

Shmanners 322: Victorian Sexuality (Part 2)

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[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: Doing pretty good.

Travis: Yeah?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: I'm hopped up off a nap.

Teresa: Uh-oh!

Travis: Look out, world!

Teresa: [laughs] Feeling refreshed and ready to take on the afternoon.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Sure, yeah, alright.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: What are we talking about this week?

Teresa: Well, we are doing one of my favorite podcast tropes: a part two!

Travis: A part two, you say?

Teresa: Yeah. There was a lot of interest in our Victorian Sexuality episode, and so, you know, we want to talk about it some more.

Travis: Some more sexuality.

Teresa: Those listeners? They want to hear it.

Travis: Okay. Now, man. This is—

Teresa: They asked for it.

Travis: If this is what you guys want, let's do it. Ugh!

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: I just didn't like the way you said "They asked for it."

Teresa: [laughs] I know. I did that on purpose.

Travis: Yeah, I know!

Teresa: It was a little skeezy, sorry.

Travis: Yeah, no, you're a monster. Go on.

Teresa: [laughs] Um, so we were hoping that we would find any more, you know, scandalous and downright wacky fun facts. So...

Travis: Did we?

Teresa: We did!

Travis: Oh, good. Phew! It would be bad if you were like, "But we didn't. But anyway, here's another episode."

Teresa: Yes. Um, and right at the top here, if you're listening with kids... we are going to be talking about sex.

Travis: Yeah. It's right there in the title.

Teresa: Right there.

Travis: You probably should've figured that out from what this one's called.

Teresa: So, listener discretion is advised. But, you know, also maybe you want to listen to this with your kids.

Travis: Yeah. We're not gonna use *profanity*, as they say. We'll keep it... P—well, language PG, concepts challenging.

Teresa: Possibly. So I'd also like to— and this is directly from our writer-researcher Alex, wants to give a shoutout to YouTuber Kaz Rowe, where a lot of this information comes from. They have an incredible channel, and they do a lot of wonderful entertaining historical work on their channel.

Travis: Okay. There you go. Shoutout achieved.

Teresa: So just real quick refresher.

Travis: Uh-huh? Yeah.

Teresa: From the last episode. The Victorians get a lot of flack for being sexually repressed.

Travis: But this is not true.

Teresa: It's not the whole story.

Travis: No, they were very, uh, uh, uh... covert, right? It wasn't— you just didn't talk about it. But that doesn't mean you didn't do it.

Teresa: And there were definitely periods where they thought that not talking about it would actually make people less sexual, but it doesn't work that way.

Travis: No. No, of course it doesn't!

Teresa: Here's the thing, right? The hindsight regarding Victorian sexuality is through a lens, right? Of the people who wrote the plays and the books and, you know, did all that kind of stuff. So there is no logical reason to believe that the Victorians didn't have sex, because they obviously did.

Travis: Well, 'cause there's more English people.

Teresa: There's more English people, and Victoria herself had a very healthy sexual relationship with Prince Albert.

Travis: Many children.

Teresa: Many children. And there are tons and tons of diaries outlining... the who, what, where, whens, and whys. And that's even after the family went through and, like, censored a lot of this stuff.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: It's pretty salacious, even with the censorship.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Um, so she's like the mascot for the Victorian era, and—

Travis: Well, she was the— uh, what's the word? She was, like, the... uh, boilerplate for it, right? Like, she was the one everyone was trying to copy.

Teresa: Exactly. Um, so there could not have been the Victorian Era without sexuality. Let's get that out in there. And it should be noted that the *moment* that the camera was invented in this era, people started taking naked pictures.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: The moment.

Travis: The moment.

Teresa: Um, there are so many images... from this period. It's mind boggling, really. It was almost like they were just— they were hungry for it. They were waiting for it.

