

Shmanners 281: Bonfires

Published October 8, 2021

[Listen here on themcelroy.family](#)

Travis: Hey, folks! Travis here. Uh, just wanted to do a quick content warning up top. We talk about some historical occurrences of torture and self-harm, and we just wanted to make sure you knew about that before we start.

[pause]

Travis: [singing] This girl is bonfire! [speaking] Oh, I'm so sorry.

Teresa: [laughs] 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: That one— that was actually great, my dear.

Travis: It— it's not! It's so dumb!

Teresa: You nailed it!

Travis: "This girl is bonfire?" It's nothing!

Teresa: No. It is something.

Travis: [laughs]

Teresa: And you— the laughter was from your apology.

Travis: [wheeze-laughs]

Teresa: It was so— you— you correctly threw your head back in order to shout the song, and then you immediately sunk down to half your size!
[laughs quietly]

Travis: Because it's not really a joke!

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: [through laughter] There's no punchline. They— they— it doesn't mean any— it's just like, "Isn't it funny how some words sound like other words?"

Teresa: [laughs] It's— it's very Mitch Hedberg. She did that a lot.

Travis: I know. But this is— I feel like this is a thing that Justin and Griffin have acknowledged that I do many, many times, in which half of my jokes are, "Isn't it funny how some words sound like other words?"

Teresa: [laughs] Well.

Travis: This is— I had that whole, like— not a whole parody, but just whenever I think about the song "Poison," and then "[singing] That girl is Susan!" gets stuck in my head, and I still think that's great. Oh boy.

Teresa: Well, uh, you married the right person, because I'll always giggle at those.

Travis: And I married the right person eight years ago today.

Teresa: Aww. Happy anniversary.

Travis: Happy anniversary, my love. We're recording this on the 6th, which is our wedding anniversary. Both of us forgot it. Um, right up until Monday.

Teresa: We— yes, we remembered it.

Travis: Yeah. Well, I mean—

Teresa: Just— just not super far in advance.

Travis: Does that count? Yeah, like, Monday morning. And I went like, "Hey. I think Wednesday's our anniversary."

And you were like, "Aw, yeah!" [laughs] Does that count as remembering?

Teresa: Yeah, it totally does.

Travis: Okay, I guess. I got you a bronze rose.

Teresa: Indeed.

Travis: That Bebe helped me pick out, 'cause bronze is the eight-year anniversary.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Uh, Bebe also— so, we got you those, uh, like, rose, like, earrings. You should've seen some of the earrings she wanted to get you.

Teresa: Oh boy.

Travis: Bigger and more colorful was Bebe's... [laughs]

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Oh, okay. Alright. So, we are talking about bonfires.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Now, right off the bat, we looked into this. What makes a bonfire a bonfire?

Teresa: Quantity.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Right? It's the size.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: And this is really funny, actually, because in the game *Dark Souls* and the subsequent games, you basically save your game at a campfire, but they call 'em bonfires. But it's, like, barely even a campfire. It's a smoldering pile of wood.

Teresa: I think that the good measure is, can you see a person directly opposite you, above the flames? It's not a bonfire. Can you not see them? It's a bonfire.

Travis: I tell you what, and I'm gonna turn this question around on you in a second, but my most vivid bonfire memory— and I still think about this, and it feels like something that I have transposed from, like, a, like, episode of *The OC* or *Friday Night Lights* or something I watched into a memory, but it's real.

When I was in high school, part of, like, our homecoming celebration is they would build, like, a giant, like, stack of pallets and wood and stuff in

the middle of, like, the practice field. Like, at school? And have a huge bonfire on school grounds, like, in the practice field and just, like, all the high school kids would, like, hang out.

Teresa: That sounds like a recipe for disaster.

Travis: Doesn't it? But, like, I know that that's not uncommon. This would've been, what? 19... 99? No, 2000, 2001, in there, at this— or at least the one I'm thinking of. And yeah, I think about that and it's like, "Hey, guys?!" But also you gotta remember, my school, one, was in West Virginia. [laughs quietly] Two, was, like, up on a hill with nothing else surrounding it. Right? Where they had built it, like, not anywhere in, like— I mean, it was in city limits, but you know what— it was removed from everything else.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Have you ever attended a bonfire?

Teresa: No, I have not.

Travis: No. And why is that, Teresa?

Teresa: Because I'm severely asthmatic.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: I have been to campfires.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: I was a Girl Scout for a while. Um, I also, you know, our friends love fire pits, love campfires. I can take about ten minutes before I need to back away, uh, because that's about as long as it takes to, uh, pick out, roast and eat a s'more.

Travis: Now, I will say, and if anybody listening has experience with these and wants to tweet at me, @travismcelroy, there are, like, fire pits and fire, like— there are things that you can buy that supposedly are built so the air flow is such that it, like, incredibly reduces the— the smoke.

Teresa: Huh.

Travis: I don't know if that's true or not. There are also, like, gas fire pits, but that's—[sighs]

Teresa: Right. I mean, gas fire pit I can do no problem, because it's the smoke.

Travis: But is it the same, the gas fire pit?

Teresa: No, it's—

Travis: No.

Teresa: No, it's not.

Travis: No! See, this is the thing. So, I— and you know what? Somehow, we make it work. I love fire pits.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Um, and I love building up fires and everything. Um, but, you know, I love you and your lungs more.

