

## Shmanners 295: Idioms Part 10

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**Travis:** You know, it's just like they say, a cat that stitches has the rolling.  
I— What?

**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:** How are you?

**Teresa:** I'm going to ask how are you? You ran out of steam pretty early in that joke.

**Travis:** Yeah. So, I am sick. I've been sick for a couple of days now. It's not The Sick. Just sick.

**Teresa:** We've been tested.

**Travis:** And so I'm still kind of rebuilding my body.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Yeah, and so I'm just a little low energy. But I'm going to sparkle. I'm going to bring it. I'm going to turn it up and turn it on and turn it loose.

**Teresa:** Well, you're in luck because it is a very special, special day, which I think will carry us through, be the wind beneath our wings. Because today is the 10th installment of Idioms.

**Travis:** It is. And isn't it also, like, our Shmanner-versary? I think it's a Shmanner-versary.

**Teresa:** Is it like 500 episodes or something?

**Travis:** Maybe five years? I don't know. I got to look.

**Teresa:** Five years, 500 episodes.

**Travis:** That is not how it works, baby.

**Teresa:** [cackling]

**Travis:** We're not doing— We're not doing 100 episodes a year. You know that, right?

**Teresa:** It's definitely— It could be five years, because we started right when I was pregnant with Beebs, right?

**Travis:** Yeah. Let's see. I want to look.

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Travis:** But you go ahead and start.

**Teresa:** I will, I will. And we want to thank everyone.

**Travis:** Oh, next week is the five-year Shmanner-versary.

**Teresa:** Oh, jumped the gun.

**Travis:** Next week is the Shmanner-versary.

**Teresa:** That's an idiom. Did you get it?

**Travis:** Jumped the gun. Yeah.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** That's about racing, though.

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Travis:** Or, year. Because you go before the start of—

**Teresa:** Right, yes. And we said it was our anniversary.

**Travis:** No, I understand. But if we're explaining idioms...

**Teresa:** Oh, okay!

**Travis:** ...and you're using an idiom that I know the meaning of—

**Teresa:** Oh, yay!

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** We want to say thank you.

**Travis:** Right.

**Teresa:** Thank you, you. Listener-you.

**Travis:** Me?

**Teresa:** No. Listeners.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** For continuing to support us with these idioms. There is no way we could keep track of all of the idioms we use and need to research. But you guys sending one in at a time, we really appreciate it.

**Travis:** And thank you to Alex. We'll thank Alex again, but she does such diligent work going through these idioms and researching for us. It's great.

**Teresa:** Our first one is "Oopsie-daisy," and by extension, "Upsy-daisy."

**Travis:** Wait, I guess that's an— I never thought of that. Oopsie-daisy is just like, I made kind of a whimsical mistake. I don't think you would say it, like, if you're a surgeon who nicks something you shouldn't. "Oopsie-daisy!"

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Travis:** But it's more just like, "Oh, I was walking, I tripped, and this pie went in your face! Oopsie-daisy!"

**Teresa:** So, these two, oopsie-daisy and upsy-daisy, are two different things. Although, they sound similar. These were suggested by Susan C. Thank you, Susan. "Oopsie-daisy" is a soft way to say you made a mistake, like you were talking about. A surgeon probably doesn't say oopsie-daisy.

**Travis:** No.

**Teresa:** And "upsy-daisy" is a childlike term to encourage someone to get out of bed or just generally get a move on.

**Travis:** Okay. Why daisy?

**Teresa:** Here we go. Miriam Webster has a pretty solid hypothesis. In the 17th century, the term "lackaday" was an expression of regret, surprise, or grief.

**Travis:** Sure.

**Teresa:** I know this term from a song that I had to sing in college, *But Not for Me* is the name of the song.

**Travis:** Well, I know, like lackadaisical, right?

**Teresa:** Yeah, sure. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Travis:** Where it's just kind of melancholy and low energy.

**Teresa:** Lacking life or zest.

**Travis:** Sure.

**Teresa:** It could be, maybe, lackadaisical short to daisy? Hmm? Daisy is in it.

**Travis:** I mean, sure.

**Teresa:** So maybe the "daisy" part of oopsie-daisy and upsy-daisy is basically a light kind of scolding, right? For lack of zest.

**Travis:** I get it, but that's a bit of a stretch, right? Because you could say, like, Daisy Fuentes has "daisy" in her name. Maybe that's it, but there's no connection to that.