Travis: You know, I've heard it, a running joke before, that like... I remember back when there was a competition, right? Where Blu-Ray DVDs and HD DVDs, right? Were, like, competing. And I remember people talking about like, "Well, we'll see which one they start putting porn on."

Teresa: Ahh.

Travis: And that would be like, "Ah. It's got the porn seal of approval, that that's going to be the technology that survives." And that's what happened with photography. They were like, "Aw, this is great. We can take pictures of, like, wildlife and beautiful nature things. And also, naked people!" What? Oh, okay!

Teresa: Exactly. Um, and so there's another great point that Kaz Rowe makes in their video. That the social conventions could absolutely be restricting, but there are also parts of society where having a very specific social convention is freeing to some people. Where, you know, you understand where the boundaries are and what we do and do not talk about. And so, you know, people are not— people are not a monolith. There are lots of— there's a great roundness to the Victorian Era that you don't often see portrayed.

Travis: Yeah. It's also important to note, when we talk about, like, nude people in photos... that there is a— throughout the history of art, right? A debate over what is, uh, okay, quote— you know what I mean. What is "profane," quote-unquote. And this idea of, like, no, this is art, and this was, like, for art, and it's modeling. And it's like, "No it's not! This is gross!" Right? Has been a debate for as long as people have been, you know, doing portraits or doing— or writing, or whatever.

Teresa: Exactly. The question is, what is porn? And the answer is, I'll know it when I see it.

Travis: Is that a joke? 'Cause "I don't know, but I know what I like," I know is the quote about art.

Teresa: [laughs] Uh, it may be a joke that I stole from *Parks and Rec*.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Here are a couple of, um... quickly. This is still our recap. Um, couple of reasons at this point why the Victorian Era is associated with sexual repression. One of being which Christianity was very prevalent, and Christianity has a kind of built-in mechanism for shame. Because there's the idea of, like, the omnipresent God watching you at every moment of the day.

Travis: Well, more than that. As someone who was raised Southern Baptist, let me say, what I am about to say is not a... uh, condemnation of Christianity, in that there is a certain type of psychology of a person drawn to a religion so that they might feel better than other people.

Teresa: Absolutely.

Travis: And so that is seen a lot of these people who are like, "Ah. Now that I have this religion on my side, I will wield it like a weapon against people who do things I don't like."

Teresa: Yes. So there were a couple of— I mean, like I said, there were some—the people who write the history books and plays and media and all this kind of stuff love to talk about the repression. Um, but some of the images that we have in our head may or may not be true, right? Um, for example there is a play written in, like, the 1940's, wherein these stuffy Victorians have to cover up the legs of the piano because it is so reminiscent of the female leg figure.

Travis: Now I've heard this before, but like, table legs and stuff. Is that not true?

Teresa: Table legs and stuff. No. I mean... am I saying that nobody covered up the legs of their furniture? No. What I'm saying is, that particular example, covering furniture legs because they were too— too hot to handle is from a play in the 1940's. [laughs quietly]

Travis: Ohh, okay.

Teresa: There were actual advice given to Victorian people, one of which that there were... certain positions that one should not do during intercourse, because they would make you physically or mentally ill.

Travis: Oh boy!

Teresa: That's, I mean, obviously not true. But this was something that was circulated at the time.

Travis: Nah. I mean, listen. I could see like, "Don't do this one. You're gonna, like, get something out of— your joint out of socket."

Teresa: [laughs] "You might pull a muscle."

Travis: But I don't know that... if someone said, "Oh, that position? [giggles] It'll drive you nuts!" [laughs] That'd be wild!

Teresa: That would be wild.

Travis: Maybe in a different way.

Teresa: Another one was that syphilis itself was very prevalent, and there was this kind of mystique around STIs that were— is it something that it just, like, appeared because maybe you were, um— you were sinful, right? Or was it something that everybody got when they had intercourse, so don't do that and you'll never get it? Or what exactly, you know, parents told their children about it was usually nothing.