Teresa: And then when you get home, you have to... take a shower.

Travis: Yes. Which I actually—

Teresa: Uh, and change your clothes.

Travis: Until I started, like, dating you, I did not appreciate, like, how much one smells like smoke coming home. Um, like, there is a place here in, uh— called North Side Tavern, and they have, like, fire pits in, like, the patio, where you, like, burn actual wood. And, like, when you come home and you have someone say, like, "Hey. Smell yourself."

And you're like, "Aw, jeez!"

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: "Yeah, I smell like a forest fire! This is terrible!"

Teresa: It is thick.

Travis: Okay. So, bonfires.

Teresa: Bonfires.

Travis: They're big, and they're fire. Go on. Tell me more.

Teresa: Okay. Um, so... in 1755—

Travis: Fire was invented.

Teresa: Nope. *Dictionary of the English Language* by, uh, Samuel Johnson suggested that, um—

Travis: That sounds like a made up, fake, old-timey name.

Teresa: I know, right?

Travis: Samuel Johnson. [laughs]

Teresa: Suggested that *bon* is French for good, and so bonfire is French for good fire!

Travis: I was honest— honest-to-Travis going to make that the opening joke, having no idea that that was real.

Teresa: Oh! Well, Noah Webster thought it was real.

Travis: Oh?

Teresa: Um, but... it has since been corrected.

Travis: Oh, okay. So—

Teresa: Not long after.

Travis: —so it's not real.

Teresa: No, it's not real.

Travis: Okay, good. Okay.

Teresa: It's not real. [laughs]

Travis: 'Cause I was gonna say, like, "Oh, it's a good fire— or, as the French would say, bonfire."

Teresa: Nope.

Travis: No, okay.

Teresa: That's not— that's not it.

Travis: That's nothing.

Teresa: Uh, in 1890, Webster's International Dictionary saw that the origin of the term bonfire means bone fire.

Travis: Oh, bones, like marrow bones? Like *Bones*, like the show with David Boreanaz?

Teresa: No.

Travis: Like, human— well, I guess other bones, whatever bones.

Teresa: Other bones. Uh, so it entered Middle English as banefire sometime around the 1400's.

Travis: That sounds cool too. Ugh.

Teresa: Yeah. Yeah, totally cool. Um—

Travis: Like, to keep skeletons away?

Teresa: No.

Travis: No.

Teresa: No. Uh, we use the term "bane" to describe something of harm or ruin, right? Something is the bane of your existence, right?

Travis: Or like wolfsbane, to keep the werewolves away.

Teresa: Sure. Uh, but in Middle English—

Travis: Thank you for just agreeing with that. I really appreciate that.

Teresa: Yeah, I know.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: I got you.

Travis: I love you very much.

Teresa: I love you too. Uh, [laughs] in Middle English, it meant killer or slayer.

Travis: Uh-huh, yeah, yeah.

Teresa: Um, because there was a gruesome custom—

Travis: Oh boy.

Teresa: —at the time, uh, in the late 1400's.

Travis: Can I just say, I don't even know what's coming, but I'm just gonna say kind of a blanket content warning after that statement.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Okay, go on.

Teresa: Post-battle, the bodies of the losing side would be piled up and burned in celebration by the victors.

Travis: Hoo, boy. [laughs uncomfortably]

Teresa: Well, okay. If you— if the people are dead, right? And they are, at this point. You either have to bury them, or you have to remove them, or you just leave them to rot in the field.

Travis: Which is way worse.

Teresa: Which is way worse.

Travis: I think it's— I—[sighs]

Teresa: It is a pretty sanitary solution to just burn it.

Travis: I think the word that hit me weird there was "celebration."

Teresa: Hmm.

Travis: Where I'm— I'm certain, just given, like, the time period and, like, the custom, right? That there was also probably a certain amount of, like, warriors' burial, you know, I mean, the funeral pyre is a custom in many different cultures, and so I'm sure that there— I think I was just picturing, like, you know, the Ewoks dancing around and using the, like—

Teresa: Oh. [laughs]

Travis: —Storm trooper helmets as drums, and this was probably not exactly that. Maybe the—

Teresa: Not exactly.

Travis: —the celebration was probably more somber than that.

Teresa: Uh, I mean, they did win. The winners—

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: —did it to the o— the— the dead, so.

Travis: I'm sure that— well, I guess I would like to hope that there was some respect to it?

Teresa: Maybe.

Travis: Meh, who knows?

Teresa: Who knows? Um, there is one more slightly also gruesome perhaps... origin?

Travis: Okay?

Teresa: In 1555, Edward Bonner, the Bishop of London, ordered over 300 people to be burned at the stake as punishment for heresy, going against the church.

Travis: So, like, Bonner fires?

Teresa: Yeah, Bon's fires. Bonner fire.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Yeah. Maybe. But it is—

Travis: You know what? I'm just gonna go on record.

Teresa: What?

Travis: We shouldn't burn people for heresy.

Teresa: I agree.

Travis: I know it's a bold, bold stance. But here on *Shmanners*, we do not condone burning people for heresy.

Teresa: Right. Um, and— and you mentioned that not— the idea of a communal fire is not scary in itself, right? I mean, there's a lot of ritual that goes with it. There's an ancient Celtic custom—

Travis: And we're also— like, that term, "bonfire," right?