**Teresa:** Well, there is a connection. I just explained it to you. Say lackadaisical without the word "daisy" in it.

**Travis:** I'm not saying that "daisy" isn't in lackadaisical.

**Teresa:** Well, it is.

**Travis:** [laughs] No! I'm agreeing with you that it is. It just seems like a big, logical leap.

**Teresa:** And it's very possible that language that is ever evolving just took off the front and the end of the word and changed lackadaisical into daisy.

**Travis:** Okay. You're clearly right and I'm sorry.

**Teresa:** Thank you. Okay, next one.

**Travis:** I'm sick. Be nice.

**Teresa:** No.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** The next one is also sent in by Susan C. Uh, "shoo-in."

**Travis:** Okay, so a shoo-in is like, you're definitely going to win or succeed, right? So it's just like, "Oh, yeah, they are the greatest archer in town. It's a shoe-in or they're a shoo-in."

**Teresa:** Yes. Would you tell me how one spells shoo-in?

**Travis:** Okay, I know this is a trick, but I'll just say my gut, which is S-H-O-E-I-N.

**Teresa:** That is incorrect, sir.

**Travis:** Is it more like shew, like S-H-E-W?

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Travis:** Oh, see, I—

**Teresa:** No, no, no, wait, sorry, I wasn't listening. [laughs]

**Travis:** Oh, it's a great episode.

**Teresa:** I thought that you would get it, and so I was ready to say yes.

**Travis:** Well, thank you?

**Teresa:** It's— [giggling] S-H-O-O. Shoo.

**Travis:** Okay, I mean, we're saying the same—

**Teresa:** Okay. It comes from horse racing in the 1930s.

**Travis:** Okay, yeah, I could have guessed that. But see, that's why I would have guessed shoe, like a horseshoe is why I thought that, because I was connecting it to horses. Anyway, okay, go on.

**Teresa:** But it's not what you expect because it's not about shoes. So in the 1930s, horse racing sometimes was more rigged than it should have been.

**Travis:** Sure.

**Teresa:** And when it was decided who would win, the other jockeys would hold their horses back. Maybe also where that one comes from, right?

**Travis:** Oh, hold your horses?

**Teresa:** Yeah. And quite literally shoo the winner in. So that's something when you—

**Travis:** And nobody noticed that— There weren't people like, "Why'd they stop?" [laughs]

**Teresa:** So— [laughs] When you yell or you're trying to coax an animal to go somewhere, like you might shoo a fly, right? Shoo then became the phrase to describe a certain winner, someone whose competitors would quite literally lead them into victory. Although this concept, you know, comes from horse racing, which really shouldn't be rigged, it doesn't carry today the stigma of any cheating. It just means that you're the most likely winner.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Yeah. And while we're at it, "hold your horses" is next.

**Travis:** Okay. So hold your horses, is that literally that? Hold your horses back?

**Teresa:** Hold on, hold on. Alex took the last one to its logical conclusion, correct? Right?

**Travis:** Sure.

**Teresa:** So she was like, "Well, hold your horses. I need to know what that is." And turns out that the two of them are not related. [laughs]

**Travis:** Oh, okay. You got me, Alex.

**Teresa:** Me too.

**Travis:** Got me good on that one.

**Teresa:** Maybe somebody will read the copy before we start next time.

**Travis:** Hey, I'm the fool. You're the expert. There's a dynamic that needs to be maintained here in order for an interesting, creative product. If you're like, "What is hold your horses?" And then I just answered and you're like, "Yeah." That's not funny.

**Teresa:** [giggling] Alright.

**Travis:** I'm trying to make a quality product for people to consume and forget about things for one minute. If we could just give people one minute's peace in this dag-blasted world. Okay.

**Teresa:** There are two probable origins of this. It might be quite literal, stemming from the 17th century, where one of the punishments for breaking the law is that you could be trampled by horses.

**Travis:** Sure.

**Teresa:** And the person in charge would call "hold, you horses" to stop the horses from trampling you before you were tied to the ground.

**Travis:** Yeah, that would be embarrassing. Can you imagine?



**Teresa:** Another theory about the idiom "hold your horses" comes from the early days of the Erie Canal.

**Travis:** What?

**Teresa:** The Erie Canal was completed in 1825—

**Travis:** I actually, I know it as the Spooky Canal, but go on.

**Teresa:** [laughs] And was a 375-mile waterway used to transport heavy goods from Albany, New York, to Buffalo. The cargo would be loaded on barges and then teams of horses would be attached by a tow line so that the animals could pull the barges through the canal. And, of course, there was only one path, because why would you make two paths?

**Travis:** Sure.

**Teresa:** One on either side of the canal? No!

**Travis:** That seems like a lot of work. I mean, it is weird that they went to the trouble of digging a canal and then they were like, "We're just going to have one thing."