Travis: No. And trust me, as someone who grew up in the 90's and early 2000's, it's not, like, wonderfully better now, right?

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: There's something about STIs that has always made people, like... dumb, right? It's always made people, like— it's like urban legends almost, where they will share misinformation. And what it is is the lack of sex education, and people, like, being hesitant to talk to young people about anything related to sex. And so it ends up with them having to fill in the blanks themselves. Or downright misinformation being taught to people to scare them away from other people, and stuff like that.

Teresa: Exactly. So there was a— there was a huge push to really kind of censor anything that would be considered sexual, because, you know, the idea that if

you don't know about it then you can't possibly do it. Which we all know not to be true.

Travis: No.

Teresa: Um, here's another one. In 1893, Lady Colin Campbell wrote in her book, *The Etiquette of Good Society*:

"In the house, a woman is allowed much less freedom of posture than a man. He may change his position in an infinity of ways, lounge and loll, cross his legs, do anything but sit on the edge of his chair. But a woman must sit still."

Travis: Now, hold on. Why can't a guy sit on the edge of his chair?

Teresa: I don't know exactly.

Travis: 'Cause he'll fall over.

Teresa: Maybe. Maybe that shows too much eagerness?

Travis: But then what happens when he goes to a monster truck show?

Teresa: Oh.

Travis: He goes to a monster truck show and he's like, "Oh my god, I wanna sit on the edge of my seat! But I don't want to be shamed."

Teresa: Uh, I think that it was just the—

Travis: "Sunday, Sunday, Sunday! Come see Truckzilla! You'll wanna sit on the edge of your seat, but society won't allow it!"

Teresa: It's more about just, like, the women are not allowed to lounge or even, you know— it looked too inviting.

Travis: No, yeah.

Teresa: Right?

Travis: Well, this is a thing too, of like, when you think about art and nude portraits, photos, whatever, there is usually a certain, like, rela— I'm trying to do it like a—

Teresa: You're trying to do a—

Travis: You know what I—

Teresa: Paint me like one of your French girls.

Travis: Exactly right.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: This idea of ease rather than just comfort, right? Because which one— most people would find someone who is feeling easy while naked way better than somebody who's like "[strained noises]."

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: [laughs] Um, and so usually that ease, I can see where they would associate that with like, "Well, you don't wanna be comfortable. You don't wanna be seen to, like, relax in front of somebody."

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: That's way to open— ugh. I mean, I don't feel that way.

Teresa: I don't.

Travis: I don't want people to be uncomfortable around me, period. That's why the edges of my seats are always the most comfortable.

Teresa: [laughs] Do we have any thank you notes this week?

Travis: Yes were do, let's go do them!

[theme music plays]

Travis: I want to say thank you to Quip. And of course I want to say thank you to Quip for sponsoring the show, obviously.

Teresa: Of course.

Travis: Obviously. But I also want to—

Teresa: But also for sponsoring our teeth. [laughs]

Travis: Sponsoring my family's teeth. Bebe uses a kid's toothbrush. Teresa and I use the toothbrush. Dot asks to use the kid's toothbrush all the time. She likes to pick up Bebe's toothbrush, press the button, and go "Oh! Huh!" And then turn it off and put it back in.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Um, so she's very excited about that. But not just that. It's my favorite toothpaste I've ever used. It's my favorite mouthwash I've ever used. And they have the floss that comes in a cool little futuristic flip-up case that you like, [blows raspberry] hook it in there, you get some more floss out. They got the gum.

Teresa: I love that the floss feels like a floss pick with a lot less waste.

Travis: Yes, absolutely.

Teresa: Because you're only using, like, what, an inch, inch-and-a-half worth of floss, and you throw away that little piece of floss instead of the whole, like, hand piece.

Travis: And if you're not brushing with a timer, there's a built-in timer in the Quip toothbrushes. I can almost guarantee you're not doing enough.

Teresa: Bebe would never brush long enough if there wasn't a timer.