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: We're talking about the origin of that; not, like, probably for centuries before that was, like, "Let's build a big fire to keep the whole, like, clan warm," right?

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: Like, that was a completely different thing.

Teresa: This was just coining the term.

Travis: Got it.

Teresa: Right, right, right, right, right. Um, and there were different, um, ways that, uh, that fires were presented, as maybe, like, honoring the sun, right? Um, and there was a nomadic tribe of warriors in Europe dating back all the way to 800 BCE. Who do you think their religious leaders were?

Travis: In 800 BCE?

[pause]

Teresa: The druids.

Travis: Oh yeah, those folks! Okay!

Teresa: Yeah, those—

Travis: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Teresa: They were the political counselors, the educators, the healers, the worshipers of the land. Um, and they would build enormous fires during the solstices.

Travis: Right, okay, yes.

Teresa: Winter and summer solstice, um, believing that the great flames would hasten the return of spring and prolong the summer.

Travis: And there was— that was, like, part of what led to, like, and then take one of the logs from the fire home to start your fire.

Teresa: Exactly, the Yule log.

Travis: Right. Okay. So it was very communal.

Teresa: Absolutely. Um, we think that taking one of those fires has morphed into Yule log, morphed into *Buche de Noel*, um, morphed into a lot of different things, because of [sing-song] the great Christian rebrand.

Travis: Right. Yep, yep, yep, yep, yep.

Teresa: Yeah. Um, because a community bonfire is really fun.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Uh, it is a great way to, you know, make community and camaraderie—

Travis: [simultaneously] And let's just talk about—

Teresa: —to celebrate, to hang out.

Travis: [simultaneously] The— the symbolism of it.

Teresa: Even if you're just gonna eat and, like, tell spooky stories, it's fun!

Travis: Yeah. The symbolism of it. Think about it, right? You have a point of light in the darkness that everyone is being drawn towards to feel safer together, with the darkness kept at bay by this, you know, bright spot of light, right? Like, it is inherently what fire, what the campfire, you know, in this sense represents, of safety, um, you know, warmth, um, providing food in some circumstances, right?

Teresa: Right.

Travis: Um, and there is just something about because it is, like, a circle, right? You form a circle around the fire, that it just forms that kind of bond and loop around it. So whether, you know, there are people who observe it as, like, a ritual, as a sacred fire, there are some who don't, right? But I think you can't deny the obvious, like, symbolism and inherent kind of, like, why it draws people in, and why it's fascinating.

Teresa: Absolutely.

Travis: Plus, fire's just fun to watch, man!

Teresa: Fire is fun to watch.

Travis: It's so weird, the way it does its stuff. Like, unpredictable and cool and... I don't know. Fire. It's so great.

Teresa: So, the summer solstice was co-opted into the celebration of St. John the Baptist, um, and the winter solstice became Christmas Eve bonfires.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Right? Um, and we would be remiss if we didn't talk about a very famous night in the UK.

Travis: Yeah, I can't wait until we talk about it. But first... it's time for a thank you note to our sponsors!

Teresa: Alright.

[theme music plays]

Travis: This week we want to write a thank you note to DoorDash. Listen, it doesn't matter what kind of food you want, right? You want Chinese, they want pizza, someone's crazing fro-yo? There's something for everyone on DoorDash. And DoorDash connects you with the restaurants you love right now, and right to your door! Man, the number of times that I have opened up DoorDash and we don't know what we want but we start looking for what's new on DoorDash, what local places, or just, like, wait to see if we get inspired by something. It's wonderful.

And now, you can also get grocery essentials with DoorDash, too! You get drinks, snacks, other household items delivered to you in under an hour. Ordering is easy. You just open the DoorDash app and choose what you want from where you want it, and your items will be left safely outside your door with the contactless delivery drop off setting.

For a limited time, our listeners can get 25% off and zero delivery fees on their first order of \$15 or more when you download the DoorDash app and enter code "shmannerspod," all one word. That's 25% off, up to a \$10 value, and zero delivery fees on your first order when you download the DoorDash app in the app store and enter code "shmannerspod." Subject to change, terms apply.

[music plays]

[tapping against wine glass]

Speaker One: [clears throat] Excuse me, everybody. I just wanted to say a few words about the beautiful couple. I've known you two for a long time, and you get along like peanut butter and chocolate. Or, you know, like— like, uh, comedy and culture. Like, uh, Maximum Fun podcasts.

[scattered laughter]

Actually, they're having a block party from October 11th to October 22nd, and that's kind of like your party, right? You have a community of friends and family, and Max Fun has a community of shows and audiences that support them. You're having a new start with your life together, and Max Fun will be putting out new episodes that are especially welcoming to new

audiences, so it's a great time to introduce your friends to your favorite show or jump into one you haven't tried before.

Speaker Two: Is he still talking about podcasts?

Speaker One: And they're setting up a volunteer event where we can help out our local communities! Plus, Maximum Fun is gonna have games, prizes, episode recs, so much other fun stuff.

Speaker Three: What's wrong with Kyle? Is he okay?

Speaker One: Oh! [laughs] Anyways, anyways, sorry for getting carried away there. If it's alright with everybody here, let's all raise our glasses for a toast... to the Max Fun block party!