**Teresa:** "One path." So then there was definitely, you know, complications if one team of horses was getting too close to another team, right? Not only could that rile up the horses, it could tangle the lines, and then everybody would be in trouble. So hold your horses was a serious order to stop your horses so that there wouldn't be any collisions. Apparently, the phrase wasn't widely used in print until, like, 1842, which is plenty of time after the canal was built.

**Travis:** That's so weird. I just assumed that one of the things would be like, when people used to drive carriages and horses through, like, city streets, that it would be like a command for pedestrians, but like, pedestrians are crossing, so hold your horses.

But then I think about it and like, there weren't, like, pedestrian laws, there weren't, like, traffic cops out protecting pedestrians along the street. So I guess it wasn't a concern.

**Teresa:** Right.

**Travis:** You either got hit by the horses or you didn't and that was kind of up to you.

**Teresa:** [laughing] And so I'm thinking this is probably better than the other one.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Anyway, next one is suggested by Emin R. "Poring over."

**Travis:** Okay, so pouring over is like, when you are studying something or you're like— See, that's the thing. To me, I think it is, like, you're doing an in-depth dive into something. Like you're pouring over the notes. And it's not just like glancing at them or kind of like a cursory— It's like I'm going over them again and again and again.

**Teresa:** Yes. I mean, that is what we would term the usage.

**Travis:** The only thing I think is maybe it is like, because you literally are, like, it's like you're pouring your attention over them, like—

**Teresa:** No, no, no, no. It's spelled P-O-R-I-N-G.

**Travis:** What?

**Teresa:** Not pouring, P-O-U-R-I-N-G.

**Travis:** What? I'm 38-years-old. I am a college graduate, madam. You're telling me that to pore over something is P-O-R?

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Travis:** Oh, my God.

**Teresa:** Like the things on your face, like the little holes for your hair follicles and such.

**Travis:** Teresa, what— I read books! I've read many books.

**Teresa:** Okay, but you don't have any kind of, like, middle English background. It comes from the middle English word poren, which means to gaze intently, look closely, or watch closely.

**Travis:** Like how your pores, you can see when you're up close.

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Travis:** I mean, pore also has an "e" on it, though, so.

**Teresa:** Well, but you wouldn't spell the "I-N-G," the participle.

**Travis:** Oh, yeah, I see what you're saying.

**Teresa:** You wouldn't put an "E-I-N-G."

**Travis:** Yeah. Okay, you know what? I'm wrong, and you're right, again.

**Teresa:** Anyway!

**Travis:** Another one on the board for Teresa.

**Teresa:** Here it is. In the past, if one were to read at night for a long amount of time, you would need a candle, right?

**Travis:** Sure.

**Teresa:** Or a lantern, which could cause eye strain. And there's a legend that says for you to pore over something, you were so obsessed or enchanted by the subject that it didn't matter if learning about it gave you poor eyesight.

**Travis:** But that's P-O-O-R!

**Teresa:** Yes, I know.

**Travis:** What? What?

**Teresa:** Ain't language funny?

**Travis:** It's a real kick in the teeth. Okay.

**Teresa:** Alright, let's do one more from Emin. Calling someone a "heel."

**Travis:** Okay, so when I think of "heel," I immediately think of— Well, we just did a pro wrestling episode.

**Teresa:** Right, yes.

**Travis:** But heel is kind of like two things, right? It's either to me, when someone says, "Ah, stop being a heel," it's like you're being kind of a jerk. Or it's like you're being kind of a stick in the mud. You're being not fun. "Aw, real heel."

**Teresa:** One online dictionary put it very colorfully. Alex says, "an incompetent or worthless criminal."

**Travis:** Sure. Okay. I don't know that in my head, I associate "heel" with "criminal," but sure.

**Teresa:** Well, here is why. "Perhaps you would call someone a heel, meaning they were in the lowest possible social position."

**Travis:** Oh, like the heel of a body.

**Teresa:** Sure, yes. Also, if you were very poor, you usually had to steal things to live.

**Travis:** Sure. But I'm saying, like, if you think about the lowest part of your body, the heel.

**Teresa:** Right.

**Travis:** Right? Right there on the bottom of your foot.

**Teresa:** It could also come from the idea of someone acting like a dog, following someone, literally stopping at their heels. The way a dog heels.