Travis: Well, even me! Man, until I started using that timer I'd brush my teeth and I'd be like, "Okay, that's— oh, it's still go— oh, okay, great! Uhh... "

Teresa: And the pulse that tells you when to switch around. That's great too.

Travis: And if you're already on top of your brushing, they have a toothbrush with a smart motor in it that connects to your smartphone, and will earn you rewards. So, like, why aren't you doing it?

With stylish and affordable electric brushes starting at just \$25, you won't be paying through the teeth for better oral health. Plus, it's powered by, like, a battery, so you don't have to worry about like, "Oh no, I forgot to put it on the charger, or I have to travel, what am I gonna do with it?" All that stuff. So if you go to getquip.com/shmanners right now you'll get your first refill free. That's your first refill free at getquip.com/shmanners. That's G-E-T-Q-U-I-P.com/shmanners. Quip: the good habits company.

[music plays]

Maddy: It could happen to you. You're all grown up now. A professional adult with diverse interests and hobbies. And one of those hobbies is... video games.

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Maddy: I'm Maddy Myers.

Jason: I'm Jason Schreirer.

Kirk: And I'm Kirk Hamilton. and together we form *Triple Click!* A podcast about video games.

Maddy: If you think you might be a person who likes video games, we hope you'll give Triple Click a listen.

Jason: *Triple Click!* New episodes every Thursday on Maximum Fun.

[music and ad end]

[music plays]

Speaker One: Hey, kid. Your dad tell you about the time he broke Stephen Dorff's nose at the Kid's Choice Awards?

[audience laughs]

Speaker Two: In *Dead Pilots Society*, scripts that were developed by studios and networks but were never produced are given the table reads they deserve.

Speaker Three: When I was a kid, I had to spend my Christmas break filming a PSA about Angel Dust! So yeah, bein' a kid sucks sometimes.

[audience laughs]

Speaker Two: Presented by Andrew Reich and Ben Blacker. *Dead Pilots Society*, twice a month on Maximumfun.org.

Speaker Four: You know, the show you like. That hobo with the scarf who lives in a magic dumpster?

[audience laughs]

Speaker Five: *Doctor Who*?

Speaker Four: Yeah!

[audience laughs and applauds]

[ad ends]

Travis: Tell me more, Teresa. Go on, tell me more! Tell me more!

Teresa: Um, well I think—

Travis: Shoo da bop bop. Shoo da—

Teresa: [simultaneously] Rest in peace, Olivia Newton-John.

Travis: Oh my god, you're right. Ugh.

Teresa: So I think that we— we talked a little bit about it in our last episode on this. But I think that it bears repeating that the—

Travis: Bears repeating sounds like this: grr, grr, grr. Grr, grr, grr.

Teresa: [laughs] Uh, that although sex was permitted for procreation, right? The thing that we think about when we think about sexual repression in the Victorian Era is masturbation, right? How it was like, do not under any circumstances. It will, you know, make you unhealthy. It will ruin your family.

Travis: It'll move your whole uterus around in there.

Teresa: All that kind of— I think that they were pretty much done with that.

Travis: Oh yeah?

Teresa: That's a very Greek... definition of hysteria. But anyway. It was just seen as something unhealthy and to be avoided at all costs.

Travis: Sinful. Sinful as all get out.

Teresa: Sinful, for sure. Yeah, I mean, definitely there was a lot of shame and fear. There were also— there was an industry around keeping people from masturbating. Lots of little devices and such.

Travis: Yeah, we touched on this a little bit last— last—

Teresa: We did touch on that.

Travis: —time.

Teresa: Um, the most of it that we have seen from the era really focuses on men, right? Uh—

Travis: Well, of course!

Teresa: Yeah. We talked about the little, like, teathy thing that tried to keep people from having erections.

Travis: I say of course because of this idea— one, uh... erections. Like, people with erections, right? It's easier for someone who doesn't understand— like, isn't fully versed in anatomy to understand, like, arousal, for someone with a penis, right?