[scattered scoffing and groans]

Speaker One: Which you can learn more about at Maximumfun.org/blockparty, and don't forget to join in on October 11th!

Speaker Four: Actually, that— that sounds pretty cool.

[ad ends]

Travis: Okay. So, what is this night in the UK that you spoke of?

Teresa: Bonfire night!

Travis: Oh, okay. Well, I probably could've guessed that. In retrospect? Yeah.

Teresa: You probably could have. Um, so on the 5th of Reme— of— [laughs]

Travis: Ah?

Teresa: [laughs] Was a Freudian slip. Is that what they call it?

Travis: Yeah!

Teresa: The 5th of November, people all across the UK—

Travis: Do you mean the night of *The Adventure Zone* live show, happening—

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: —in just a couple weeks? You can get your tickets now. We're doing another hootenanny. That one?

Teresa: That one. But, um, people all across the UK will light bonfires, set off fireworks, and burn effigies of a man named Guy Fawkes.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: Here is the very famous poem by John Milton.

"Remember, remember the fifth of November, the gunpowder, treason, and plot. I know of no reason why the gunpowder treason should ever be forgot."

Travis: That's when he tried to blow up Parliament, right?

Teresa: It was a failed attempt to blow up the Houses of Parliament in 1605.

Travis: Right.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: That live show, by the way, you can get your tickets for the TAZ virtual live show at bit.ly/tazvirtual, tazvirtual.

Teresa: And is it gonna be video on demand, so if you go to a bonfire you can watch it later?

Travis: Yes, totally.

Teresa: Totally.

Travis: And tickets are only \$10. It's gonna be great. Okay.

Teresa: Um, so a little— little background about that. Um, so James I became King of England in 1603, and at the time this was a massively welcome change for British Catholics. Um, Elizabeth had repressed Catholicism, and James I was like— you know, we thought that it was gonna work out a little better, 'cause he was the son of the late Catholic Mary, Queen of Scots.

Travis: Right.

Teresa: Right? Turns out, he did not care about Catholicism. He was more than happy to carry out the persecutions of Queen Elizabeth.

Travis: Bummer.

Teresa: Yeah. So, um, then there were a couple of people who decided, well, let's just kill King James! Bring on the next one, right?

Travis: Sure, sure, sure, okay.

Teresa: Um, hoping that it would spark an uprising, right? Um, and so they mapped out the plan where they would place several barrels of gunpowder under the House of Lords because they knew that the King and all the government people would be there on the opening day of Parliament, and all they needed then was an explosive expert. Enter... Guy Fawkes.

Travis: I mean, listen. I don't know much about Guy Fawkes, but it's a good name.

Teresa: I'm trying to tell you about it!

Travis: No, I know that. But I'm just saying, like, if— if— maybe it's just because of the association now, but it feels like a movie, like, character name that you would give to— like, a name you would give to an explosive expert, right? "This is Guy Fawkes."

You know what it is?

[pause]

Teresa: What?

Travis: It's 'cause I'm thinking about the phoenix.

Teresa: Ohh, okay!

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: Ugh. Okay.

Teresa: So, um, they stocked it to the brim in a vault underneath the House of Lords with 36 barrels of gunpowder.

Travis: That's a lot.

Teresa: To blow everything up, it seems.

Travis: That's a lot of barrels.

Teresa: Um, and they said, "Guy Fawkes, you're gonna stand here and guard it."

[pause]

Travis: He got caught.

Teresa: He got caught, because of an anonymous tip.

Travis: Aw, man!

Teresa: Yeah... saying that the House of Lords shall receive a terrible blow.

Travis: Well, okay. I said "Aw, man." I don't know why I'm pulling for murder.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: I think it's just because I'm very removed from the story, and so I'm thinking of it not as an actual thing that happened but rather as a tale I'm being told.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: But, I don't know.

Teresa: So, just after midnight—

Travis: Listen—

Teresa: Oh.

Travis: —we don't condone blowing people up.

Teresa: We don't.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: This is just the story.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: So, just after midnight, uh, Fawkes was taken. He was imprisoned and put in the Tower of London, and they forced him to name his co-conspirators. Um, but, you know, almost everybody, like, who he named was, like, a well-to-do kind of person, right? So a lot of the lower

class people who had conspired and helped, they were arrested. But four people, the highest four, [crosstalk]—

Travis: The rich folks.

Teresa: The rich folks, uh, were not arrested.

Travis: Uh-huh. Okay.

Teresa: Alright. At trial, January of 1606, they, Fawkes and everybody else who was left, was found guilty and sentenced to be hung, drawn, and quartered.

Travis: Ooh.

Teresa: They were still doin' that at that point.

Travis: Ugh!

Teresa: But instead, Fawkes leapt to his death to avoid his own execution.

Travis: Yeah, yeah, yeah, okay.

Teresa: So... Londoners began—

Travis: I didn't know the bonfire episode was gonna contain so much! [laughs] So much gruesome things!

Teresa: Yeah, we'll put a trigger warning on the— on the beginning, right?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Yeah. So, Londoners began to light bonfires to celebrate that James I was alive and well. In 1606 the observance of the 5th of November Act was passed, creating an annual public day of thanksgiving for the plot's failure.

Travis: Oh, okay.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: Okay!