**Travis:** Hmm.

**Teresa:** Perhaps?

**Travis:** Okay. Okay. All right. Now I wonder, because I've always heard it about— This is so weird, but whenever I've thought about it in pro wrestling, you talk about the heel turn, right? Which is when you think someone has been a good guy or good person, and then they take a heel turn, and it is revealed that they're a heel, right? And I've always thought about it as literally like, you put your heel down and, like, spun on your heel.

**Teresa:** Well, does that ever refer to a wrestler who goes from the baddie to the goody, or is it only from the goody to the baddie?

**Travis:** You know, I've only ever heard about it as goody to the baddie, so maybe I'm associating that with the 180 degree.

**Teresa:** That also makes sense, right?

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Because if you go from a goody to a baddie, your status changes.

**Travis:** I wonder what the term is when it— A redemption arc? I don't know.

**Teresa:** Maybe, maybe. Oh, you know what? One more. One more from Emin.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Uh, knuckle down.

**Travis:** Okay, so knuckle down is like, let's get serious about this. Let's work a little bit harder, let's, like reel it— I almost said nose to the grindstone. That's another one.

**Teresa:** That's another one!

**Travis:** But let's really buckle down. That's another one.

**Teresa:** That's another one!

**Travis:** That's, like, put more focus and energy into finishing this.

**Teresa:** Yes. Get serious about a task.

**Travis:** It's always so hard not to define idioms with idioms.

**Teresa:** [laughs] This actually comes from marbles.

**Travis:** Wait, what? Really?

**Teresa:** The children's game, marbles. It first appeared in the mid 1860s and it comes directly from the schoolyard game. So to assume the correct shooting position for a game of marbles, one should put their knuckles directly on the ground in order to steady their shot. Thus the phrase "knuckle down."

**Travis:** Yeah, I'm doing it right now. You'll put your knuckle down to shoot because you wouldn't want to shoot a butt, because— Yeah!

**Teresa:** Yeah!

**Travis:** Do people still play marbles?

**Teresa:** No. I think Pogs is what people play. Which is—

**Travis:** Hey, babe?

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** There's no way people are playing Pogs in 2021 or 2022 even. Are you kidding me? Is that okay?

**Teresa:** I have seen Pogs on the interwebs!

**Travis:** Hey, look at me. Look at me. This is just for us. No one's listening. [quietly] Do you really think that in 2022 kids are playing Pogs?

**Teresa:** I think that more kids are playing Pogs than marbles.

**Travis:** You know what? I would bet you're wrong.

**Teresa:** [laughs] You know what's really a great game? Tiddly Winks. That's where—

**Travis:** I bet more people are playing Tiddly Winks than Pogs. How about a word from some other Max Fun shows?

[theme music plays]

**John:** I'm John Moe. My show, *Depresh Mode*, is all about mental health. And this week I talked with Amanda Knox. She spent four years in an Italian prison for a murder she didn't commit. That's a lot of trauma and she's okay talking about it. If I touch on something that you'd rather not get into, just say so. We'll cut the whole exchange out, but also seems like you're pretty open about a lot of things.

**Amanda:** Yeah, yeah. I am having trouble imagining anything that you could talk to me about that I—

**John:** I know. What are we going to throw Amanda Knox? *Depresh Mode* with John Moe, only on Maximum Fun.

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**Travis:** Okay, what's our next one?

**Teresa:** Next one is from Houston L. "Take a crack at it."

**Travis:** "Take a crack at it." I mean, yeah, like— Oh, give it a shot. Another one! Alright, like, try it, right? It's like, "Oh, I've never done it before. We'll take a crack at it, see how you do," or "You're up, you know, take a crack at it."

**Teresa:** There isn't much pressure associated with this phrase, right? Because you probably haven't done it before and it is an onomatopoeia.

**Travis:** Wait, really?

**Teresa:** Yeah. It refers to the cracking sound that a gunshot makes right after you take a shot at something, right? Take a shot at something, take a crack at it?

**Travis:** Sure. I, just the other day, tried to explain the concept of onomatopoeia to Bebe and we're like, "You know, it's a sound! Like moo!" And she's like, "Oh, so like crap." And I'm like, "No, that's not how it works!"

**Teresa:** [laughing] No, that's not it!

**Travis:** Nope, that's not— That's nothing.



**Teresa:** Uh, both of these idioms probably started in the 1800s. That era is full of a lot of shooting euphemisms.

**Travis:** [with a fake accent] Ah, yes. To hunt for pheasant, the grouse...

**Teresa:** Oh, no, no, no.

**Travis:** ... the pigeon, the clay pigeon. Not good eating, but good sport.

**Teresa:** Here's one. This was submitted by Cricket, by way of this phrase being used on *Downton Abbey*.

**Travis:** Ah, yes.

**Teresa:** "One swallow doesn't make a summer."

**Travis:** Okay, so I have no idea the meaning, like what you would use it for, but it has to be like, when the swallows return from Capistrano to clue you in that it is returned, that it's not cold anymore. But if you only see one, you can't say that everything's good now.

