

Shmanners 317: Victorian Sexuality

Published July 8, 2022

[Listen here at themcelroy.family](https://themcelroy.family)

Travis: Hey, folks! Husband host Travis here. I wanted to do a quick disclaimer at the top. This episode is about, uh, basically, sex in the Victorian era. There's a lot of adult themes in here, so it may not be appropriate to listen to this with kids around. Just wanted to give you a heads up. Otherwise, enjoy the episode!

[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 all right. Doing fine. Doing okay. A-okay!

Travis: I'm really excited to talk about this week's episode. But you know what else I'm really excited about to talk about this week's episode?

Teresa: What?

Travis: We have a special guest. "[imitates English Countess] It's me, the Dowager Countess! I'm here to help you talk about all these inappropriate things. Oh, my!"

Teresa: Um, the Dowager Countess, I believe, was from the Regency period. We are talking strictly Victorian.

Travis: "I can still have opinions."

Teresa: But I'm going to introduce you to a new character later.

Travis: "Oh! Is he a young bachelor that could marry my granddaughter, Cecilia?"

Teresa: No. It's not.

Travis: "Okay."

Teresa: It's an older lady, quite like yourself.

Travis: "Ah! But competition?"

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: "Oh, my! I'm going to take a break then. Bye!" [imitates walking sound effect] Ba-bum, ba-bum, ba-bum... door slam!

Teresa: [laughing]

Travis: Okay. Well, she's gone.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: So—

Teresa: Thank goodness. Whew.

Travis: Yeah. She's so judgy.

Teresa: [laughing]

Travis: She's so judgy. She's all up in everybody's business. But can I tell you? Kind of funny in that way, where it's just like, I'd watch a show about her.

Teresa: Oh, would you?

Travis: But I don't want her in the booth. You know what I mean?

Teresa: Oh, okay. All right.

Travis: Yeah. You get me. You get me.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: So, we're talking about, I think—so, Alex—

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: ... summarized the title, like, "Victorian Sexuality" or something.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Is that a good summary of it?

Teresa: I mean, it is. Um, more like, "The tools Victorians used to suppress themselves."

Travis: Oh, boy. Now here's—okay, this is something I know, right? Because, uh, there's a wonderful—I think we've referenced it before, but Audible podcast.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: With Stephen Fry.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Called *Victorian Secrets*. And it's really, really, like, audioscaped. A combination of, like, historical, and then he'll, like, act out scenes where he's himself, but, like, interviewing people from the Victorian era or whatever.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: It's very, very interesting. But they do a whole episode about, like, Victorians and sexuality and, like, sensuality and sex.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: And basically, the idea is we think of them as very repressed, and in some ways, they were publicly, but it wasn't like the Puritans because there was a very, like, thriving, *just* below the surface, underground of, like, "And this is where we go to look at ladies naked. And this is where you can buy pornography. And this is where this thing is."

Teresa: Right. There was a façade that one was expected to—to put on—

Travis: Right.

Teresa: ... is the thing.

Travis: But it wasn't like folks weren't doing it.

Teresa: Of course not. And the more that we find out about Queen Victoria and Prince Albert—the more that we find out the *worst* person to talk about, um, repressing your sexuality, is to talk about Victoria.

Travis: Oh! What?

Teresa: I mean, she's kind of—she is kind of just an enigma in that way, where like, this whole society is about, like, being very prim and proper. And, you know us, we're going to talk about like how—in all the ways that you can refute sexual advances. And then Queen Victoria had a whole gaggle of kids, so she obviously knew what she was doing. And—

Travis: Well, but that's that façade thing you were talking about, right? Because then you could always say, like, "Well, she's married." Right?

Teresa: Right.

Travis: Right. Like this idea, but—

Teresa: Right. But even— even married women were discouraged from it.

Travis: Really?

Teresa: Yeah. We'll talk about it, but, like, you know, we read about— we read in her diaries, and we, you know, go through her personal effects. And there

like—there's, like, a naked statue of—[giggles] of Albert that she loved to just, like, stare at and draw. And, like—

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: She was obviously—

Travis: She stans her husband. I don't think [crosstalk].

Teresa: ... very attracted to, and very much enjoyed her married life.

Travis: And her marital bed?

Teresa: And her marital bed. Yeah.

Travis: Good for her.

Teresa: So, it's very weird.

