

## Shmanners 248: Valentine's Special (2021)

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**Travis:** What did one sea mammal say to the other sea mammal on Valentine's Day?

**Teresa:** I don't know, what?

**Travis:** *Whale* you be my valentine?

**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:** [laughs] It's extraordinary etiquette...

**Travis:** ... For ordinary occasions. Hello, my dove.

**Teresa:** Hello, dear.

**Travis:** How are you?

**Teresa:** Doing okay. Happy to be healthy and safe inside our cozy home.

**Travis:** Yes, it's quite snowy.

**Teresa:** As... [laughs] As the inches of snow do accumulate.

**Travis:** Waiting 'til mid-February this year. Uh, a little bit of snow. But here we are. We're nearing, of course, the universal day of love, where everyone is required to love each other by law.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** And to express that love whether you want to or not, because it's so decreed. We must be spooky on Halloween. We must be cheerful in the winter holidays. We must be lovey on Valentine's Day, and we must appreciate trees on Arbor Day.

**Travis:** Alright.

**Travis:** Those are the four big ones.

**Teresa:** That's it.

**Travis:** Those are the only holidays I recognize. [laughs]

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** That, and of course, my birthday.

**Teresa:** Yes. That's a weekly holiday, though.

**Travis:** And so, uh, for Valentine's Day, I got you... this episode.

**Teresa:** You did? You also got me some flowers.

**Travis:** Yeah, but that's not as funny as if I just gave you... I got you some chocolates, too.

**Teresa:** Yeah. And my sister, and my mom sent Bebe some very cute Valentine's Day presents.

**Travis:** Very punny jokes. That's what Bebe's into now.

**Teresa:** Yes. That is really what she's into. She loves it.

**Travis:** She loves any—her—my favorite, and we'll get to the episode in a second, but right now... uh, she appreciates punny jokes. One I made up for her, "Where does the cow go to appreciate art and history? The mooseum."

**Teresa:** Get it?

**Travis:** Right.

**Teresa:** Is what she says right after. [laughs]

**Travis:** "Get it?" But then she'll also do jokes like, if she's eating, say, a banana, she'll go, "Hey! I banana you! Get it?"

**Teresa:** [laughing] 'Cause it's a banana!

**Travis:** And all you can really say is, "Yeah! I totally do, yeah."

**Teresa:** [laughing] I was really impressed my mom was able to find some old Valentine's cards.

**Travis:** Like, vintage Barbie.

**Teresa:** Vintage Barbies. Those little ones that, y'know, they came in like, a perforated sheet, and you kind of like, tore them apart. Beebs was stoked.

**Travis:** Yeah. You appreciated the one that had acid-washed jeans on it, I believe.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm. There was only one of those, which makes me think that uh, maybe I appreciated that a lot when I actually handed them out to classmates, because there's only one left.

**Travis:** Absolutely. Now, I... I don't know what the kids these days are into. Maybe they're doing virtual valentines, or TikTok valentines or something.

**Teresa:** [laughing]

**Travis:** But back in my day, we had those, uh... I'm trying to remember—I'm sure I did, like, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle ones.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** I think Rescue Ranger ones were in there. I just—I liked those, because it felt like, y'know, there—even though it was a set, there were different ones, and you could be like, “Well, this one’s going to David, clearly. Uh, y'know what, I think I'll give this one to Nikki.” And it felt very, like... specific to me. No, you didn’t feel that way?

**Teresa:** I never really did that. I was always, let’s take a... I got out the ol’ class directory, and went top to bottom, just assigning people cards.  
[laughs]

**Travis:** You never thought like, “Oh, Chris will appreciate *this* Rescue Rangers bon mot.”

**Teresa:** No. [laughs]

**Travis:** No? Okay. Well, maybe it was just me. And then you'd go around, and then, people had made like, their own little like, envelopes to go in the front.

**Teresa:** We always used tissue boxes.

**Travis:** Oh yeah? Um, and I think that, by the time I got to school, we were in the like, ‘everyone gets one.’ There is no like...

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Travis:** I'm gonna give one to Nikki and not to David.

**Teresa:** Well, I think that one of the good things about valentine cards is, I think you either have to give out just one to, perhaps, your SO. Perceived SO, if you're in middle school.