**Teresa:** Exactly. No, that's perfectly—

**Travis:** Oh, I was guessing. Okay, great!

**Teresa:** I mean, that was a great guess. It means even though something good happened, you can't rely on it. Just because you saw one swallow doesn't mean it's actually summertime, right? It's— It's—

**Travis:** Also, though, inherently, there's something about it that feels so classist to me. And it might just be because we have the context of, like, it was in *Downton Abbey*. But that doesn't sound like something someone, like working at the mill would say, like, "Well, let me tell you, son."

**Teresa:** I mean, probably not, but it is a reminder to work and not be overly optimistic, which is very British.

**Travis:** But I'm just saying, like, if I heard, like, somebody used that, I'd be like, "What? Who are you? What? What? Get out of here."

**Teresa:** It dates all the way back to Aesop's fables—

**Travis:** I wouldn't say that. I don't think I would say that. I think if anyone ever hears me say, "Whoa, one swallow doesn't make a summer," or whatever, I'm probably drunk and it's time for me to go home.

**Teresa:** [laughing] Like I said, it goes all the way back to Aesop's fables. The tale is called *The Young Man and the Swallow*, which is very much like the, um... What's the name of the actual one with the ants and the cricket? "The ants are preparing for winter..."

**Travis:** Of the name of it?

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** I don't know.

**Teresa:** I feel like that has a special name.

**Travis:** I'm sure it does. The— Oh, the lazy cricket. The... The...

**Teresa:** Anyway!

**Travis:** Unreliable bug.

**Teresa:** [giggling]

**Travis:** The bad boyfriend cricket.

**Teresa:** The young man lives recklessly. He spends his money on gambling and luxury until he only has a cloak to keep himself warm in the world. And the swallow returning was meant to symbolize the coming of warmer months. Just like you said, migrating back, it would be a sign of, you know, better times are on the way. Better weather.

But here's the thing. In this story, the dude sees only one very unusually early swallow fly by him, and he decides that means that spring is here, right? He doesn't need his cloak anymore, and he sells it to try to rebuild his fortune. He takes the money from selling his cloak and places one last bet and loses.

So now not only is he actually still broke, but the cold weather comes back and the man, at the end, later passes the same swallow that he had seen, which is now frozen.

**Travis:** Oh. Just like him.

**Teresa:** Just like he will be. I think we're supposed to surmise.

**Travis:** Okay, wait. I'm just gonna throw this out and you tell me if this is anything. A new telling of Aesop's fables called ASAP's fables.

**Teresa:** ASAP's?

**Travis:** And it just gets right to the point, right at the beginning.

**Teresa:** Ohh!

**Travis:** So it's just like one sentence and it's like, "Hey, it's going to get cold again." And that's all it says.

**Teresa:** [laughs] That's not really a fable, though.

**Travis:** No, but it's ASAP, right? It's right to the point.

**Teresa:** It needs a story to be a fable.

**Travis:** Dude saw a bird, sold his coat, got cold. Don't sell your coat.

**Teresa:** [laughs] Alright.

**Travis:** Yeah? Right to the point.

**Teresa:** I feel— I feel like this is like—

**Travis:** "Cricket didn't collect stuff, ants did. Cricket had to ask ants for food. Prepare for stuff." Four lines, max on all of these.

**Teresa:** I feel like this is really—

**Travis:** "Lion was mean to a mouse. Mouse pulled thorn from lion's paw. Lion was nice to a mouse. Everybody can help everybody." Four lines. Boom, boom, boom, boom.

**Teresa:** Okay, all of that is great. But I would like to celebrate the fact that this idiom can be actually traced to a story.

**Travis:** Sure.

**Teresa:** Having pretty much the same title as the idiom.

**Travis:** Yes. It is nice to have a definitive one that's not like, I don't know, maybe it's about barrels. I don't know.

**Teresa:** [laughs] Okay, here's one from Michael P. "I have a bone to pick with you."

**Travis:** Okay. So this is like— I associate it because a lot of the times when we talk about what the usage of these are, the thing about idioms is they often have kind of a nonspecific... I'm trying to think of the word I'm thinking of, but they have like an implied meaning.