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Hey, we have some questions. You wanna do some questions?

Teresa: Yeah!

Travis: Excellent. Okay, Erin asks:

"Should you offer to bring stuff to add to the fire if you are invited to someone's bonfire, or offer to bring snacks to cook?"

Teresa: Hmm.

Travis: I would say— I mean, this is— it depends on... who— how well do you know the person, right?

Teresa: Right, yes.

Travis: Where, like, if, you know, I have lots of friends that if they were planning a fire I'd be like, "Do you want me to, like, bring some stuff?" I mean, just today, right? From my blacksmith class I picked up some old, like, barrel staves that the teacher was giving away to take to my friend Justin's where they have, you know, where they do fire pits all the time. Right?

I would ask. I would ask the person. Like, "Do you want me to bring stuff for the fire instead of just rolling up?" Right? 'Cause you don't know what their plan is.

Teresa: Right. Well, so the thing— the thing is, right? If someone hosts a bonfire, it's usually a community event. And so these kind of, like, jobs are parceled out ahead of time.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Um, always ask. That's great advice. Uh, but also, you can't go wrong by bringing something to share, I think.

Travis: Right. Food is always appreciated.

Teresa: Always.

Travis: Um, although I mean... you know, the— bringing the fuel—
[laughs]

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: If— if— if you ask— [stammers] if you want to, right? 'Cause I like burning stuff. And if you ask first, I think that's the way.

Teresa: Yeah. I would not roll up with your truck full of, um, landscape debris, uh, to burn. You know, like your honeysuckle trees or whatever. Don't— don't— don't bring all that stuff.

Travis: Well, speaking of, Actually Five Raccoons in a Trench Coat asks:

Teresa: Oh!

Travis: Yep.

"What is appropriate and not appropriate to put on a bonfire?"

So, good question. The answers may surprise you. So, one of the number things that I think people wouldn't think of not to burn that you really shouldn't burn is treated wood.

Teresa: Hmm.

Travis: So, like, most lumber that you're going to buy from, like, a hardware store is treated, and that means it's got chemicals in it.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Uh, and that includes most but all shipping pallets. So a lot of people use shipping pallets to burn, but you really want to familiarize yourself with how to tell the difference between treated shipping pallets and non-treated shipping pallets, because some of them are okay, and some of them are not. Same with plywood.

Teresa: Oh yeah.

Travis: Some plywood is treated, some plywood is non-treated. But as far as, like, 2x4s, 4x4s, any kind of, like, 1x— all that stuff, if you bought that at a hardware store or, like a lumber place, it's gonna be treated.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: And so, you should not burn that.

Teresa: Um, and if you are going to burn brush, it needs to be dry.

Travis: Correct.

Teresa: Um, not only if it's still wick, still green, right? It will take a very long time, and it might not even burn. Uh, some— some trees and stuff, they have, like, this waxy stuff on the outside. Turns out... they don't like to be burned. [laughs]

Travis: Yeah. Um, so some other things to keep in mind is, like, mailers and magazines and stuff. While they'll catch really well, they once again have, like, the ink and stuff can be really bad for you. Um, rubber, plastics, anything like that. Do not.

Teresa: Aerosols.

Travis: No! Do not. And, I mean, if you're gonna be building a fire, don't use accelerants, you know?

Teresa: Like gasoline or fire starter.

Travis: Anything like that. 'Cause, once again, like, it's not really great to be inhaled, you know?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: And also just keep in mind, paper and stuff like that. Paper can be very dangerous, only because it will flake and, like, float in the air, and it can stay smoldering for a really, really long time.

Teresa: That's why newspaper is no longer recommended as kindling.

Travis: Yeah. Um, and just as far as that goes, I would also say make sure if you're going to do a bonfire or anything like this, make sure that you do some research into burning regulations in the area, and what the, like, conditions for forest fires are at the time. Um, you know, there's times of year where it's so dry and everything that, like, you should not be doing any open burns. It's so dangerous.

Teresa: So, if you have checked to make sure that, um, your local area or whatever area, uh, allows fires, make sure that you build the fire downwind of anything that could potentially catch fire.

Travis: Right.

Teresa: Like a tent.

Travis: And if you're doing a big ol' tall bonfire, you want it to be in an open area that doesn't have, like, trees above it, um, and things above it, right? Because those— those flames get real high, and you don't wanna set fire to the trees above.

Teresa: Um, and you should always a bucket handy that is full of loose dirt or sand or lots of water.

Travis: Yeah, and the thing about water to keep in mind when you're putting out a fire is when you throw the water on, it'll turn to steam,

right? And evaporate. And if it did not fully douse the fire then, you need more water. Whereas, like, sand and dirt smother the fire and do not burn away, so if you can, sand and dirt are better than water.

Um, but also, even then, once it's smothered, you wanna stir it around, because you don't know what's still burning under that dirt and sand. Um, so just make sure you got it all. Be thorough. Be careful. Smokey would appreciate it. Um, so, uh, @chansport asks:

"Wooden pallets make great bonfires, as they are easily stackable," as long as they're not treated. "However, the nails holding them together can mess up the fire pit for future users. Is it okay to use pallets if you stay and clean up the nails afterwards?"

Teresa: Yeah, totally! Um, because you'll be able to sift through the ashes.

Travis: Or, even better!