**Travis:** Or... or, SOs.

**Teresa:** Yes. Or...

**Travis:** S's O.

**Teresa:** S's O. No no no.

**Travis:** Significants other. [laughs]

**Teresa:** I'm saying—[laughs] I'm saying, you either need to give out just one to someone who is, quote, the most special, or you need to give out one to everyone.

**Travis:** Or, but I do want to acknowledge that there are people with multiple partners. So, the mosts specials.

**Teresa:** Sure. I'm talking more about middle school.

**Travis:** I don't know. In middle school, maybe there are multiple partners. Like I said, I don't know anything about children. And I say that, having two of them. So while we're—'cause we've done a couple Valentine's episodes now at this point, and we're gonna get to, we have some questions to do, too. But we wanted to kind of throw a spotlight at the reason we're talking about this, specifically on like, paper valentines. The exchanging of...

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Travis:** Like, the cards.

**Teresa:** Yes. We're gonna say a card of literary distinction.

**Travis:** Ooh! Oh my! [laughs] Ooh!

**Teresa:** So, the festival of Saint Valentine, I would like to give a little bit of background, was probably related to the Roman festival.

**Travis:** Sure, sure.

**Teresa:** From February 13<sup>th</sup> through the 15<sup>th</sup>, the Romans would celebrate an ancient fertility festival.

**Travis:** So, probably a little more Bacchanalian.

**Teresa:** A little bit. Uh, they would sacrifice goats, and then hit women with the goat skin in the hopes that that would make them fertile.

**Travis:** Man, they were really just throwin' spaghetti at the wall, weren't they?

**Teresa:** Well, y'know...

**Travis:** Is this it? Does this work? I'unno! We'll slap the women with goat skin. I'unno!

**Teresa:** It doesn't not work, I guess.

**Travis:** No, hey, honey? It doesn't not work. It does not work. Let's put it that way. I'm no scientist, and I'm definitely not Dr. Sydnee McElroy, but I would hang my entire credibility on the fact that slapping women with goat skin doesn't make them more fertile. Now, to your point—

**Teresa:** Maybe if you find that romantic, and maybe if you—

**Travis:** That doesn't make you more fertile, though!

**Teresa:** Maybe that's your thing, though.

**Travis:** Okay. It's fine if it's your thing. I'm not saying that someone wouldn't be into it. I'm saying, it does not change their physiology!  
[laughing]

**Teresa:** [laughing] Okay. Anyway. And Valentine's Day, Saint Valentine's Day, was probably part of the great Christian rebrand.

**Travis:** Uh-huh. As we have seen over and over and over again, like Christmas, Halloween, Easter...

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** All of them.

**Teresa:** When it was taken by the Catholic church. But the thing is, it seems to be kind of a rush job, 'cause no one really knows which Saint Valentine the holiday is named for.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** There was a Valentine of Terni, martyred—

**Travis:** I hope it's not that one!

**Teresa:** Why?

**Travis:** Valentine of tyranny?!

**Teresa:** No, Terni.

**Travis:** Oh, okay. Whoo!

**Teresa:** Uh, martyred in 197 BCE.

**Travis:** That's so long ago.

**Teresa:** And Valentine of Rome was martyred in 496 BCE. And they both share the same feast day.

**Travis:** Oh boy.

**Teresa:** Well, so... Who knows? [laughs]

**Travis:** That—I mean... that's gotta beef on ya, right? When you were martyred 300 years before the other one, and you're like, "Oh, so now..." It's kind of like when I was born three years after Justin, and we have the same birthday. It's kind of like that, right?

**Teresa:** Yeah. Which one is it for?

**Travis:** Yeah. We couldn't have two feast days? Come on, guys. There's 365 days in a year. Come on.

**Teresa:** [laughs] So... it's probably—Valentine for love, right, is probably credited to Chaucer. Um, there is a poem, *Parlement of Foules*.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Which is widely accepted as the first recorded instance of Saint Valentine's Day being linked to romanticism.

**Travis:** Okay... so I guess it's a little more ancient than Hallmark, is what you are saying.

**Teresa:** Yes, indeed.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Indeed. So, in old English, and I am gonna do the best I can...



**Travis:** You can do this. Just don't confuse the thorn. Don't say 'ye.' Don't say 'ye!' Don't do it!

**Teresa:** Okay, okay! "For this was on Saint Valentine's day, when every fowl cometh there to chase his make."

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** To find... birds in love, I guess. Right?