Travis: It's all about façade, though, isn't it?

Teresa: Yeah. Yeah.

Travis: Right?

Teresa: That's it.

Travis: 'Cause everything—it's so interesting because everything about the Victorian era appears to be like, "If anyone glances at me, I want them to *think* I'm the most upstanding person, but I also want to be fun."

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Like, "I don't want people to *not* like being around me."

Teresa: Well, maybe you do. Okay. So, the general consensus for this time period is that intimate relations were something to be avoided at all costs.

Travis: Mm.

Teresa: And were—and people found very bizarre and creative ways to get around doing, um, [giggles softly] Alex says—

Travis: Why are you giggling? Go on.

Teresa: [through laugh] “The horizontal mambo.”

Travis: Oh, Alex.

Teresa: [bursts out laughing]

Travis: The beast with two backs, as I believe Shakespeare referred to it.

Teresa: I believe that is what Shakespeare says. So, here’s the thing, right? We talk a lot about the media at this time.

Travis: Sure. Yeah.

Teresa: Because, um, there were a lot of, like, up-and-coming businesses. They wanted to sell things. They wanted to make things. Lots of inventors and everybody trying to make a buck. And all kinds of stuff, right?

Travis: Well, and this is, like, the *thriving* of, like, the newspaper era. Not just newspapers but, like, magazines, and periodicals, and everything where there’s, like, stories published in them. And then there’s, like, we start to get, you know, people writing in, and advertisements. As you said, everything really starts to kick off because of the Industrial Revolution. Where it’s just like, “Head down to the shop. Don’t be the last person to get one.”

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: We’re selling things en masse.

Teresa: Right. Um, so, one of the ways that were advertised, in order to, um, *calm* your desires—

Travis: Oi? Oi-oi.

Teresa: Because it was truly believed that if you avoided anything that might excite your senses—

Travis: Uh-huh.

Teresa: ... or warm your nether regions with [alluringly] tantalizing spices.

Travis: Oh, boy.

Teresa: You could—

Travis: Hey, I hated everything about that.

Teresa: [laughing]

Travis: Not the way you said it, mind you. But just about every word you said in there. I think there's something about "nether regions" that makes you think about hell. [laughs loudly]

Teresa: Yeah. But you could combat your sexual desires by sticking to bland food.

Travis: But now, I just want to say, I don't—now that I've said that nether regions made me think about H-E- double hockey sticks, it's probably not an accident.

Teresa: Probably not.

Travis: I bet that's the word choice. But that—was the Battle Creek Sanatorium during this time?

Teresa: It was. Yes. The Seventh Day Adventist Church—

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: ... was, um, inspired by this theory.

Travis: Right.

Teresa: And so, it is— that was a *little* bit after this, right?

Travis: But, like, it's part of the same movement, right?

Teresa: Yeah, the same movement. Yes.

Travis: So, John Kellogg. I mean, this is a great story. Well, interesting, I guess, but Kellogg's— you know, Corn Flakes, comes from... "Don't have sex." Um, and it was supposed to be—

Teresa: The non-sugared version.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: His brother put sugar on it 'cause he wanted to actually sell it.

Travis: Right. Correct.

Teresa: Um, [laughs]

Travis: But it was supposed to be this super bland food that was so bland you couldn't possibly be aroused afterwards.

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: And this is, not to cross streams with a different podcast that I executive produce, but this was a thing with the immortal baby, right? That we talked about on *Chasing Immortality* on our first episode, Shaffer and the Immortal Baby. Is that this idea of, if you could keep a kid from, like, hot sauce and stuff, then, like, they would live forever.

Basically, the immortal baby theory was, if you didn't teach a kid that death was an inevitability, they wouldn't die. Right? Like, you could say, like, "Yeah, death's a thing, but whatever, you can avoid it like you would avoid a cold by washing your hands or whatever."

Teresa: Interesting.

Travis: Also, for some reason, no prunes for the immortal baby. I don't know.

Teresa: Hmm. So, to be avoided are things like chocolate and wine—

Travis: Oh, God. Oh.

Teresa: ... and mustard.

Travis: Too spicy.

Teresa: Too spicy.

Travis: Oh, my God! Too spicy. Ah!

Teresa: [laughs softly] But, um— but things that were, like, plain like corn and porridge and bread and things.

Travis: Bran.

Teresa: Bran. Yeah.

