Shmanners 371: Idioms Part 12

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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: Good. I'm good. I'm feeling—

Travis: You're excited.

Teresa: —energy. I'm excited. Uh, you know, today, today is gonna be a good day. I've really turned things around. This morning, I was feeling very anxious and upset, and now I'm ready, raring to go.

Travis: Overslept on the first day of school.

Teresa: Oh no. [laughs]

Travis: Oh boy. You folks at home, maybe we've got some people who can relate.

Teresa: [laughs] But we made it.

Travis: We did make it.

Teresa: We were not the last people in the building, either.

Travis: There's nothing when you act like—oh, we overslept, right? Getting ready. And then Bebe the whole time is like, "I feel rushed. I feel so rushed." And it's like, "Yeah, man. 'Cause we're rushing. 'Cause we're running late."

Teresa: [laughs] Listen, I'm over it now. I'm totally over it. I have a plan of attack for tomorrow. It's gonna be great. I'm gonna be great. You're gonna be great.

Travis: Oh, okay.

Teresa: It's gonna be great.

Travis: I love the confidence. And we're talking about idioms, just like some of our favorite episodes.

Teresa: Yeah, indeed. This is one of my favorite types, because I love to give you pop quizzes. [laughs]

Travis: Yeah, and I haven't looked at these at all.

Teresa: So I'm really excited to see, like—you're gonna get close. These are all really great idioms, and I'm certain that you—you know. You know what they are. For our listeners, if it's been a while and maybe you're not exactly sure what an idiom is, they are colloquial metaphors, right? And the definition is a group of words established by usage as having a meaning not deducible from those of the individual words.

Travis: So like if someone says "Let the cat out of the bag," right? You know what that means if you've heard it before and you've heard it used. But, like, for example if you—

Teresa: But you're not worried that there's an actual cat coming at you from a bag.

Travis: Right. Like if you went to Germany, right? And said "Let the cat out of the bag," and they had never heard that saying before they'd be like, "What are you talking about?" Right?

Teresa: I've seen some of these on TikToks, and Germany has amazing idioms, by the way.

Travis: I bet.

Teresa: There was one about being a stupid sausage. [laughs]

Travis: Oh yeah, it's great.

Teresa: It's great. But if someone called me a stupid sausage, I would not understand what that was.

Travis: I think you could probably, though, from context clues, be like "Ow."

Teresa: Oh, okay. I mean, yes, but it's kind of—it's endearing in the German.

Travis: Sure. Okay, so bring me on for that first idiom.

Teresa: Um, okay. Here we go. "The whole nine yards."

Travis: Okay, so I know that this is... to, like, go all out, um, or go above and beyond.

Teresa: Give everything you've got.

Travis: Right.

Teresa: Right? 100%.

Travis: And I think it's about... 'cause I feel like I've looked this up before...

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: It's about using all the fabric on a roll?

Teresa: [gasps] Ding, ding, ding!

Travis: Yes!

Teresa: You are exactly right! Although in linguistic circles it's a little contested, but...

Travis: Sure, a lot of these are.

Teresa: Uh, the phrase is part of the American lexicon, or has been part of the American lexicon, since the mid-1800s. Um, so that's a little older than a lot of our idioms. A lot of our idioms come from the mid-1900s, right? Or the early 1900s.

Travis: Can I tell you, thank you for this opening this door for me to talk about the film The Whole Nine Yards—

Teresa: Oh boy.

Travis: —with Matthew Perry and Bruce Willis, uh, and Amanda Peet, and Natasha Henstridge, I believe?

Um, here's the only thing about it. I don't know off the top of my head why it is called that. Because... I think it's supposed to be related to, like, golfing, but I don't know where the golfing c—it's not like a big part of the movie? Maybe Bruce Willis golfs once in the movie. I don't know. I don't remember. But, like, I feel like the cover of the film had them, like, coming out of, like, a golf, you know, like, a hole? But that wasn't a part of the movie at all.

Teresa: I—I don't know. It has been so long since I've seen any part of that movie. Maybe I haven't seen that movie.

Travis: Oh, maybe. Okay. Anywho.

Teresa: But I understand what it's about. Anyways. Uh, it's difficult to put a finger on exactly where it come from, the but idea that keeps coming up is, like you said, the literal nine yards of fabric that are in a bolt of cloth, which is the way that they sell cloth, right?

An article published in Comments on Etymology pointed out that fabric during the 1800s and early 1900s was sold as a standard length of nine yards per bundle, so if you bought the whole bundle, AKA the nine yards of fabric, you were likely making something pretty all-encompassing.