**Travis:** Yeah. Just say ring by spring. We get it.

**Teresa:** Yeah. But not everyone agrees that Chaucer's poem refers directly to February 14<sup>th</sup>. Some have argued that he's just talking about birds mating in England, which would happen—

**Travis:** Oh, he's being literal.

**Teresa:** —in the warmer weather of May, and not the darkness of February. That would make sense, because another Saint Valentine's Day, the feast of Saint Valentine of Genoa, falls in May. But regardless, Chaucer was kind of writing about the end of winter into spring, and so, his story is often cited when people talk about the lovey-doviness of Valentine's Day.

**Travis:** Y'know, I've never thought about it before, but it does seem like Valentine's Day would make more sense to me in warmer weather. Now, admittedly, we're only talking about, uh, our hemisphere, which is cold right now. But you would think that if it's like, "Hey, go out there. Make some romance." No, it's cold. Thank you very much. I will wait.

**Teresa:** [laughs] How about come in here and make some romance?

**Travis:** Well, that just assumes that you already have a partner.

**Teresa:** I suppose that's true.

**Travis:** And many folks – I don't know if you know this – aren't married forever like we are.

**Teresa:** Ohh, like we are.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Okay. But let's talk about the cards.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** So, by the 15<sup>th</sup> century, France in particular was all over the 14<sup>th</sup> being a big ol' love fest. So there were lavish banquets with singing and dancing held to mark the occasion, and probably the first card specifically came from a little bit of a less, y'know, party atmosphere. It was a 15<sup>th</sup> century Frenchman, said to have created the earliest surviving Valentine's greeting.

**Travis:** And it said, "You up?"

**Teresa:** [laughs] Which he wrote to his wife while he was actually imprisoned in the tower of London.

**Travis:** Oh, bummer. As like a prisoner, not just like lost, right?

**Teresa:** Right, right.

**Travis:** Okay. He went on a tour, got turned around...

**Teresa:** It was after a battle that he was imprisoned. The battle of Agincourt.

**Travis:** Okay. That's the one with Henry—

**Teresa:** Henry V.

**Travis:** V, yes.

**Teresa:** Yeah, yeah. The Duke of Orleans wrote to his wife, "Je suis desja d'amour tanné, ma tres douce Valentinée."

**Travis:** I am...

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** I am desired, my love... [laughs]

**Teresa:** Okay. Uh, "I'm already sick of love, my very gentle valentine." Meaning, lovesick.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Feelin' missin' you.

**Travis:** My heart, oh, she aches for you, my love. Happy Valentine's Day. I—[laughs] Whale you be my valentine? [laughs]

**Teresa:** Yeah! So, as soon—

**Travis:** Dearest love, I write to you from the tower of London. What did one pickle say to the other on Valentine's Day?

**Teresa:** [laughs] You mean a great... dill to me.

**Travis:** [simultaneously] Dill to me. And now, I die. [laughs] Okay.

**Teresa:** So, very soon after that, the love-devoted holiday begins popping up all over literature. Have you heard of this guy Shakespeare?

**Travis:** Yes I have. Billiam, I believe is his first name.

**Teresa:** Yep, yep. He sends out, uh... he sends one up to old Saint Valentine in Hamlet, when Ophelia says, "Tomorrow is Saint Valentine's Day. All in the morning the time, and I am a maid at your window to be your valentine."

**Travis:** Eugh. Poor Ophelia. Eugh, treated rough, she is.

**Teresa:** Again, in Sir Edmond Spenser's epic poem, *The Faerie Queen*, that's in 1590, uh, features the line, "She bathed with roses red and violets blue, and all of the sweetest flowers that in the forest grew."

**Travis:** Is that the beginning of 'roses are red, violets are blue'?

**Teresa:** It was in the 18<sup>th</sup> century that the line first made its appearance as the most familiar Valentine's Day poem of all time!

**Travis:** Ah! Roses are red, violets are blue. And if you see a skunk, you say, "P.U."

**Teresa:** Nooo.

**Travis:** No.

**Teresa:** The rose is red, the violets blue, honey is sweet, and so are you.

**Travis:** Of course.

**Teresa:** So sweet.

**Travis:** Yeah. Wait, hold on... I want to hear more about this. But first... a thank you note for our sponsor. A valentine for our sponsor!

