like, the intro to the holiday week. But, thanks to the 2010's—is that the teen—the 20-teens?

**Travis:** Sure.

**Teresa:** No, because we're the twen—no. Yeah, the 2010's, yeah.

**Travis:** The 21 blinks.

**Teresa:** 21 blinks. Uh, things like Amazon and Walmart started—which is Asda, by the way. Um, started promoting American Black Friday.

**Travis:** In other places.



**Teresa:** In other places, like the UK.

**Travis:** Interesting, okay.

**Teresa:** Um, and according to—

**Travis:** "We're doing it! Cultural—"

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** "—cultural sharing!"

**Teresa:** According to The Guardian, it's still pretty controversial. Um, I mean, despite the fact that it was wildly successful.

**Travis:** Well, sure.

**Teresa:** Um, and here's Canada.

**Travis:** Oh, hey, Canada!

**Teresa:** Canada! You can see since the early 2000's that the Canadian dollar has been quite strong. So, the Canadian retailers instituted the day after American Thanksgiving Black Friday sales.

**Travis:** Now, that seems a mouthful.

**Teresa:** 'Cause their—'cause their Thanksgiving—

**Travis:** No, I understand that. But the day after American Thanksgiving Black Friday sales, you could probably shorten that. [wheezes]

**Teresa:** You probably could. Their Thanksgiving is on the second Monday in October.

**Travis:** Yes.

**Teresa:** Right? So they couldn't use the day after Thanksgiving, because it's not the right Friday.

**Travis:** Sure.

**Teresa:** You know what I mean?

**Travis:** Yeah, makes sense.

**Teresa:** Um, and this is why they have these sales. The Canadians were traveling across the border to buy holiday gifts on Black Friday, stacking the days discounts with their amazing conversion rate.

**Travis:** Ohhh! Good job, Canadians! Very smart.

**Teresa:** So Canada had to make a fake Black Friday [holding back laughter] to keep their citizens from crossing the border in the name of the deal.

**Travis:** Very smart, Canadians.

**Teresa:** Yes. And, you know, other places, the Netherlands, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, they all—

**Travis:** They were coming over too!

**Teresa:** No.

**Travis:** [through laughter] Everybody was comin' to the US!

**Teresa:** But a lot of these places have initiated their own kind of, like, clearinghouse sales.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Uh, because brands are international these days.

**Travis:** That's true. It also is a good time of the year to do it. Like, this is the thing. The reason, like—I'm not going to say the reason Christmas is shu—such a hob—sh—blegh! Such a shopping holiday.

**Teresa:** Right.

**Travis:** But I'm definitely gonna say it contributes to it, is the branding of it is, we need to clear out this older stock to make way for new stock, and it's the end of our fiscal year, you know? We're moving—I'm not saying everybody's fiscal year ends in December, but you know what I mean, right? Like, this—this'll be good on the books. This looks good on the books.

**Teresa:** Exactly. Um, so a couple of quick etiquette reminders, as far as Black Friday goes—

**Travis:** Don't push!

**Teresa:** No pushing. Please do your normal please and thank you's, pushing, being kind, um, because there are—first of all, like you said, a lot of retail workers, um, where this is—this is how they make their money, and we should be nice to them.

**Travis:** And trust me, as frustrated as you, a customer, gets at Black Friday, I guarantee the retail employee is more so if not, like, triple, quadruple as much. Right? Because the thing is—here's—here's the thing! As someone who worked retail for many years, I did not revel in having to tell somebody we were sold out of something they wanted.

**Teresa:** Exactly.

**Travis:** That is a bummer! I want to sell those things to you. And so—and also, I'll tell you the same thing that I now tell Bebe all the time. Sometimes you just gotta take no for an answer.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** Right? Like, if they're sold out of something, that is just a factual thing [laughs quietly] that is true. They're not keeping something from you, they're not hiding it in the back. It doesn't make any sense to hide things in the back on a day where you are trying to sell as much as you can.

**Teresa:** Right. Um, here are some actionable things you can do. When you're passing through the store, try to keep to the middle of the aisles, the middle of the sales floor, and don't travel through any aisles unless you're looking for something specific there, right? So that—

**Travis:** I would say along those lines, too, pay attention, 'cause a lot of stores will set up, like, those flows, you know? Where it's, like, lines or stanchions or ropes or something so that you know, like, where specific things are. If I may, another piece of advice. If you are going for something, know what you are going for.

**Teresa:** Right. Don't be the person who gets to the front of the aisle and be like, "Oh, I don't—I don't even want this." You're just in the way. [laughs]

**Travis:** Right. And that way, a lot of times they will have employees outside, like, guiding people, and you can ask, "I am looking for this deal. Where do I need to go?"

And you can move with purpose, you can clear the lines, and you can get to the place you want.

**Teresa:** Right, and with a lot of these sales posted early online, you can know exactly what you want and where it is. Like, even on the Target website, it will tell you what aisle it's in in the store you choose.

**Travis:** Correct.

**Teresa:** So have a game plan.

**Travis:** Think of it like supermarket sweep—

**Teresa:** Yeah!

**Travis:** —where if you're going for those big ticket items, you wanna head straight there, you know? And then grab that giant Tootsie Roll or whatever.

**Teresa:** Um, so, also, I think that it's a good idea to go shopping with a buddy, especially if it's a very crowded store on Black Friday. Um, and we wouldn't—this year, we discourage you from going out and being close to other people, obviously.

**Travis:** We are talking about other years, when there is not a global pandemic, you know, claiming people's lives left and right.