**Teresa:** Right.

**Travis:** Where you could say, I have a bone to pick with you is like, I have a problem with you, right? But I associate it more with, like, I have something that's kind of annoying that I want to talk to you about and not like, you know, you stole my car. I have a bone to pick with you. It's more like you've been playing your music too loud and I have a bone to pick with you.

**Teresa:** Okay, okay.

**Travis:** You know what I mean? It's not usually a major complaint so much as it's just like, I'm getting really fed up with— That's another one.

**Teresa:** It just needs to be discussed is what you mean.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** It's not something where other people need to be involved. It just needs to be talked out. And this actually goes back all the way to the 1500s and the origin, again, is pretty simple. It comes from the behavior of dogs.

**Travis:** [gasps] I knew it! Because dogs like bones!

**Teresa:** They do. And they will continue to try to pick the last meat from the bone, no matter how difficult it is. So it's indicative that the phrase is referring to the person's ability to try to solve a time consuming problem.

**Travis:** Yeah, let's really— Okay, here's another one. Hash this out. Get to the bottom of this.

**Teresa:** Yep.

**Travis:** Um, like both of those come to mind where it's just like, you know what? We're going to talk this out. We're going to figure this out right now because I can't deal with it anymore.

**Teresa:** Right. Here is one from Kathy M. "Rob Peter to pay Paul."

**Travis:** Okay, so this one I know means, like, you would use it to say, like you're taking from something that needs it to give to something else that needs it, so now that first thing also needs it.

**Teresa:** A concrete example would be paying off a student loan with a credit card, right? Using money you don't actually have to pay off something that you actually need, right?

**Travis:** Right. So it's like you didn't really solve the problem.

**Teresa:** You just moved it.

**Travis:** You just moved it one person over.

**Teresa:** Um and here, specifically, when Kathy wrote in—

**Travis:** I've always thought it had to do with the Bible, because Peter and Paul are very biblical names. I've always associated—

**Teresa:** I mean, definitely. Um...

**Travis:** Or it's Peter, Paul and Mary. They're the ones who did *Puff the Magic Dragon*, right?

**Teresa:** Among others. It doesn't quite go back all the way that far, but, but, but! Listen up.

**Travis:** I am! We're in a tiny box. I can't go anywhere.

**Teresa:** [laughs] There are several theories. Here are three. The first theory is that it originated from English folklore and alludes to an event in the mid-16th century in England. At that time, the Church of St. Peter in Westminster had been dissolved and absorbed by the Diocese of London. And a few years after the church was closed, many of the church's assets were expropriated for repairs to another, more famous Church, St. Paul's Cathedral, right? So...

**Travis:** So, it's literally taking stuff from one church, the St. Peter one, giving it to the Church of St. Paul.

**Teresa:** Exactly.

**Travis:** Okay. But that doesn't really feel like robbing.

**Teresa:** Okay, well, the other theory originated in Middle English as a collection of common names. For example, Peter and Paul would be tossed around like Tom, Dick and Harry, right? That's another one. And the idea is

that these names were simply tossed on top of an old adage about spreading around your debts instead of actually paying them off.

**Travis:** That one, I think, makes more sense to me because I think the idea of, like, so you owe Tom money, so you're going to borrow from Dick to pay Tom. Like, that, to me, feels like what we sometimes run into with idioms where it didn't have to have, like, one origin. It's just such common, like, sense that I can see how it would come out of just general, especially then if we're talking about, like, the 1500s and 1600s, when they start to write things down, then you're going to write down "Rob Peter to pay Paul," and that's why it stuck that way.

**Teresa:** Here's the last one. So Paul and Peter, in biblical times, later they shared the same feast day, and it was quite common to hear their names together. And so it was kind of assumed that they became kind of a catch all for all things that weren't really different, okay?

**Travis:** Sure. Peter, Paul, Paul, Peter.

**Teresa:** Six of one, half a dozen of the other. That kind of stuff.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** And so it's different ways of naming the two, like the same two people. So if you didn't go to Paul's Church, you probably went to Peter and Paul's Church. If you're robbing Peter to pay Paul, you're just kind of shifting things around. You're not actually doing anything differently because they're the same.

**Travis:** So it's kind of like Peter and Paul are married and so you're robbing Peter to pay Paul. But they share a bank account, you know what I mean? You're stealing Paul's money, really.

**Teresa:** I thought you were going back to Peter, Paul and Mary.

**Travis:** No— Oh, because I said marry in there?

**Teresa:** [overlapping] The folk group.

**Travis:** Uh, Teresa it's spelled different because this marry has two Rs and the Mary you're thinking of has only one R. You silly goose.