**Teresa:** Ooh!

[theme music plays]

**Travis:** First off, we want to write a valentine to Bombas. And here's the thing – I don't say this lightly – I do, in fact, love Bombas!

**Teresa:** I do, too!

**Travis:** At this point, about 50% of my socks are Bombas socks. And... I also enjoy their t-shirts.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm, super soft.

**Travis:** They're soft. They fit well, too. They hang right on my weird body. [laughs]

**Teresa:** [laughs] You have a great, normal body.

**Travis:** Thank youuu.

**Teresa:** Regular sized.

**Travis:** I'm large. Don't say regular. I mean, I'm a burly dude.

**Teresa:** But they have a little bit of stretch and give, so any body has a good body.

**Travis:** And I also love their socks. Not only are comfortable, they have some fun designs on there, and they have features. And I know what you're thinking about – socks with features? Yes. You got the no seam in the toe, so it's comfortable on your toe. You got some support in the arch. Oh, love this stuff. They thought of every detail, my friends.

And not only that – every pair of socks you purchase, Bombas donates a pair to someone in need. The generosity of Bombas customers has allowed them to donate over 40 million pairs of socks and counting through their nationwide network of 3,000 plus giving partners. To those experiencing homelessness, these socks represent the dignity of putting on clean clothes, a small comfort that's especially important right now.

So, give a pair when you buy a pair and get 20% off your first purchase at [Bombas.com/Shmanners](https://Bombas.com/Shmanners). That's [Bombas.com/Shmanners](https://Bombas.com/Shmanners) for 20% off your first purchase. [Bombas.com/Shmanners](https://Bombas.com/Shmanners).

**Teresa:** Shmanners is also sponsored in part this week by She's Birdie. So, you should feel comfortable going about your daily life. And if one of the things you need to feel safe is an alarm system, maybe on your home...

**Travis:** Right. It can be scary out there, y'know what I mean?

**Teresa:** It can.

**Travis:** And it doesn't matter what size you are. I'm a burly dude, and I still get nervous out there sometimes, y'know? But I know that it is especially rough, uh, for people who are not as burly as me. I would say, women and some non-binary folks and folks that identify as women. It's scary out there.

**Teresa:** It can be. So you put an alarm system on your home, but you can also carry one around with you. Birdie is a personal safety alarm that's easy to carry and simple to use.

So, when you activate it, the alarm emits a loud siren and a flashing light to help deter whatever it is you would like to scare off.

**Travis:** Or whoever.

**Teresa:** Or whoever. Sure, sure. And bonus – it comes in fun colors, so why not, right?

**Travis:** Oh, yay!

**Teresa:** She's Birdie is offering our listeners 15% off your first purchase when you go to [ShesBirdie.com/Shmanners](https://ShesBirdie.com/Shmanners). That's [ShesBirdie.com/Shmanners](https://ShesBirdie.com/Shmanners) for 15% off.

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[music plays]

**Speaker 1:** Welcome.

**Speaker 2:** Thank you.

**Speaker 3:** Thanks.

**Speaker 1:** These are real podcast listeners, not actors. What do you look for in a podcast?

**Speaker 2:** Reliability is big for me.

**Speaker 4:** Power.

**Speaker 5:** I'd say comfort.

**Speaker 1:** What do you think of this?

[crashing sounds]

**Speaker 6:** That's Jordan, Jesse, Go.

**Speaker 2:** Jordan, Jesse, Go?

**Speaker 3:** They came out of the floor?

**Speaker 2:** And down from the ceiling?

**Speaker 3:** That can't be safe.

**Speaker 2:** I'm upset. Can we go now?

**Speaker 1:** Soon.

[music plays]

**Speaker 1:** Jordan, Jesse, Go: A real podcast.

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**Travis:** Okay. When last we left off, you told me where 'roses are red, violets are blue' came from.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** Now what?

**Teresa:** The cards. Let's get into the cards.

**Travis:** Yes. So in the year, 1650, the first Star Wars valentines debuted.

**Teresa:** [laughs] It's likely the first version of these little cards were sent in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The first ones, obviously, were hand made with like, decorated paper and romantic symbols like flowers and love knots, and y'know, notes of love, romantic lines of poetry...