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: Because they can be like, "Okay, great. I get that." Right? And it's like, well, you're not educa— you just don't understand the rest of the process for someone with a vagina. And it's like, well, yeah, no— ew. Don't tell me about that!

Teresa: [laughs] It does seem a tad more visual.

Travis: And also, uh, just in this time, people didn't, like, seem to acknowledge the idea of, like... women having pleasure?

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Of it being like, "Well, I don't know. I don't think that's a thing, right? That's not— no. That's not a thing. That's not what it's about."

Teresa: There are even reports that a serious illness could be contracted from, quote, "the solitary vice." Epilepsy. Can you imagine—

Travis: What?

Teresa: —blaming someone's epilepsy on their tendency to masturbate?

Travis: What?! Wha— what's the connection?

Teresa: I don't know.

Travis: Wow!

Teresa: It doesn't make— it does not make any sense.

Travis: They were really just flying by the seat of their pants at this point, huh? They had medicine! Like, they ha—

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: What— what could that possibly be based on?!

Teresa: I... I don't know. It's sad, really.

Travis: Do you think it was just a scare tactic?

Teresa: Probably.

Travis: Ugh.

Teresa: Um, there were also physical ways one could... [sighs] relieve themselves of the urge. Or at least make it awful. Um... like, uh, mutilation practices.

Travis: Ugh.

Teresa: Um, there is a gynecologist from the 1860's named Isaac Baker Brown who believed that self-pleasure was an antisocial behavior, and could be cured by removing the clitoris.

Travis: Oh no!

Teresa: I didn't mean for it to get this grim. But I'm just trying to explain that there is a depth to this sexual repression that maybe we have not considered.

Travis: Well, this is the thing about it, right? Because once again, we talk about repression. This seems like that there was, like, forced stuff in an attempt to control a thing people were doing, right? We talk about scare tactics. We talk about, like, misinformation regarding STIs. We talk about this, like, mutilation, right? This does not sound to me like this is what everybody was doing. It sounds to me like this is what everybody was being told to do.

Teresa: That does make a lot of sense.

Travis: Right? There's a difference, right? We talk about Puritans, right? Puritans is, like, they were doing this, right? They went around— like, they were trying to live this lifestyle. And this more feels like people were trying to do just, like, their normal, everyday life, and meanwhile people were shouting at them like, "Hey, by the way, I have a new torture device for you to use."

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: Ugh.

Teresa: Um, and just to lighten this up a little bit...

Travis: Please.

Teresa: ... if you wanted to cure your masturbation tendencies, you could always just go with yogurt enemas.

Travis: Hoo boy!

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Or sandpaper gloves.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: But, I mean, I don't know. Maybe that's what you're into.

Teresa: I don't know. Um, we mentioned briefly about the idea of... if you don't talk about it, it doesn't exist.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: And, um, there was—

Travis: Which in many ways sums up a lot of sex education in our country today.

Teresa: Indeed. Uh, there was a campaign to shut down anything provocative in theater or literature. In 1873, the Comstock Act outlawed obscenity, including birth control and abortion devices and information. This is put forth by the enforcer of the law, that's why it's named— federal agent Anthony Comstock.

Travis: Now, here's the thing. I know about the real life one. But also Comstock is the name of, like, the villain in *Bioshock Infinite*.

Teresa: Which is why I mentioned it specifically, hoping you would talk about it.

Travis: Yes, of course.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: 'Cause it is a, like, puritanical society. This overt zealous religious, uh, cult, in a floating city. And it's also very racist. The cult is so racist, you guys.

Teresa: And I don't know if it's... if it's, like... directly? I mean...

Travis: I mean, the people who named de— I don't think— it—

Teresa: They must know, right?

Travis: It can't be a coincidence to have a religious zealot who's, like, trying to control everything, named Comstock, and not know about the Comstock laws. I think it's gotta be.