**Teresa:** So to wrap this up, we've got some amazing sayings from communities around the world and we always want to hear those. So if you have a cultural saying that you love, a silly phrase used in high school or something ridiculous that your grandma says all the time, you should tell us that. So tweet at us or email it to Alex at ShmannersCast@gmail.com. Okay. In France...

**Travis:** Yes?

**Teresa:** They describe someone having a midlife crisis as someone having a midday demon.

**Travis:** What?

**Teresa:** Yeah. [laughs]

**Travis:** That is so much better.

**Teresa:** It definitely is.

**Travis:** Because midlife crisis makes it sound like, I don't know, maybe it is severe in some ways, but I like the, like, "Yeah, they're having a midday demon, did you see? Did you see the car he bought? Yeah, that's a midday demon car right there."

**Teresa:** I think that it also shows, like, it illustrates the fleeting nature of the sort of thing.

**Travis:** Sure.

**Teresa:** Because when we think of someone having a midlife crisis, it is like something where they try to do things to feel better and nothing works. So it's over pretty quickly.



**Travis:** Well, that's the thing is I don't know anybody who's made serious improvement lifestyle changes...

**Teresa:** Exactly.

**Travis:** ... and, like, really gotten their stuff together as they turn, like, you know, 45 or 50 or whatever and have their friends go, like, "Real midlife crisis."

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** I always associate with like, "What are you doing?"

**Teresa:** If you're in Portugal and you're being way too nice to your awful ex-boyfriend, your best friend might tell you that you're feeding the donkey sponge cake.

**Travis:** What?

**Teresa:** I love it.

**Travis:** That's another good one.

**Teresa:** Surely is, surely is. You're being really nice to someone who doesn't deserve it.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Right? The donkey doesn't care if it's sponge cake...

**Travis:** [crosstalk] Donkey doesn't care!

**Teresa:** ... or straw. It's going to eat it no matter what.

**Travis:** Donkey don't care!

**Teresa:** Probably doesn't even enjoy it more than the other.

**Travis:** No, he's too dumb. Your boyfriend is too dumb to— Ex-boyfriend. Hey. Ex-boyfriend.

**Teresa:** Ex-boyfriend. We've moved on.

**Travis:** Too dumb.

**Teresa:** In America, you might say something is too—

**Travis:** Wait, this is where we live.

**Teresa:** This is where we live. Yes, but I'm getting to it.

**Travis:** Oh, okay.

**Teresa:** You might say something is a hop, skip, and a jump away, right? But in Germany, if something is not very far, a German person would say that it's only a cat's jump away.

**Travis:** That's great, because then that could be a sliding scale. That's a cat's jump. That one has more of a monkey jump, a little bit further. Ooh, that's a Kangaroo jump. I mean, you don't want to go there.

**Teresa:** I don't—

**Travis:** Take you forever.

**Teresa:** I don't know if that applies, but that would be great to know if those are also German idioms.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Um, if you are celebrating Valentine's Day in Spain, I really hope someone doesn't quote, "give you pumpkins," which is a Spanish idiom for rejecting someone.

**Travis:** Oh, okay. There's a lot of things that could have been that would have terrible. "How'd it go last night?"

"They gave me pumpkins."

"Oh, God, no. I'm so sorry."

**Teresa:** "You need to get to the doctor right now!"

**Travis:** "I need to go to the doctor right now!"

**Teresa:** In Spain and Greece...

**Travis:** They could be like, "I was poisoned. They gave me pumpkins. I have 48 hours to live."

**Teresa:** [laughing] It's not quite that dire.

**Travis:** It feels like it, though! There's something about pumpkin that of all the different things it could have been, it feels so bad.

**Teresa:** Gave me bananas.

**Travis:** Gave me bananas is not that bad. Feels kind of silly, kind of lighthearted. Gave me strawberries? Ooh, it's kind of romantic, it's kind of nice. Gave me apples, oh, they want your health. They gave me pumpkins. Oh, no.

**Teresa:** Specifically, pumpkins in Spain and Greece were considered an anti-aphrodisiac.

**Travis:** That's true. Have you ever seen someone eat a pumpkin? It's not sexy.

**Teresa:** I have not, but I don't think it would be very seductive.

**Travis:** This is what I'm saying. It's not sexy. Not sexy to see someone eat a whole raw pumpkin.

**Teresa:** [laughing]

**Travis:** Now I'm just picturing, like, "Hey, hey! [chomps]."

**Teresa:** I don't know if one can eat raw pumpkin, can you? I mean, I suppose you can.

**Travis:** If you try hard enough, you can eat anything.

**Teresa:** If you try hard enough. Okay. Next, if you are on the Trans-Siberian railway without a ticket, a Russian person might say that you are, quote, "riding as a hare."