**Travis:** Doves. Probably some doves in there. Hearts.

**Teresa:** And even... sometimes, puzzles.

**Travis:** Ooh!

**Teresa:** Right? To make your love notes a little more secret.

**Travis:** Like a little word search?

**Teresa:** Sure. Why not?

**Travis:** Okay. I'm into that.

**Teresa:** Um, and at this time, you could also buy several different volumes that offered guidance on selecting appropriate words and images to effectively melt the heart of your beloved.



**Travis:** Indeed.

**Teresa:** And those first pre-printed cards began to show up in the Georgian era of Britain. Perhaps the oldest surviving card comes from 1797. It was sent by a woman named Catherine Mosscopy to a man in London named Mr. Brown.

It's in the York Castle Museum, if you would ever care to see it. A verse printed around the edges of the card reads, "Since on this ever happy day, all nature's full of love and play, yet harmless, still, if my design 'tis but to be your valentine."

**Travis:** Also, what did one lovesick pirate say to another one?

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Arrr you gonna be my valentine?!

**Teresa:** [laughing] And like a lot of the wonderful, sometimes problematic traditions we have today, it really started popping off in the Victorian era.

**Travis:** Mm-hmm, mm-hmm, mm-hmm. I'm not surprised by that. Because the Victorians... it's such a, uh, oxymoron, right? A juxtaposition. A catch 22. Uh, because their scene is being very stuffy, but really, it's just repression. And so, whenever there was a chance for an outlet, they took it.

**Teresa:** Exactly.

**Travis:** So, having this chance to be like, "Hey, today, we're gonna be uber romantic, and everyone's on board with it." I definitely see why they like, totally bought into it.

**Teresa:** Right. And by the mid-1820s, it's estimated that 200,000 valentines were sent in just London alone.

**Travis:** Oh, wow.

**Teresa:** I mean, that does sound like a lot. But that number doubled by the 1840s, and doubled *again* in the 1860s.

**Travis:** What? Whaaat?! Oh. My. Lanta.

**Teresa:** Indeed. So, due to their popularity, obviously, many Victorian valentines have survived. There is one massive collection of about 1700 examples displayed in the museum of London.

**Travis:** Can I read my favorite here?

**Teresa:** Oh, please.

**Travis:** It says, "What did the corn say when it got a lovely valentine?"

**Teresa:** Hmm?

**Travis:** "Aw, shucks."

**Teresa:** [laughs] That's one Bebe hasn't told us yet.

**Travis:** No, I just—well, I didn't make that up. I adapted it from a Bo Burnham joke.

**Teresa:** Ohh. Okay. So, this is also when the valentine's card also got kind of um...

**Travis:** Commercialized.

**Teresa:** No. Let's say...

**Travis:** Standard?

**Teresa:** Nothing gold can stay, because—

**Travis:** Maybe standardized? Is that a word you would use?

**Teresa:** No. That's not where I'm going here.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** There was something that became known as 'vinegar valentines.'

**Travis:** Oh, yes yes yes! I've heard of these!

**Teresa:** Which were purposely designed to insult your friends, and well, y'know, not your friends. Other people.

**Travis:** Wait, were they playful, or were they actually insulting?

**Teresa:** Sometimes both. So, here's one—

**Travis:** Sometimes it was like a roast? [laughs]

**Teresa:** Here's an example.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** The card is a sketch of a woman handing a suitor a gigantic lemon. And this is what it says. "Tis a lemon now I hand you, and bid you now skidoo. Because I love another, there is no chance for you."

**Travis:** Aww, zing!

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** Can I just say, though... if I were to receive that now... I mean, not now, 'cause we're married. But if I was still a'courtin', and I got that, I'd be like, "Welp. [laughs] This is pretty clear. Oh! Time for me to mosey on along. There's no ambiguity here. I'm out."

**Teresa:** So, these vinegar valentines were classified as really anything that was like, super rude and upsetting, all the way to like, the punny ones that we've been enjoying during this show.

So, there's a lot of these examples. But I would say that... this trend did seem to die out on the, y'know, the heavier side. So all of these, "I hate you" genre...

**Travis:** Yeah. Who has the time?

**Teresa:** Yeah. Did die out. But we do classify these funny valentines as vinegar valentines, 'cause they're not as sweet as honey like the romantic ones are.