Teresa: Um, I mean, the important part to know about this act is it didn't work.

Travis: No! It's like Prohibition!

Teresa: There's no way you can censor all of that stuff. All of history and literature and theater and media. Like...

Travis: Well, and a lot of it also was about, like, things being transported in the mail, right? Which we still run in today, and can be difficult to get, like, sex education and health textbooks sent through the mail because of, like, weird Comstock laws that are still on the books in some places. But also that idea of, like, you opening everyone's mail? You checking what's in the box? Or is it just the threat of "[mumbling] We might check it. We might check it, so be careful..."

Teresa: [laughs] Um, let's go over some things that are definitely not true.

Travis: Oh, okay. Flat Earth.

Teresa: [laughs] Okay.

Travis: Oh, you meant specifically—

Teresa: No, specifically—

Travis: —related to— okay.

Teresa: We talked about the table legs, right?

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: Um, but here's the thing, right? Each generation kind of wants to be seen as more progressive, or at least better than—

Travis: What their view is, yeah.

Teresa: —better than or might right, you know, according to them. So a lot of these things get kind of, like, circulated around about how terrible it was back then. Um, so I do—

Travis: Or the other way around. Then when the older generation looks at kids and their like, "It used to be so much better."

And you're like, "Actually it wasn't. Actually, you're wrong! It might've been better for *you*." Anyways, go on.

Teresa: Let's talk about ankles.

Travis: Ankles? They're the thing between the foot and the leg if I'm not mistaken.

Teresa: [laughs] It is a very prevalent, especially today, like, "Ooh, I can see her ankles! Her ankles are showing!" We really associate this with the Victorian Era, right? Um, and that the idea was that Victorian women were told never to show their ankles, 'cause it might make men horny, right?

Travis: Is that not real?

Teresa: No, it's not.

Travis: [gasps] What?

Teresa: Here's the thing.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: The way that those skirts, the clothing were designed, is you absolutely had to pick up your skirt to do things like step over a curb.

Travis: Yeah, or get in a carriage.

Teresa: Get in a carriage, go up the stairs.

Travis: Play soccer.

Teresa: You know, move around, really.

Travis: They probably weren't playing soccer in those dresses.

Teresa: No, they weren't playing soccer. But you absolutely had to pick up your skirts in order to really, like, do anything except for sit. Um, and so there's no way... people could have possibly gone about their daily lives without showing someone their ankles. It's a lot like, you know, um, in— there's a lot of, like, school dress codes these days that talk about shoulders or bra straps or whatever. And it makes absolutely zero sense, because people move around, and these are the clothes that they have, so there's no way that you can do the things that you need to do without these articles of clothing possibly showing, right?

Travis: It also— listen. Not to turn it into this, but I'm going to for a second. Do people not realize that by trying to, like, hide the thing, that's what makes them... seem provocative to people? Like, if you tell kids, like, "You can't show bra straps in school," then when people see the bra strap they're like, "Oooh!" Right? Where if you didn't make a deal out of it, it wouldn't be a deal. Like, that when we talk about the Comstock laws, we talk about Prohibition, we talk about all these things that when you try to restrict something, it makes people more interested in it.

Teresa: And so, like, the idea was if you saw the ankle— if a man saw your ankle it might remind him that you have legs, then it might remind him that there is something between those legs that he's interested in.

Travis: And who knows where it goes from there, yeah.

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: He might remember that you have, like, I don't know, a colon? And then, like, lungs.

Teresa: [laughs] So... the myth originates from the sex work at the time, which was highly visual, as we've talked about. And were you advertising your wares on the street, you might provocatively pick up your skirts and show your leg to advertise that you were available for those services, right? And so that's why it was considered poor taste to show your legs, right? Because it was associated with sex work. Um, but...

Travis: It was not inherently, like, ankle-related.