**Teresa:** Right. Have a buddy. Because not only could you divide and conquer each other's lists, but also it'll help keep you a little safer. There are, you know,

people out there who are not as nice as we would hope you are going to be. Um, and so it's great to have backup if you need it.

**Travis:** And the fact of the matter is, too, psychologically, the dynamics of a crowd are—it's a fascinating subject if you ever want to learn more about it, of how, like, a group of people changes from being individuals together into, like, that clump, you know, mindset.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** And so sometimes it's not even about being nice or being mean. Sometimes it's about panic, sometimes it's about being stressed out, sometimes it's about all of these things, uh, where this push will happen. Um, so that is good. Also, if you're waiting in line, it's good to have a buddy, so if you have to go to the bathroom or go home or whatever, that you have someone there with you. Do not expect other people to save your place in line. But here's the other thing I will say, too. Um, and this is not... illegal or anything, but I will say, if you're looking to be a good person who exists in the universe, do not be the person who gets in line early, right? And then ten minutes before the store opens, six of your friends roll up to stand with you.

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Travis:** Right? That—because at that point, if you are doing individual shopping—now, if it's family, and you're all going shopping together, and you're there together or whatever, great. But the idea of "I got here, and now the whole line has to push back six people," when sometimes there is a limited quantity of the items being sold, that is not good.

**Teresa:** And not cool. It's just not cool.

**Travis:** Because I saw people who would count down the line and be like, "Okay, I'm 20th, and I know there's 25 of this thing, 'cause it says that that's the quantity on hand." Right?

**Teresa:** Right.

**Travis:** Like, that was a thing. And so then if they got pushed back to 26th after waiting for—I—

**Teresa:** Not cool.

**Travis:** —that is not okay. Um, and, you know, same of, like, pay attention. A lot of the times, in the circulars in the ads, it'll tell you the guaranteed quantity on hand and how many you are allowed to buy.

**Teresa:** Right, yeah. Limits.

**Travis:** And knowing that when you go into it is important. Um, and once you're done shopping, get out!

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Right? That's not the time to then meander and see if that DVD you were looking for is there, right? Like, you have your stuff. Clear out.

**Teresa:** Great.

**Travis:** So, that's gonna do it for us! We're actually gonna do a two part, because we got a lot of great questions about, like, shopping for people. And, you know, I think we've talked about that before, but there's always more to talk about with holiday shopping. So, we will touch on that in part two, probably next week.

Um, this week, though, we want to say thank you to Alex, our researcher—

**Teresa:** Of course.

**Travis:** —without whom we would not be able to do this show. We want to say thank you to you for listening, and once again, I just want to reiterate, encouraging people to have a safe holiday season. Don't get together. Don't travel unless, like, you have to for, I don't know, health reasons or s—I don't—who knows. But, um, if you can help it, stay home, stay safe—

**Teresa:** Just do your part to make this better.

**Travis:** Right. We're all in this together, and the most shmannerly thing you can do is to think about others. Um, and, you know, we can all help each other by just staying home, and that's what I, an indoor kid, have always dreamed of.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Uh, we want to say thank you to Maximumfun.org, our podcast home. Make sure you check out all the other amazing shows there.

**Teresa:** And thank you to our Max Fun members.

**Travis:** Of course.

**Teresa:** Who have—who are helping us support other people, too!

**Travis:** Yep.

**Teresa:** Like Alex!

**Travis:** Um, if you want to check out more McElroy projects, you can go to [mcelroy.family](http://mcelroy.family). They're all there. Uh, the same, you can go to [mcelroymerch.com](http://mcelroymerch.com). We got a lot of great merch there, so if you're looking to do some holiday shopping...

**Teresa:** Oh!

**Travis:** ... for some McElroy fans, might I recommend [mcelroymerch.com](http://mcelroymerch.com)?

**Teresa:** Don't have to wait till Black Friday.

**Travis:** Um, I also want to tell you that there is—let's see. The paperback version of *The Sawbones Book* is coming out. Uh, I believe that comes out December 29th. Uh, and you can get that at [bit.ly/sawbonespaperback](http://bit.ly/sawbonespaperback). Uh, you can preorder *The Adventure Zone: Crystal Kingdom*, that's the fourth in our graphic novel series. You can get that at [theadventurezonecomic.com](http://theadventurezonecomic.com), and that comes out July 13th, 2021. But you know, giving somebody the preorder for that is—

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** —it's, like, a great holiday gift!

**Teresa:** It's like the gift that keeps on giving.

**Travis:** Right! 'Cause you get a piece of paper at first, and then you forget about it, and then you get a lot more pieces of paper all glued together with pictures on 'em!

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Um, you can also preorder our podcasting how-to book, *Everybody Has a Podcast (Except You)*. It's available for preorder now at [themcelroypodcastbook.com](http://themcelroypodcastbook.com). That comes out January 26th, so I actually think that is a great holiday gift idea to give somebody and say, "Hey, in one month, you're going to become an expert podcaster, and you'll get some chuckles and smiles from this wonderful funnybook!"

Um, let's see. Who else do we thank, Teresa?

**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 Kayla M. Wasil for our Twitter thumbnail art. Our Twitter handle is @shmatterscast. That is where we get our delightful question submissions for our shows, and we'll get those in next week for holiday shopping. Um, thank you to Bruja Betty Pinup Photography for the cover banner of our fan-run Facebook group, *Shmatters Fanners*. Lots of really great stuff about gift-giving going on there. in the Facebook group. Uh, you should join, if you love to give and get excellent advice from other fans.

**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 *Shmatters*...

**Teresa:** Manners, *Shmatters*. Get it?

[theme music plays]

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