Travis: That was another thing. All about being regular.

Teresa: Hmm.

Travis: It was a big thing. At least in the Battle Creek thing.

Teresa: [giggles softly] At the sanitorium.

Travis: Yeah. It was *all* about being— a lot of enemas was their whole deal.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Ew.

Teresa: Another way that people believed you could, um, stop up your desires, was just never talking about it. We don't speak of it.

Travis: Oh, my God.

Teresa: It's unspeakable. I mean, it's kind of like—it's kind of like what we've talked about as far as, like, um, flatulence goes, right? So, if—

Travis: Please go on!

Teresa: Remember?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: We talked about farts.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: And if it happens, you just don't say anything.

Travis: True.

Teresa: You don't acknowledge it; therefore, it doesn't exist.

Travis: Well, this is why it's interesting to see that this kind of environment then gives rise to people like Sigmund Freud, right?

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Where it's just like, "Oh, no one's talking about it, huh? I'm going to make a whole career out of making people talk about it."

'Cause the interesting thing is, psychologically, all of this stuff is, uh, I mean, probably goes without saying, but bunk, hokum. Because the less you talk about it, and the less you address it, and the more you repress that kind of thing, then it's like a build-up, right?

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: As opposed to, like, having open, honest conversations and, like, understanding yourself. And, you know, being able to, like, express in healthy ways and in consensual ways and stuff. Instead, it just builds up and builds up and builds up and becomes this repressed society.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: That gives way to bad things.

Teresa: So, in 1916, there is a sex education manual putting it in a very succinct manner. "She should know the scientific names of her organs, not because there

are as many vulgar names as in the case of boys, because dignified names help attitude.

Ovaries, uterus, vagina, fallopian tubes, and vulva should be sufficient. Detailed descriptions of the external organs might arouse curiosity that leads to exploration and irritation.

Travis: Oh, I see. Oh, let's not make it fun.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Let's keep it scientific, ladies.

Teresa: Not just scientific, but incomplete, right?

Travis: Uh-huh. Oh, only worry about the internal stuff.

Teresa: Mostly the internal stuff, 'cause that's the baby-making stuff.

Travis: Yeah, the outside stuff is where a lot of the fun happens.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: So, let's not—

Teresa: And it's important to point out that at this time, homosexuality was illegal. Okay?

Travis: Sure. Yeah.

Teresa: In a lot of countries, not just in Britain. But lesbianism specifically had far less legal [through laugh] documentation. [normally] Because, one, lawmakers at the time didn't understand how women could make love to each other. [chuckles]

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: And when they did find out that it was possible, they didn't want any record of it on the books.

Travis: Oh.

Teresa: Because they were worried that reading about it might cause women to try it out, and then society would be in disarray. Because women would no longer want to marry men.

Travis: Yeah. It's not like now. When lawmakers have a full understanding of, like, people with uteruses and stuff.

Teresa: [sarcastically] Mmm-hmm.

Travis: Um, but this is also the time where people thought, like, hysteria was, like, the— your uterus moving around your body, right?

Teresa: Um...

Travis: Or is that earlier or later?

Teresa: That's a lot earlier.

Travis: Oh, okay.

Teresa: Hysteria was a generalized term at this point to mean "Uppity woman."

Travis: Oh, sure. Okay. Not like now.

Teresa: Not like now.

Travis: Now, but was this the time where it was like, "You can't have table legs that are too shapely 'cause it might arouse a man"? Was that this time?

Teresa: Uh, right. This is where the next term comes in. Shame.

Travis: Oh, sorry. [laughs]

Teresa: [laughing]

Travis: Should I go on?

Teresa: Shame.

Travis: Sorry, I just flashed back to being raised in a Southern Baptist Church. Go on. [wheeze laughs]

Teresa: Uh, so, ignorance and shame were considered desirable traits in unmarried women especially. So, you were supposed to react reluctantly and uncomfortably to the idea of sex, and this was a sort of like, one of her many accomplishments, right?

Travis: Wow.

Teresa: Um, so—

Travis: So, wait. Just to be clear, let's put a lantern on it. A desirable trait—

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: ... in a potential bride is like, "I like how ashamed she is of herself—

Teresa: Yep.

Travis: "... and me, and everything we do."

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Ah, great. "And now I'm going to sneak off, or maybe not even sneak off. Just tell my wife I'm going to a brothel now because I'm a man and I can do whatever I want," right? Just about that time?