Teresa: Use a magnet.

Travis: The— yeah, they make these things. Um, I have one that I use when I'm doing, like, projects and stuff that are basically like brooms with— but instead of, like, bristles, it's a magnet. So you can, like, sweep it over everything and it'll pick up, you know, the metal out of the dirt. Uh, or—

Teresa: So smart.

Travis: —yeah, the ash. So use a magnet to clean up. Um, Nick asked:

"What is proper wood gathering etiquette? I always felt like a skeeze nabbing shipping pallets from random warehouse docks."

Well...

Teresa: Yeah. Don't— let— let's not do that.

Travis: Yeah. The only time that I would say that that is okay, assuming that you can identify that it's not treated, is if it's, like, leaning up against a dumpster.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: Because the thing is, a lot of shipping places reuse those pallets [laughs] over and over again. So just because they're stacked up somewhere doesn't mean they don't need 'em.

Teresa: Um, and remember, in order to keep a fire going, to even light the fire in the first place, you need sticks of all sizes, right? So it's just as good to go and collect, like, dry, small sticks, um, as kindling, and break those up. Like, that— you're gonna need those, you know?

Travis: Uh, another thing. Be careful bringing wood from, like, one forest to another, or even, like, state to state or city to city or anything like, that because there can be pests and bugs and stuff in, like— you know, if you have— you know, you go through the forest, you pick up some logs, you throw 'em in the back of your truck or the back of your car or whatever, and then you drive, you know 40 miles to a different forest, right? Any, like, wood— any bugs, anything in there, right? You've just brought them into this new thing, especially if any of the wood is, like, diseased. You know, tree diseases. You can spread that, um, from, you know, forest to forest that way, so just be careful with that as well.

The Goblin Gamer asks... aww.

"What do I do if I think someone is cute and I want to ask them out at a bonfire?"

Hmm, sweet. I'll give you— the basic thing for asking anybody out. If you're a little nervous, this is just a tip from Travis. Be explicit that you're asking them out. It's a little thing. Especially if you're asking them to, like, go to a bonfire with you.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Right? There's a difference between, "Hey, wanna go to a bonfire?" A thing I would ask any friend or family member, versus "Do you want to go a bonfire as my date?"

Teresa: Certainly. Um, and I think that... [sighs] here's the deal. When you are at the bonfire asking said person out, right? That's— that's what the thing is about?

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: Yes. Being there at the bonfire. Um, you need to have an exit strategy, right? Because the bonfire is kind of like an all-night thing.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: Right? So, I'm not saying that you need to leave after you've asked person out on a date, but you do need to have, like, the ball rolling to go and do something else, to go away, like, um... do— "Can I make you a s'more?" Or, you know, whatever it is. There needs to be a

transition to another subject so you folks aren't just, like, standing next to each other.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Awkwardly. [laughs]

Travis: And listen, this is true of asking anyone out. If you see someone that you think is cute, talk to them first. Get to— have a conversation first, and then it's a lot easier and better to say, like, "Hey. I really enjoyed talking to you, and I would like to keep talking to you another time. Would you like to grab a coffee with me sometime?" Right? Something like that. As opposed to just walking and going like, "Hey, I think you're really cute. Do you wanna grab coffee?"

When they're like, "I have no context for you."

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Um, this is from Midnight Salad. Best time for salad, if you ask me.

"If someone gets up from their spot, is it reserved or fair game?"

Teresa: Um, couple of caveats. Did they bring that chair?

Travis: Right. Uh, did they call tick-tock seat lock?

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: You know what I mean? This is important.

Teresa: Uh, have they left for a long time? Did they just announce that they were gonna go get a beer, anybody else want a beer, right?

Travis: Right.

Teresa: Like, I think that you need to read the room a little bit and figure out, are they coming back? And if they're coming back, give 'em back their chair.

Travis: Yeah, when they come back, get back up, right? Like, there's nothing to say you can't sit there for a little bit, but I agree. Man, check the vibe, right? Is it the kind of party where people are rotating through seats all the time, or is it the kind of party where everyone has been in the same seat since the beginning, right? And then it's, like, you know, bad form to take the seat. But if it's just like people are getting up and sitting back down all the time— also, are they sitting next to someone

that they are with or talking to or friends with? There's a lot to take into play here, but I think that you can get a good feeling in the moment.

Teresa: Yeah. And if— if they brought that chair, they have dibs on that chair. So even if you do sit down for, what, 20 minutes or so—

Travis: Like, if you wanna talk to the person who's next to them or whatever, right?

Teresa: Right. When they come back, it's their chair.

Travis: Uh, Tiny asks:

"Protocol for who keeps wood on the fire? Is it the host's job?" There's a part two here, too, but...

Teresa: There are gonna be so many people who want to mess around with that fire, I don't know if it's anybody's job. I would say—

Travis: Oh— oh, Teresa! Oh my God, you're so wrong! Go on.

Teresa: I would say that you need to try and keep people away [through laughter] from the fire, if—

Travis: This is what I'm saying. Okay—

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: —you are mistaking a job as an assignment versus a job as a privilege.

Teresa: [through laughter] Okay.

Travis: Because the thing is, building— okay, this is where I'm gonna sound smug, and I don't mean to. But building a long-lasting fire, especially a big fire like a bonfire, there is a— there is a, like, scientific formula, right? To fire.