**Travis:** Gotcha, gotcha, gotcha.

**Teresa:** By the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, it came to America.

**Travis:** What did the bee say to the unwanted suitor?

**Teresa:** Hm?

**Travis:** Buzz off!

**Teresa:** Oh, yeah. That's a vinegar for sure. And so, printing technology allowed America to put their own spin on things. And I mean, here in the US, people have probably been exchanging handmade valentines as early as the 1700s. but again, in the 1840s, a woman named Esther A. Howland began selling the first mass-produced valentines in the US.

**Travis:** And they were Star Wars valentines, right?

**Teresa:** Mm, no. They were made with lace and ribbons and colorful pictures and things.

**Travis:** There was a little picture of baby Yoda, and it said, "Yoda best!"

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** "Yoda best!"

**Teresa:** "Yoda best."

**Travis:** Get it?

**Teresa:** And our patron purveyor... Hallmark for the Valentine's cards. Started printing them in 1913. I mean, they had only just begun in 1910, and so, what we all know and love as the Hallmark card, printed valentine, was in 1913.

**Travis:** Yeah. I bet it was really, really appreciated—it's gonna sound like I'm making a joke, but I'm not. But I bet during that time of very, very masculine repression of emotion, of like, the '40s to now...

**Teresa:** Sure.

**Travis:** But especially during the '40s to the '80s, I bet having something like Hallmark was like, really appreciated by males in that time, of just like... [whispers] "I don't know."

**Teresa:** Like, "I'm not supposed to be showing emotions. Here is somebody who has done it for me."

**Travis:** Right. Like, "I have not been taught how to do this by society, and that's bad, but also, here is a thing to let you know I like you. Sorryyy."

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Hey. We have lots of questions. You want to do some questions?

**Teresa:** Sure, let's do some!

**Travis:** Let's... do... some... questions. I'm... pulling them... up... right now.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Indeed.

**Teresa:** Um, I'm gonna say, first, before you start... make sure that you read the cards that you send. Don't think that, just because it has a heart on the front, that it's gonna be all lovey-dovey. Those vinegar valentines are not like, super bad these days, but there's still some problematic things that go into those.

Also, don't feel like you just have to send it to romantic interests. You can send valentines to friends, relatives, coworkers, and anybody who might want a "hey, ya awesome" on Valentine's Day.

**Travis:** Yeah, we got lots of good questions about that.

**Teresa:** Great. Great great.

**Travis:** But first, I want to address this one from TwerkDad. "The cynic in me hates Valentine's Day. Why should I let a calendar tell me to buy flowers? The good husband in me knows better than to make a principled stand, here. Other than a home-cooked meal, what are some ways to buy into the holiday without feeding greeting card companies?"

Well, one of the things I would say, first and foremost... and I know that this is coming—I am not a cynic. I am, uh...

**Teresa:** A hopeless romantic.

**Travis:** Yes. And I would say that, while I understand this sentiment, and I've heard it a lot about Valentine's Day being commercialized and all this stuff... I think that that is, on some level, true of all holidays. Right? And I think that it—much like we were saying just moments ago, there are some people who still are not very good at expressing themselves in this way.

And so, for them, having these things like, y'know, the cute balloons with messages on them is like, okay, great. I didn't know how to say this, and now I can do that. And then, for others, you might not feel the need to do that. You might want to create something on your own. Great. That's also good.

But I would say that holidays in general are there... not because it's the only day in which you do that thing, but if you think about like, Thanksgiving, right? It's not like it's saying, you shouldn't be thankful on every other day. It is just giving us an excuse to highlight what we should be thankful for in our lives.

**Teresa:** That's very lovely.

**Travis:** And so, I think Valentine's Day is not about the giving of things, unless your partner enjoys that, and it is a way to express what I am about to say. It is merely an excuse to, at least once a year, take stock and say, y'know what? Much like on New Year's Day, it's a chance to take stock and think about things you want to do differently in the year.

Valentine's Day is a chance to take stock and say, "Am I taking my partner for granted?" My partners for granted, in some cases. Am I taking those I love for granted? This is a good day to kind of like, take a breath, reset, and make sure that I am valuing my loved ones in an appropriate way.