Teresa: Just about.

Travis: Yeah, great. Cool, cool, cool. Or was that more Regency?

Teresa: Uh, I mean, uh, some of this, some of that.

Travis: It probably never went away, really.

Teresa: Um, so, in that vein, there were also problems with male sexuality, even heterosexually.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: So, um, they obviously didn't want women to discover self-pleasure. But they really, really, *really* didn't want men to do it.

Travis: Wait, hold on. Hey, just, uh, here's a hint: You don't have to teach guys that. [laughing]

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: That's not, like, a—one day a young man's like, "Wait, I can do *what?*" It just happens. I don't have to tell ya.

Teresa: Well, and if it is discovered that that is something that you just simply cannot help, you'll be diagnosed with spermatorrhea.

Travis: [high pitched voice] Sorry. What now?

Teresa: It's a condition.

Travis: Oh, like diarrhea, but for sperm.

Teresa: Where a person with a penis *suffers*—

Travis: Uh-huh.

Teresa: ... from excessive involuntary seminal discharge.

Travis: Oh, I see. Well, I guess the word that I'm confused there by is involuntary.

Teresa: Do you— do you know what that is? [pause] It's a wet dream.

Travis: Ohh! [whispers] Okay. But that's—okay. Okay. [normally] Shame.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: [singsong] Shame.

Teresa: Yeah. Yeah.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: So, like you said, it is quite involuntary. Um, and a very natural and part of puberty for anyone who has a penis.

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: And it's not a disorder. So, it just happens when excessive semen is stored in the seminal vesicles. And if there's a lack of sexual activity, you ejaculate involuntarily. It's completely normal.

Travis: It's like— almost like it's a symptom of repression and not a symptom of something else.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: So, in the Victorian era, there is a contraption to fix everything.

Travis: Oh, boy. Isn't there, though. And, you know what? I would love to talk about it. But first, how about a word from some other Max Fun shows?

[theme music plays]

Speaker One: [bell rings out, door opens] Um, hi! I'm looking for a movie.

Ify: Oh, I got you.

Drea: There's that new foreign film with the time travel.

Alonso: There's an amazing documentary about queer history on streaming.

Ify: Have I told you about this *classic*, where giant robots fight?

Alonso: Or there's that one that most critics hated, but I thought was actually pretty good.

Drea: Oh, I know. The one with the huge car chase, and then there's that scene where—

Ify, Drea, and Alonso: [simultaneously] ... the car jumps over the submarine!"

Speaker One: Wow. Who are you, eclectic movie experts?

Ify: Well, I'm Ify Nwadiwe.

Drea: I'm Drea Clark.

Alonso: And I'm Alonso Duralde. And together, we host the movie podcast, *Maximum Film*.

Drea: New episodes every week on Maximumfun.org.

Ify: And you actually just walked into our recording booth.

Speaker One: Oh, weird. Sorry, I thought this was a video store.

Drea: You seem like a lady with a lot of problems.

[music fades out]

[new music/jazz plays]

Ross: Carrie, is it?

Carrie: Oh, yes. Hi, I'm Carrie.

Ross: I am Psychic Ross. And I will be reading you [exaggerated spookiness] this evening.

Carrie: Oh! Interesting. Well, okay, I co-host a podcast. It's called *Oh, No, Ross and Carrie!*

Ross: Yes. I'm sensing that.

Carrie: Oh.

Ross: The spirits are telling me it is a show about poodles—

Carrie: Well, it's about, like, fringe science and spirituality—

Ross: Yes.

Carrie: ... things of the paranormal.

Ross: [simultaneously] That's correct.

Carrie: Oh, you knew that!

Ross: And you do research online, you—

Carrie: But more importantly, like, we do in-person investigations.

Ross: You, in-person, investigate as well.

Carrie: Oh, my God! That's amazing.

Ross: See?

Carrie: Me and my friend. This is so weird. My friend, Ross, same name as you.

Ross: Weird.

Carrie: He and I just go and try them all out. And actually, we've gone to a number of psychics, and to be honest with you, it's a lot like this. It's called *Oh, No, Ross and Carrie!* They can find it at Maximumfun.org.

Ross: I could have told you that.