Teresa: Exactly. It was about, you know, reading the room. You have to have the context for it. So we think about it as any time your ankle is showing, but it was really about the context of the ankle.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: Here's another one. Have you heard of the Prince Albert?

[pause]

Travis: Oh, yes! The Prince Albert. Like, the piercing?

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Yes, it is a penis piercing, if I'm not mistaken.

Teresa: It is. And it has persisted that it was named for the actual Prince Albert.

Travis: Uh-huh. Was it?

Teresa: No.

Travis: I mean, 'cause we're talking about in this section, I was guessing the answer is no.

Teresa: Not— no, no. It was not named for him because he had a piercing. He did not. That's not the way that it worked.

Travis: He just used to do the piercings for people.

Teresa: No. [laughs]

Travis: No.

Teresa: What he did have was a sort of... anchor.

Travis: What?

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: Wait, no, sorry. Go on?

Teresa: [laughs] This was actually popularized by Beau Brummel. It was a kind of...

Travis: Which sounds like a kind of butter to me every time anyone says it.

Teresa: [laughs] It is a kind of weight that you would kind of... like, there was a ring situation, right? And then there was a counterweight that you would place—

Travis: A lever and pulley system.

Teresa: [laughs] No. Uh, it was because the pants of the era were so tight, um, that if you did not want to have an erection show through your pants, you needed to...

Travis: Physically restrain your penis.

Teresa: Physically restrain the penis.

Travis: Ho boy. And this was the— a complicated, like, weight and cou— this is what they came up with?

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Not, like, tighter underpants?

Teresa: I guess not.

Travis: [wheeze-laughs]

Teresa: And, like I said, I mean, there wasn't— there isn't actually any proof that Prince Albert really wore one, but it was reported in the newspapers of the time that he liked the idea and adopted the custom himself.

Travis: This seems like a flex though, isn't it? Where it's just like, "Well, my erections are so powerful, don't you see, that I have to hang a weight simply to control them." Uh, that— that seems like a Beau Brummel move for sure.

Teresa: Possibly.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: I mean... you could just wear Spanx nowadays. If you wanted to just keep everything—

Travis: Or think about baseball. [laughs]

Teresa: [laughs] Keep everything—

Travis: Well, unless you're into baseball. I don't know, man. Maybe for some people they're like, "Oh no, I can't think about baseball. 'Cause baseball gets me going," you know?

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: I don't know.

Teresa: Um, another— another prevalent myth is that Victorian doctors assisted their female patients in achieving orgasm.

Travis: Yes. I've seen it mostly related to, like, comedy shows. They did that in, like, another period, I think.

Teresa: Um, and so, like, they— they obviously weren't using vibrators. But there was a manual for— it's called *Massage Treatment in the Diseases of Women*.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Um, and I read through some of the, um, provided directions.

Travis: Mm-hmm?

Teresa: It does not sound sexy to me. Um, but I can— I can conceive of how it might have felt sexy to someone.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Um, I'm not gonna read through it. But I am going to assure our listeners that it seems very clinical, and not at all the happy times [laughs quietly] that, uh— that, you know, media has made it out to be.

Travis: Got it.

Teresa: Um, and I am not exactly sure what it was made to treat.

Travis: Well, kind of a running theme of this episode has been, "I don't know, man. We're just kind of guessing at this stuff."

Teresa: Yeah. That's a— I mean, that's a running theme of a lot of medicine in a historical context. [laughs]

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: It seems that there were practitioners of this medical massage. But it seems there's just such a wide breath of— breadth. That's what it is, right? Wide breadth. Of things that it supposedly was supposed to make better.

Travis: So it was supposed to be a cure-all?

Teresa: Yeah. Little bit.

Travis: Okay. And we know from *Sawbones*... cure-alls...

Teresa: Cure-alls cure nothing.

Travis: Oh, is that what it is?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Overalls over nothing.

Teresa: [laughs] Over nothing.

Travis: I think it says.