**Teresa:** To shine a light on your relationships.

**Travis:** Very much so. So, I would say that it is a day about figuring out, like, the things that maybe you have fallen a little behind on, or a little lax on, that you can do. And so, you say, other than a home-cooked meal... what's wrong with doing a home-cooked meal and saying like, 'this is for you'?

**Teresa:** I think the gift of time is very important. So, maybe there are things that you've been putting off doing that your partner, uh, has requested. Or maybe just making sure that things are taken care of so that your partner can take some time for themselves.

**Travis:** Right.

**Teresa:** Um, as a mother of young children, that is something—

**Travis:** And a mother of dragons.

**Teresa:** Uh-huh. That I always appreciate, when Travis comes and says, “Here, I’ll take both the kids into my office, and we’ll play video games together.” Then I can go and do things that I like to do.

**Travis:** Time. Time is, perhaps, the greatest gift, because it’s the thing that we can never give ourselves. That was—whoa. Whoa, that was really deep, you hear that?

**Teresa:** Ooh. Ooooh.

**Travis:** Um, uh, so, along those same lines, @ReviewPartyPod asks, “Are roses a requirement? They can feel so cliché to me.” I think that you’re right. I think that they can feel cliché if it’s not what the person wants.

**Teresa:** Sure. And if you would like to give flowers instead of roses, because roses are kind of a weird thing to give people in February, right? Because they’re not like... they’re grown in a different hemisphere at this point in time, especially if you’re in the US. You can give all kinds of different flowers. Some of my favorite flowers are of the yellow color. You can even make tissue paper flowers, things like that. I don’t think that roses are a requirement as much as the time and the thought of, “I’m thinking of you, here is a visual representation.”

**Travis:** Right. And I also think along those lines, if you want to give someone flowers, there’s like a whole fun florist code of flowers.

**Teresa:** We’ve talked about this!

**Travis:** Yeah. You can like, create a bouquet, y’know, and say like, “Hey, here’s why I picked these flowers,” right? And I think that that is fun.



**Teresa:** Check out that episode. I think that was last Valentine's Day.

**Travis:** Yeah, flower language. Uh, BooMakesThings asks, "How to celebrate Valentine's Day with multiple partners and their partners?" So, while Teresa and I do not have multiple partners, I think the closest touchstone we have with this is kind of, we have multiple families at this point. We have, y'know, Teresa's parents, we have my Dad and my step mom, we have Justin and Griffin, and y'know, Rachel and Sydnee and their kids, and we have... like, all of these people, right?

So on holidays like Christmas, we want to make sure we spend time with everybody and make sure everybody feels, uh, y'know, that they have gotten some time with us. So I would say, the number one thing is scheduling. Right? Is making sure that you are openly communicating with everybody involved to say, "Do you have plans? Is there a time that you were hoping to do something? I would like to do something at this time." So that way, everyone is kind of involved in the planning process, makes everybody feel like they are getting the time that they want with the people they love.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** And also, I don't know. We also set spending limits at Christmas? I don't know if that's a thing that you would think about with multiple partners so that it's not like, "I got you this DVD." And it's like, "Oh, well I bought you this new car!" I don't know. [laughs] Maybe that's something you want to consider as well.

This is from Colton, who asks, "What would be considered an appropriate Valentine's Day gift? My love language is gift giving, so my go-to is to treat it as another gift giving celebration, but I feel that that isn't correct."

I know I'm answering a lot of these. I'm just showing off how much I've learned from being in a wonderful relationship with a wonderful partner like Teresa, who has taught me so much.

**Teresa:** I'm very proud of you.

**Travis:** Thank you. Here's the thing about love languages, Colton, that it took me a long time to understand. Your love language is the language in which you want to be spoken to. It is not necessarily the correct way to express yourself. So it is about learning your partner's love—or your partners' love language, and expressing to them in the way they want to be expressed to, if that makes sense.

So while your love language might be gift giving, that means you want to receive gifts. But if you are feeling like perhaps that is not the appropriate thing to do, then I would say, you want to acknowledge what the receiver's love language is, and respond in that way. And it can be a gift giving holiday. I'm not saying it's not. Sure. But it's about what the other person wants.

**Teresa:** I love it. An appropriate—uh, historically appropriate Valentine's Day gift. We talk about flowers and candy and cuddly things. So, teddy bears and things like that. Um, I would say that, anything that you could cuddle would be a great Valentine's Day gift, like a nice blanket.