[music ends]

Travis: You know, I can't help but be struck by the idea--

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: ... people have listened to the way backs of *My Brother, My Brother and Me*, that I bet that there were people during this time, right? A lot—a lot of people

were like, "I hate this." But I bet there were people, people who perhaps might have shopped at somewhere like Extremerestraints.com now, who were like, "I kinda love this. This is all great."

Teresa: [laughing]

Travis: Okay. Go on.

Teresa: Anyway, so, like I was saying, there is— [chuckles softly] it's like saying there's an app for that.

Travis: Yep.

Teresa: There was a—

Travis: We got cages. We got belts. We got wraps. We got insert things. We've got, uh, electrical things.

Teresa: Well, not quite electrical at this point, but, um, I want you to—

Travis: That does come. There's the stuff that shocks—mm.

Teresa: So, there were things like corsets and penis slings.

Travis: [snort laughs] You know, to throw penises at giants in the bible.

Teresa: No, just basically to keep you from messing with it, but the— the most—

Travis: [through laughter] To keep you from messing with it!

Teresa: Yep.

Travis: Hey, stop it!

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Leave it alone! You're going to wrinkle it. [laughs]

Teresa: The most [through laughter] terrifying of these things was called the Jugum Penis.

Travis: Sorry, what?

Teresa: It was a device worn to—

Travis: No, say the name again.

Teresa: Jugum.

Travis: Jugum Penis.

Teresa: [through laughter] Yes.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: It was a device worn at night. It looked a little bit like a bear trap. It would be put around the penis with the ring of spiky metal teeth—

Travis: [yells] What?

Teresa: ... that would dig into any spontaneous erections.

Travis: Oh, no! Why would I put a Sarlacc on my penis? I hate that!

Teresa: [giggles softly] The idea was that it would wake you up enough so that you could go splash water on your face or think about baseball or whatever it is you have to do to get rid of it.

Travis: Probably urinating, but that's—okay.

Teresa: So—

Travis: Because sometimes an erection can occur from just pressure on the prostate, and that can happen from a full bladder. It has nothing to do with sex whatsoever.

Teresa: And speaking of going to the bathroom—

Travis: Uh-huh?

Teresa: It was highly encouraged that when sexual attentions occur—

Travis: What if you just rolled over typically, and the Jugum Penis was, like, is this it? [imitates shocked groaning] Ah, ah. [chuckles] Ah, ah, ba-ah. [normally] It probably wasn't— it didn't move, right?

Teresa: No, it didn't.

Travis: It wasn't like what I'm picturing, like, something from *AAAhh! Real Monsters*, right?

Teresa: No. No.

Travis: Okay. Great. So, what were you saying about going to the bathroom?

Teresa: [clears throat dramatically]

Travis: It's terrible! I hate this.

Teresa: It is terrible. There— there's nothing wrong with those sorts of things, not the machines, but—

Travis: Yeah. There's clearly something wrong with that.

Teresa: [laughs softly] Something wrong with that, but wet dreams are normal. It's fine, but was something that they were *very* upset about. I do want to circle back to, um, what is she, Countess...?

Travis: The Dowager Countess?

Teresa: The Dowager Countess.

Travis: Should I get her back in here?

Teresa: No. No.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: No. I have a new character I need to introduce to you.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: She was kind of the sexual repression mascot.

Travis: The Dowager Co— oh, no, who?

Teresa: [clears throat] Thomas Morton wrote the play *Speed the Plow* in 1798.

Travis: Mm-hmm. Sure.

Teresa: And it was very popular at the turn of the 19th century. So, um, in the play, there's an offstage character called Mrs. Grundy, who was consistently referenced to as a very traditional and conservative woman. Um, and the characters in the play are *very* worried all the time about what Mrs. Grundy would think of that, right?

Travis: [imitates Solomon Grundy] "I'm Mrs. Grundy." Makes me think of Solomon Grundy.

Teresa: A little bit.

Travis: From, uh, *Superman*. Or *Batman*? What's Solomon— it doesn't matter, he's from DC.

Teresa: So, over time, this became a kind of shorthand, right? When someone was acting out, right? You would, you know, make them respectable and remember their purity.

Travis: You'd Grundy them up.

Teresa: By saying, [whispers] "What would Mrs. Grundy think?"

Travis: Oh, so it was basically, no joke, "What would Jesus do?"

Teresa: A little bit!

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Sure.