Teresa: But it's also an art. [laughs]

Travis: Okay. I was trying—

Teresa: It's an art and a science.

Travis: —I was trying not to sound smug.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: But yes. Because, like, you need air flow, you need the fuel, you need all this stuff, right? And so, adding wood to a fire is a fairly delicate situation. And I have seen people at, like, fire pits just, like, "Oh, it needs more wood." And just, like, chuck a big log down the middle. And it's like, "No— hold on— no, stop."

So I would say it is the host's responsibility to make sure that there is fuel for the fire and there is fuel there, and then I would also say there's, like, a circle of trust. [laughs]

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Where it's just, like— once again, like, if it's my friend, Justin McCombs, I think Justin trusts me to add wood to the fire, right? I would say if you don't know what you're doing and you've never, like, built up a fire before, don't just go chuckin' some wood in there.

Um, but if you wanna be like, "Oh, I think we need more. Where should we add it?" And start apprenticing.

Teresa: Ahh.

Travis: Start working for people.

Teresa: Okay. Yeah, like I said, you're gonna have a hard time keeping people away from that fire. [laughs quietly]

Travis: Right. Uh, and then the second part of it is, is it also up to the host to ensure that the fire's dying down at the end of the night?

Teresa: Yes. Yes.

Travis: Yeah. If you organi— whether it's at your house or some other location, yeah.

Teresa: Yeah. Um, because there does need to be a cutoff point, right? Where we're not putting any new logs on, we're not doing any of that kind of stuff, and there has to be someone there until the fire is completely extinguished.

Travis: Yeah, especially if, let's be honest, people are getting... inebriated.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Right? A large fire and inebriated people and a lot of smoke inhalation can lead to accidents, so once people start getting pretty inebriated, that's a good time to let the fire start dying down. But I would

say that if you organize and invite and plan the thing, it's your responsibility to make sure the fire is out at the end of the night.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Um, or at the very least your responsibility to make sure someone else makes it their responsibility. You know what I mean?

Teresa: [laughs] Yeah.

Travis: If you're like, "Hey, I have to go for some reason."

Teresa: Delegate.

Travis: "I trust you to do it," right? Make sure someone knows that it's their responsibility. One last question.

Teresa: It happens in TV shows and movies where people just go to sleep and the fire is still burning.

Travis: Yeah. Don't—

Teresa: Don't do that!

Travis: —don't do that. There— no. Get a lantern. [laughs quietly] And put out the fire.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Um, Christian asks:

"How do I—" this is such a delicate, important question.

Teresa: Okay, I'm ready.

Travis: "How do I initiate s'mores-making when I'm not the person who brought them, but they're right there in that camping chair?"

Teresa: Um...

Travis: "Is it s'mores time yet, guy— guys? G—" No. Here— can I say, just anecdotally, personally... as someone who often brings the s'mores supplies, sometimes you don't wanna be the person who brings the supplies and going like, "Did you guys see that I brought s'mores stuff? We should do s'mores, 'cause I brought it, and it'd be really cool if we did," and having a third party say, like, "Oh, did— should we do s'mores?"

And you're like, "That— yeah! Yeah, you know what?"

Teresa: So what you're saying is you need a plant.

Travis: I'm just saying, like, if the s'mores stuff is there...

Teresa: Uh-huh.

Travis: The only time... then, I think, initiate it when you want it, right? Because it's like the first person in the buffet line, right? Like, there's gotta be a first person. Somebody has to step up first. And there might be people like, "Oh, pretty hungry, huh?"

I'm like, "Yes, but also, everybody else want s'mores too and I'm a hero." Okay.

Teresa: So, this was the great thing about being pregnant. Uh, I was able to throw all of these inhibitions to the wind and say, "Mmm, s'mores. Sounds good. Cravin' a s'more. Gonna go make a s'more. Making a s'more right now!"

Travis: "I'm making— making a human being piece by piece inside my body, so... "

Teresa: That's right. So I get to do what I want. It's not even dusk yet, and I can't drink beer, so... s'mores it is!

Travis: So to answer your question, Christian—

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: —be pregnant. Um, but I would say that the only time that there is a— that this is a difference is if there are kids present, 'cause if you initiate—

Teresa: Oh yeah.

Travis: —s'mores as an activity, it's a whole thing now. Right?

Teresa: Gotta be ready. And as a parent, if s'mores happen before, say, hot dogs, I am not a happy camper.

Travis: Right. 'Cause you gotta— you gotta, uh, watch the actual, like, toasting of the thing, you gotta watch the eating of it, and you gotta—

Teresa: And they wanna hold it, and then they make a mess, and then they want more of those. You want *s'more*.

Travis: Right.

Teresa: They don't wanna eat that hot dog!

Travis: Right.

Teresa: Or whatever, corn on the cob, whatever you're making, right?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: They don't want that. So—

Travis: That's the only time that I think you should check with, like, the host and say, like, "Hey, is it time to do s'mores? 'Cause, like, I know there's kids here, and I don't want it to be a thing." That's when I would ask about it, in a quiet way.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Not a way that, like— it's like the seagulls in *Finding Nemo* go "Mine! Mine! Mine! S'mores? S'mores? Ice cream? Cake?" Happens, man.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: And then once you put— once you uncork that bottle [laughs] you're not putting that cork back in, trust me, friends. Uh, but speaking of parties, did you know that coming up is the Max Fun Block Party?