**Travis:** Oh yeah. I've been really into fuzzy blankets lately.

**Teresa:** Yeah, we love those fuzzy blankets.

**Travis:** Love 'em.

**Teresa:** Anything that makes your SO comfortable, like slippers or a nice robe. Robes are very in this season.

**Travis:** New body pillow. They are? Okay.

**Teresa:** Indeed. Also, uh, self-care items. Again, very popular this season.

**Travis:** Listen. Get yourself... you can find 'em real cheap... like, foot bath buckets and some Epsom salts. Go to town.

**Teresa:** Perfect.

**Travis:** Go to town. Pumice stones? Go to town. Oh, enjoy on us. Uh, let's see. This is from Macy. "How to encourage slash support friends if they've experienced a breakup close to Valentine's Day?"

**Teresa:** Uh, this, again, is give them the gift of time. Ask them, "Would you like to..." I know, uh, a lot of these hangouts are virtual. Times are virtual. But y'know, you can reach out to a person, ask them if they would like to spend some time together. If they are not ready to spend time together, again, some more of those, y'know, self-care items. It's very nice to send someone a face mask in the mail.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** You can also do things like, say, "Let's just have a virtual coffee date. We'll talk about anything that you want. Your current situation, or y'know, your future plans, or any of that stuff." I think, again, time is really the best gift you can give someone, and let them enjoy the time—their time the way they want to.

**Travis:** Yes. I think that that is the key, right? Because one, you can't assume that everybody goes through things the same way. Right? So, it may be that your friend doesn't want to talk about their heartbreak at this point, or that they are not heartbroken, and they just want to spend time with you.

So, I would say, uh, avoid saying anything like, "Hey, I know you just got broken up with, so if you want to spend Valentine's..." Don't make it about that. Make it about like, "Hey, what are you doing on Valentine's Day? I'd love to catch up with you."

**Teresa:** Or, "I've been thinking about you."

**Travis:** Right. Don't make it about, because of this. Make it just be because you love them.

This is from Dr. Brims. "Most Valentine's merchandise is romance coded. How do I give something like this to a friend while making it clear I only have platonic feelings for them?"

**Teresa:** I think that the jokes are a great way to go. Um, I mean, some of them are super groany, and if you wanted to maybe make up your own inside joke card, or something like that, I think that humor is a really fun way to let people know that you're thinking about them without all of the baggage that might be associated with romance.

**Travis:** Yeah. I also think it doesn't have to be Valentine's Day stuff, right? One, you could just like, make them a card yourself. But two, like, a thing, and say, "Hey, I just want you to know how much I appreciate you as a friend, and how much it means to me that you're in my life. And so, on this Valentine's Day, I wanted to celebrate our friendship." Right? I think it's also in how you deliver it.

**Teresa:** Yes, for sure.

**Travis:** Uh, let's see... I think that's gonna do it for us. I think that's—let's leave more time for appreciating those we love.

**Teresa:** [laughs] I love it.

**Travis:** Uh, thank you so much for listening. We want to say thank you to MaximumFun.org, our podcast home. We want to say thank you to you, the listeners, for supporting us in all things that we do, in listening to the show, in telling friends about it, in going to wherever you listen and subscribing, and... I don't know, reviewing? Is that still a thing people do? I think it is.

**Teresa:** I think it is.

**Travis:** We want to say thank you to the rest of the McElroy family for supporting us. If you haven't been listening to Wonderful or Sawbones, what are you waiting for? They're like our sister shows, and they're very good. What else, who else do we thank, Teresa?

**Teresa:** Well, we always thank Brent "Brental Floss" Black for writing our theme music, which is available as a ringtone where those are found. We also thank Kayla M. Wasil for our Twitter thumbnail art. And you can submit your questions for our question-themed episodes, @ShmannersCast.

Thank you to Bruja Betty Pinup Photography for the cover picture of the fan-run Facebook group, Shmanners Fanners. Saw some very active posts in there the other day about Valentine's Day. If you love to give and get excellent advice from other fanners, join the Shmanners Fanners group on Facebook!

**Travis:** Did we say thank you to Alex?

**Teresa:** We did not. Thank you, Alex.

**Travis:** Without whom, we would not be able to make this show. Thank you so much. 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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