Travis: Hey, everybody, remember that time period when everybody had WWJD bracelets? Oh, boysie! Now, here's the interesting thing about this, 'cause I think that that Grundy concept hits on that façade thing we're talking about.

Teresa: Absolutely.

Travis: As it was more like, if somebody was observing this, right?

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Because, don't get me wrong. I guarantee there were people during this time who were, like, "I believe this myself, and this is, like, an ideal I want to live up to." But I'm willing to put money on it that the majority of people were like, "I just don't want *other* people to think I'm like these"— like whoever the quote/unquote "bad people" are.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: Right. So, it wasn't about a personal—'cause this is the thing, right? If you have a personal desire to not engage in sex, I think that's perfectly fine, right? There are plenty of asexual people out there who are like, "I'm not interested in this." Perfectly fine.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: It's when there's that pressure of, "I mean, I want to, but I would hate for anyone to know." Once you start driving things into the dark like that, like, that's where I think it gets *bad* in so many ways, right?

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: Where the more you can openly discuss it and treat things, like, let's— I mean, actual adults who aren't afraid of that kind of thing, and it's, like, let's discuss it in a way that we can make sure it's, you know, safe and make sure that everybody is consensual and taking care. Like—

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: ... that's better, right?

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Like, how is that not better in people's minds? I don't understand how it's not better.

Teresa: It *is* better.

Travis: Thank you. Now, can I get down off this soapbox? It's too high, and I'm scared.

Teresa: [clears throat] I mean, you could.

Travis: What?

Teresa: But...

Travis: You want me to stay on it?

Teresa: I have one more to show you.

Travis: Oh, boysie.

Teresa: So, one of the key—

Travis: Somebody, by the way—

Teresa: Oh, what?

Travis: ... recently asked me if I say, "Oh, boysie" because it's a reference to Boise, Idaho. No, it's because the word boysie has the boy in it, and "Oh, boysie" is a funny way to say, "Oh, boy." Go on.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: This one shouldn't be funny, but, I mean, it is. One of the key tenants of a woman's sexual education was how to avoid knocking boots with her husband, and there was a method that was encouraged. Bullying. [laughs softly]

Travis: [yells] What?

Teresa: Even within the context of their own marriage, women were often told to be as frigid as possible.

Travis: [dumbfoundedly] Uh-huh.

Teresa: Um, so nagging, criticizing, and verbally cutting down their husbands was a way to keep them proper.

Travis: [sighs deeply] Okay. Obviously—

Teresa: And we see this trope in, uh— in Victorian novels and things like that, right?

Travis: Well, but this is the other thing too, speaking of that trope and that concept, another thing that is underlying *all* of this—

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: ... is very much a concept of like, "Listen, he can't help himself." Right? Like, once he sees, like, under your top layer, those 18 layers of undergarments, he's going to go, you know, wild. So, *you* have to be the pure one. You have to be the moral one. It's your responsibility to express shame and stuff because, for him, it's natural. And for *you*, like, the natural thing is to say "no" to it.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: Repression. Like—

Teresa: That's the ideal.

Travis: And that's so wild to me. I mean, now—but, I mean, it still exists now, right? Purity culture is still all about, like, "Boys will be boys." So it's *your* responsibility to say "no." It's *your* responsibility to do this.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: *Your* responsibility to get birth control. *Your* respon—and it's just such horse apples.

Teresa: This is the same, um, trope that we see in the “I have a headache” excuse.

Travis: Yeah! Right.

Teresa: Right. Because headaches are not really measurable, and they’re kind of fleeting and—

Travis: Well, and then once again, and also what this then creates, as we mentioned earlier, is if a husband had an affair, there was a lot of, like, “Well, yeah. What are you gonna do, man?” Like, [exasperated sigh] “Blech. Yeah. Bummer.”

But once again, the husband owned everything. Most women didn’t have jobs. Most women didn’t have their own income, right? So, it’s a lot of, like, “Yeah, that happens.” And if a *woman* had an affair, it was like, “Oh, she’s, like, of the devil.” Right?

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Like, that idea of *she* should be able to control herself, and— but, once again, the fact of the matter is, is people— like, plenty of married couples had sex on a regular basis, and it was fine.

Teresa: Yep.

Travis: Right? And—

Teresa: Including Queen Victoria.