Teresa: So, there's— we've covered a lot of myths, and we've also covered a lot of terrible, awful things that people in the Victorian Era did. And really, like... the thing that I hope that myself and you and our listeners take from this is that there are bad times in every era. [laughs]

Travis: Oh yeah. I guarantee, I guarantee come, like, 2045, 2055, people will be like, "Oh, back in, like, 2020 it was so repressed. And it was so— like, they would talk about this on TV, and they were overturning Roe V. Wade, and they were doing—" and it will be talked about— and in many ways they won't be wrong, right?

Teresa: Right.

Travis: But it'll just be because, as you said, in every era there is always a force of people who are like, "I would like everything to be less fun than this. I would like to take care of people less than this. I would like people to have less rights than they do." It just— it exists in all of history.

Teresa: It's a universal experience. And I hope that we've made it so that we feel perhaps a little more, um— a little closer to those kooky Victorians, and also maybe taken away some great lessons.

Travis: And I know I've talked about it before, but there's, like, an Audible podcast series narrated by Stephen Fry called *Victorian Secrets*.

Teresa: Oh, we love it.

Travis: It's so good. Gotta check it out. Alright. Hey, everybody. Thank you so much for joining us for another episode. Thank you to our researcher Alex, without whom we could not make this show. Thank you to our editor, Rachel,

without whom we could not make this show. And thank you to you, the listener. We could make this show without you, but why?

Thank you to my wife for being so great.

Teresa: Aww, thank you, honey!

Travis: I appreciate you. Uh, thank you to our podcast network home, Maximumfun.org. Go there and check out all the other amazing shows. If you liked this, we mentioned it, but *Sawbones*. If you're not listening, why not? Go. Right now.

Teresa: I listen.

Travis: Teresa does.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: It's her favorite podcast. Um, let's see. Oh, if you want to check out all the other McElroy shows, you can go to mcelroy.family.

Teresa: Also check out that great merch.

Travis: Yeah, and we just announced some new live shows in Denver and San Jose, September 29th in San Jose is gonna be *Adventure Zone*. September 30th in San Jose is gonna be *My Brother, My Brother, and Me*, and October 1st, Denver, *My Brother, My Brother, and me*. You can get tickets for those at bit.ly/mcelroytours. Um, and then we also have the shows in November in Washington, Detroit, and Cincinnati. Mask and proof of vaccination or negative COVID test within 72 hours of event start is required.

Also, we're going to be at Dragon Con September 1st through the 5th. We'll have more updates on that as far as, like, the events and stuff, but you can find the info about that on mcelroytours as well, bit.ly/mcelroytours. Teresa's gonna be there too. I think there's gonna be a *Shmatters* even. We'll let you know. Um, let's see. What else? Go check out all the other great merch at mcelroymerch.com, like the Garyl plush from *The Adventure Zone* and the "If God's not dead, how do you explain these gains?" shirt.

Teresa: I don't how to—

Travis: Yeah, I know.

Teresa: —explain that even.

Travis: I know. 10% of all merch proceeds this month will go to the Center for Reproductive Rights. And we're doing an annual survey that helps us try to make sure our advertisers are well-matched with our audience. So if you go to Maximumfun.org/survey, we sure would appreciate it. Who else do we thank, Teresa?

Teresa: We'd also like to 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's @shmannercast, and that's where we got a lot of really awesome listener suggestions for this episode specifically. Um, and thank you to Bruja Betty Pinup Photography for the cover picture of our fan run Facebook group *Shmanners* Fanners. If you love to give and get excellent advice from other fans, join that group today. You can submit your topic requests, your idioms. You can even just say hello to Alex by writing to us at shmannercast@gmail.com. And we look forward to hearing from you.

Travis: Yep! That's gonna do it for us, so join us again next week.

Teresa: No RSVP required!

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

Teresa: Manners, *Shmanners*. Get it.

[theme music plays]

[chord]

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