Teresa: I did know that!

Travis: Well, okay. Yeah, I know you— okay. So...

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: We wanted to have an event.

Teresa: Let's tell them about it.

Travis: Okay, great.

Teresa: Because we both know about it.

Travis: We wanted to have an event that was kind of a combination of, like, "Hey. Thank you for your support, and thank you for being here," and also a chance to maybe introduce some new listeners and new friends to the Max Fun family. So, for the next, uh, two weeks, starting October 11th through the 22nd, uh, Max Fun is gonna be putting out special content, uh, the episodes are all gonna be very new-person friendly.

They're gonna be very much, like, "Hey, you don't need to know anything about the show to listen to this episode."

We want to welcome in new people. We've got crossover events. We did, uh, a special episode with *Tights and Fights*.

Teresa: So fun.

Travis: Where we talked about, like, the etiquette and, like, rivalry and, like... of professional wrestling. Basically, like, character work of professional wrestling. It was an absolute treat. Um, and there's gonna be, like, a whole fun, like, feed for those. Um, we— it's wonderful.

Um, and you can find all that stuff at Maximumfun.org/blockparty, and there's gonna be special events, too. I'm doing, like, a game stream with some fun folks playing some Jackbox games one night, and a bunch of stuff like that. So it's gonna be a blast, and it's gonna be a perfect time for you to share *Shmanners* with a friend, uh, because we're gonna make sure that it's very— I mean, it's user-friendly all the time anyways, but—

Teresa: Of course it is.

Travis: Uh, it'll be a great time for you to share with a friend. Also, we mentioned the live show of *The Adventure Zone*, but one more time, because why not? It's going to be on November 5th at 9 PM Eastern Time, but it's available video on demand for two weeks. Um, and you can get tickets for that at bit.ly/tazvirtual. Uh, it is in a series that we call Hootenanny, which is about, like— I think the year is, like, 2091, and it's a country band that travels through space, um, that includes... let's see. There's, like, a prince from a spice planet named Benny Gene Esserit. There is a draw android arcade game turned sentient bass player named Shoots McCracken. There is a semi-organic sentient data cube named, I believe, Number 48, who is obsessed with Tim McGraw. And there is a, uh, last of the American balladeers, who is a strange combination of ultraconservative named Pepsi Liberty. [muffled laughter] And it's very silly.

Teresa: I was gonna say, it's like Red Dwarf, the roleplaying game. But—

Travis: Sure. It's kind of like a combination of Red Dwarf and Red Green, honestly, in a weird way.

Teresa: [laughs] Yes. Yes indeed.

Travis: Tickets are just \$10, and you can get those at bit.ly/tazvirtual. Uh, we have also got a lot of new merch over at the McElroy Merch store. You can check that out, including our pin of the month, which is Hell

Raven, AKA Dell Craven, which is a superhero character that Griffin played in an Adventure Zone live show that we played called Just Us, that's about superheroes trying to pretend to be normal people.

Teresa: Hmm!

Travis: Uh, and he's a bird man. [laughs] It's very funny. But it also, uh, helps benefit the National Latina Institute for Reproductive Justice, which builds Latina and Latinx power to fight for the fundamental human right to reproductive health, dignity, and justice.

Uh, we've also got some TAZ notebooks over there, some Candlesnights wrapping paper, a lot of stuff. And, in case you didn't hear, *The Adventure Zone* is now weekly, so if you're excited about that, go check that out and tell a friend. Uh, we also are back with our *Great British Bake-Off* podcast series called *Bake On*. Uh, it just gets more and more fun to do it.

Teresa: Sure does!

Travis: I really liked our last episode. We talked about biscuit week.

Teresa: Mmm.

Travis: It was fun, and suddenly 40 minutes had passed.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Um, and yeah! So— oh! Just in case you're interested in this, I just did a stream on my Twitch stream in which I taste-tested some nonalcoholic whiskeys. And if you're like, "Huh. That sounds weird and interesting." It was! Go check it out.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Uh, [Twitch.tv/thetravismcelroy](https://www.twitch.tv/thetravismcelroy).

Teresa: We always also thank Brent "brentalfloss" Black for writing our theme music, which is available as a ringtone where those are found. Thank you to Kayla M. Wasil for our Twitter thumbnail art. That is @shmannerstcast, where we got all of these delightful questions for bonfires.

Uh, thank you to Bruja Betty Pinup Photography for our fan-run Facebook group cover picture. If you love to give and get excellent advice from other fans, go ahead and join that group. We are always looking for topic suggestions and idiom submissions. Please send those to Alex at shmannerstcast@gmail.com

Travis: Uh, and I think that's gonna do it! Did we thank— uh, did we thank Alex?

Teresa: [gasps] Thank you, Alex.

Travis: Alex, we couldn't do it without you. Rachel, our editor, couldn't do it without you. Thank you both so very, very much. That's gonna do it for us. Join us again next week!

Teresa: No RSVP required!

Travis: You've been listening to *Shmanners*...

Teresa: Manners, *Shmanners*. Get it.

[theme music plays]

[chord]

Maximumfun.org.
Comedy and Culture.
Artist Owned.
Audience Supported.