Travis: And just nobody talked about it. Because nobody wanted to be—it was, I bet, that kind of thing that, like, if enough people talk about it, everybody’d be, “So, we’re all doing it? Oh!”

Teresa: But you weren’t allowed to talk about it.

Travis: Right! So, it created—

Teresa: 'Cause if you talked about it, then you were— you were no longer, you know, a pure example, right?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: You were cast out of society.

Travis: And we talked about— we touched on this a little bit during our past four episodes. But this idea of, you mentioned they didn't want to have any laws about it on the books. Right? This is the problem with, like, history, is even as recently as, you know, a hundred years ago, two hundred years ago, there's stuff that's like, "Well, I thought it was like this, and this, and this."

Like, yeah, because that's all they let be published. That's all they let be written down. That's all they put in laws and books and stuff. But that's not all that happens. Like—

Teresa: Right.

Travis: That's just the thing that they let be published. 'Cause you know that if we're talking about this stuff of, like, there's a contraption to wake you up if you get an erection, you know they're also not writing down, "But anyways, people are still doing like—"

Teresa: Yeah. So—

Travis: I just like the idea of, like, back in that day, it's like, "I don't want things delivered in a discreet package. I want it to very clearly say on the box 'Jugum Penis,' so everyone knows how pure I am!"

Teresa: [giggles softly] Yes.

Travis: "Can it be in big bubble letters, please?"

Teresa: [chuckles]

Travis: "Puffy paints!"

Teresa: I'm trying to think of the equivalent of puffy paints Victorian.

Travis: Probably something lead-based. [chuckles]

Teresa: [through laugh] Probably. [normally] Let's say that you're doing everything right outwardly.

Travis: Yes. Okay, thank you.

Teresa: Right? And you're two consenting adults, and you have figured out that as long as we keep this on the DL, we can have—

Travis: And close 18 curtains to our *married* room.

Teresa: We can have fun. There still are some very interesting ideas of [chuckles softly] sexual education and contraception.

Travis: Oh! I was hoping we'd get to this, 'cause I bet— I just saw a thing today before, this was from *QI, Quite Interesting* the show, right?

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Where they have a great Twitter account that just, like, tweets out random facts. Uh, before there was, like, condoms, Japanese men used tortoise shell, like, sheaths, basically. Isn't that interesting?

Teresa: Interesting. Yeah.

Travis: I mean, it can't have been fun for, I don't know, maybe anyone present. Maybe it was. I don't know.

Teresa: I don't know.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Maybe it was fun. Um, so, the French physiologist Eugene Becklar claimed that [laughs softly] one contraceptive measure would be if a woman dances around the room right after having sex—

Travis: Hmm.

Teresa: ... or rides a horse the next day.

Travis: Hmm.

Teresa: She can't get pregnant. 'Cause you could, like, jiggle it out.

Travis: Okay. Sure, sure. No.

Teresa: That's not the way this works.

Travis: No. Hey, no. No. No, no, no. Though I do think it would be, in many ways, funny... to be like, "Hey, hey! Excellent love making. Now, if you'll excuse me, I'm going to dance around the room a while."

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Like, "Okay, um, is it okay if I leave?"

"Yeah. No. I'll just da— it's fine."

"Do you want me to play music?"

"No."

Teresa: Some of his other insights include, um, "If you procreated on the stairs, your baby would be born with a crooked back."

Travis: Huh. Well, if you procreate on the stairs and you're not careful, there's a good chance you're going to get injured, but I don't know about the baby.

Teresa: Um, also, if you aren't truly invested or present in the sexual encounter, right? So, here is, like, the idea of, like, intention. Making the baby, right? "We are doing this just to procreate. This is not fun at all, but I'm very intent on making a child."

Travis: Uh-huh.

Teresa: If you weren't like that, if you're just boning for fun—

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: ... then your baby would be ugly and spiritless.

Travis: Okay. All right, Doctor Becklar. All right, you spiteful man.

Teresa: And also, there was the general idea that, uh, the child's gender would match whoever had the best orgasm during sex.

Travis: [inhales with exertion/wheezes]

Teresa: So, probably the boy's, right? Just boys. [giggles]

Travis: [wheeze-laughs] Yup.

Teresa: 'Cause for it— heaven—

Travis: It doesn't sound like there was a lot of focus on—

Teresa: Heaven forbid the women have any fun! Anyway—

Travis: Uh-huh.