**Travis:** Okay. Like H-A-R-E?

**Teresa:** Yes. Which is in reference to the fact that rabbits would actually sometimes hop on the train and ride.

**Travis:** [gasps] I love that.

**Teresa:** And of course, bunnies never pay for tickets.

**Travis:** Wait, no, stop, tell me— Tell me everything about these railroad rabbits, please.

**Teresa:** I think that it's just a better way to get around.

**Travis:** But, I mean, how often would you just be sitting on the train and be, like, "Mm. Rabbit." Like, how often does that happen?

**Teresa:** Often enough for there to be an idiom about it.

**Travis:** I love this.

**Teresa:** So pretty often, I'm gonna assume.

**Travis:** This is, like, when you hear about, like, stray cats and dogs and stuff that get on subways or get on trains.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** Except a rabbit will be way more exciting because here's the thing, I don't know about other people, but living in Ohio, we see deer in our yard all the time, to the point where they destroyed a tree of mine and I'm very upset about it. And sometimes I'm like, [frustrated] "oh, deer." But if I see a rabbit or a bunny? Oh, I'm excited every time.

**Teresa:** I think it's because rabbits and bunnies are smaller and they're harder to see.

**Travis:** So cute. So cute.

**Teresa:** But they're harder to see and so there are lots of rabbits in the area. We just don't see them because they're much better at hiding than deer.

**Travis:** Okay. But they're also so cute.

**Teresa:** Okay. Finland.

**Travis:** I've heard of it, yeah.

**Teresa:** So, Finland has a lot of them, okay? And these idioms are— nearly all of them are nature related.

**Travis:** Wait, I just thought of a joke.

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Travis:** If you're American and you go into a bathroom, what are you when you're in the bathroom?

**Teresa:** You're a-peein' [European].

**Travis:** You're a-peein'. And what are you when you leave the bathroom? You Finnish.

**Teresa:** [laughs] That's a good one.

**Travis:** Thank you.

**Teresa:** I like it. So they're often nature related. And here are some examples. If you're really strong, a fellow Finn might say that you have—

**Travis:** You're a real Travis.

**Teresa:** You have rye—

**Travis:** Nothing! No reaction from Teresa whatsoever.

**Teresa:** I'm trying to collect myself. You have rye in your wrists. And if your Finnish grandmother might have said, "Frost brings the pigs home."

**Travis:** What's that?

**Teresa:** To refer to someone who always comes in to eat and be warm. Once it comes, once it gets cold.

**Travis:** Oh, so wait, you say rye in your wrist, like R-Y-E?

**Teresa:** Yeah. Because you're very strong.

**Travis:** Okay. Cool.

**Teresa:** Because it's a strong flour.

**Travis:** Sure, yeah. I mean, there's stronger things but...

**Teresa:** No, rye! The flour is actually a very strong, hardy flour.

**Travis:** No, yeah, absolutely. But there's also, like, stones. There's also that metal.

**Teresa:** I— Yeah, but you wouldn't say you've got, uh, spelt in your— No, spelt is also another really...

**Travis:** He's got cake! He's got cake flour.

**Teresa:** ... hardy flour.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Here's another one is, uh, let a frog out of your mouth.

**Travis:** What?

**Teresa:** It means you said something stupid and embarrassing.

**Travis:** Oh, I like that. Man. "You really let the frog out on that one."

**Teresa:** Oh, yeah.

**Travis:** I like that.

**Teresa:** So once again, please do send in more idioms. We love them.

**Travis:** Almost as much as we love each other.

**Teresa:** Aww.

**Travis:** That's not true. That would be weird if we loved idioms as much as we loved each other.

**Teresa:** And Alex reads them. So say hi to Alex,  
ShmannersCast@gmail.com.

**Travis:** And thank you to Rachel, our editor, without whom we would not be able to make the show. Thank you to MaximumFun.org our podcast home. Go check out all the other amazing shows there at MaximumFun.org. You can check out all the McElroy projects at McElroy.family. Check out Mcelroy merch at McElroyMerch.com. If you want to see me do some streaming, trying to do more of that consistently, you can check that out at Twitch.tv/TheTravisMcElroy. What else, Teresa?

**Teresa:** We always 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 @SchmannerCast. And when we have topics that we look for listener questions about, that is where we post those. Also, 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 and have a great time.

**Travis:** That sounds great. 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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