Teresa: So, this is just the tip of the iceberg, really. [mock laughing] He he he. Now, we definitely have to put an explicit at the beginning.

Travis: Now we are going to do this.

Teresa: [through laughter] We were going to anyways. [normally] Um, so, if you listeners enjoyed this episode and love learning about all these old juicy tidbits—

Travis: I also bet this is—

Teresa: ... submit your topics or, you know, your own insights.

Travis: Yeah, so email those to us at ShmannerScast@gmail.com. Thank you to Alex, our researcher, without whom we could not make this show. Thank you to Rachel, our editor, without whom we could not make this show. Thank you, to you, for listening. We could make the show without you, but why?

Teresa: Why?

Travis: But why? Thank you to Teresa, my beautiful wife, [loudly] who I've never touched!

Teresa: [bursts out laughing]

Travis: In our entire relationship! Um, we sleep in separate cities! No, thank you. You're wonderful, and I have so much fun recording this show with you.

Teresa: I love you too.

Travis: Do you want to say how fun it is recording the show with me? Or?

Teresa: Oh, I mean, it's a gas.

Travis: All right.

Teresa: Sorry, my eye is itchy.

Travis: Uh-huh. That's a— isn't that a woman for ya?

Teresa: [bursts out laughing]

Travis: A wife, "Oh, my eye's itchy. I have a headache." [chuckles] Thank you to Maximum Fun, our podcast home. Check out all the other great shows there. If you're interested in this topic, I can guarantee there's some episodes of *Sawbones* that you would absolutely love. *Sawbones* is hosted by my older brother, Justin, and my sister-in-law, Sydnee.

Teresa: Now that I'm done rubbing my eye, I think that y—that the listeners can tell that you crack me up constantly.

Travis: Sure. Or you're a really great actor. It's one of those two.

Teresa: I mean, both.

Travis: Okay. Mmm!

Teresa: Mmm.

Travis: Mm. I see. Oh, if you want to check out—thank you—if you want to check out—

Teresa: [laughing]

Travis: ... all the other amazing McElroy shows and McElroy projects, you can go to mcelroy.family. We have some tours coming up pretty soon here. We're going to be in Salt Lake City, and Portland, and San Diego. So, get your tickets for that at bit.ly/mcelroytours. Um, let's see, while I look up the other things, Teresa, who am I forgetting?

Teresa: We always thank Brent "brentalfloss" Black for writing out theme music, which is available as a ringtone where those are found. Thank you to Kayla M. Wasil for our Twitter thumbnail art. That's @shmannerstcast, and that's where we get, uh, listener-submitted questions for our topics.

Thank you to Bruja Betty Pinup Photography for the cover picture of our fan-run Facebook group, *Shmanners* Fanners. If you love to get and give excellent advice from other fans, go ahead and join that group today. Thank you to Alex, of course. Submit your topics to Alex at shmannerstcast@gmail.com. Also, your idioms. We're collecting up more idioms. Collect. Collect. Collect.

Travis: Always.

Teresa: To make another one. Um, yeah. [laughs quietly]

Travis: We've got new merch over at the Mc Elroy merch store designed by Dana Wagner. We've got the Approach the Wizard t-shirt which has a very, like, uh, like, if you ever saw the animated *Hobbit*, like that.

Teresa: Oh, yeah!

Travis: It has that style thing. It's absolutely adorable. Um, DanaWags on Twitter. 10% of all merch proceeds this month will go to The Trans Youth Equality Foundation, which advocates for transgender, gender non-conforming, and intersex youth ages two through eighteen. Once again, that's at mcelroymerch.com.

That tour, as I mentioned, get those tickets at bit.ly/mcelroytours. It's only two weeks away. The shows, I think, are like July 20th, 21st, 22nd, 23rd, something

like that. The Portland show is sold out. The San Diego *My Brother, My Brother, and Me* is sold out. So, you can still get tickets for Salt Lake City *My Brother, My Brother, and Me*. And there is limited tickets left for the San Diego *Adventure Zone*.

Then we've got stops coming up in Washington DC, Detroit, and Cincinnati. Mask and proof of full vaccination or negative Covid test within 72 hours of event start is required. You are great, and you should have a great day.

Teresa: [laughing]

Travis: And that's going to 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]

[chord]

MaximumFun.org.

Comedy and Culture.

Artist Owned.

Audience Supported.