Travis: Right.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: So that's 27 feet of stuff. That's a lot.

Teresa: That's a lot! It is a lot. So you were using the whole thing, probably.

Travis: Were you impressed that I knew that one?

Teresa: I am impressed. I thought you were gonna go football, which is ten yards, right?

Travis: For a first down?

Teresa: For first down.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: But that's not doing the whole thing.

Travis: [simultaneously] But I'm smarter than the average bear.

Teresa: 'Cause if you were talking about nine yards out of ten yards to do the first down—

Travis: Well, then you would do 100 yards, right? It's one of my favorite thing to do to my friends who live in places where they use the metric system. And it's like, the metric system is so clear to them, right? That when they say, "Oh, it's about a meter," right? It's about—uh, "It's ten centimeters," right? They have a clear image in their head of what it is.

And they always joke about, like, Americans only have football fields.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: We only compare—"Oh, it's about half a football—oh, it's like two football fields away. That's longer than a whole football field." Right? And it's like, yeah, she was standing about, uh, like, one tenth of a football field [crosstalk].

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Right? Like it's—that's our only clear, like, I can picture that. Say a football field? I can picture that. If someone's like, "Yeah, but it was like, uh, you know, about seven and a half feet," I have no idea. What do you mean? [crosstalk].

Teresa: You know what I think of? I think of sheets of A4 paper.

Travis: Well, yeah, if you're thinking about something little.

Teresa: As a foot, right? So—

Travis: But I think about my own length.

Teresa: Oh, you do?

Travis: If I lay—I'm five foot ten. How many Travises? How many Travises would it take?

Teresa: [laughs] Interesting.

Travis: That's about 5% of a Travis, so it's, uh...

Teresa: I don't know. Okay. Here's another one. "Cutting corners."

Travis: So cutting corners I know is about, like, that you, like, took shortcuts to finish a project, or that you tried to do it, like, cheaply or whatever. Really—usually it's associated with, like, not doing 100% of the work, or buying the best materials or something like that.

Teresa: Right, so it's usually at the expense of the product being worse. Right? So you cut corners, you make an inferior product or do an inferior job, and it is visible in the job. Right?

Travis: Now, I have to assume that this is... a literal one about at some point, like, selling people material or something that had the corners cut off.

Teresa: You know, that is what Alexx thought as well. That it was also sewing and cloth related. But it's actually about horse-drawn carriages.

Travis: Get out! I never would've guessed that.

Teresa: The phrase first began to pop up in the 1800s when it was customary for people to travel via coach or carriage, right? And when you're driving a horse-drawn carriage, you come to a sharp corner, it is proper safety precaution to go all the way into the corner and then turn slowly so you won't rustle the cargo or the passengers or, you know, even pop your wheel off, right? But it takes longer than just... cutting the diagonal.

Travis: Just cutting corners.

Teresa: And cut the corner off. It allowed you to take a faster turn, and it also made the risks of mistakes higher.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: You could clip the curb and overturn. You could clip the curb and knock your wheel off. You could be involved in a pileup with another coach, right? You might drives straight into them, or they could drive into you, cutting the corner. So discard normal safety precautions and get faster, but inferior, results.

Travis: I can't hear the phrase "cutting corners" without thinking about Battlestar Galactica. What do I mean? Thank you for asking, Teresa.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Well, in the remake—and I can't speak to the original—they did this thing where if you had actual, like, physical paper on the show, all the corners were cut off. And I think it was supposed to be, like, paper is a lot harder to come by when you're in space and everything, right? There's nothing written in the corners, so you don't need that space. But, like, books and, like, a piece of paper, anything had the corners cut off. And I always thought like, "That's a lot of work."

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Right? Like, are you telling me—

Teresa: Who's the prop master doing that?

Travis: Right? It's like, somebody had to go [grumbling unintelligibly] like, sawing off the—it's a lot work. Ugh.

Teresa: It is a lot of work. Alright. Here's another one. "Back to the drawing board."

Travis: Okay, this one... I know I'm gonna nail both of these.

Teresa: Okay, okay.

Travis: So back to the drawing board is, like, when your first plan or the plan you're doing, the thing you're working on, doesn't work, and you need to start over, right? Then you need to go back to the drawing board, right? That's how you would use the phrase. Like, "Oh, you know what? This isn't working. Back to the drawing board."

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Right? And it has to be literally about designing things, right? It has to be, like, "We designed this product, we designed this machine, we designed this building, and it's not working, so we need to go back to the drawing board and design it again." Right?

Teresa: It is possible. But that is not its first recorded usage.

Travis: Get outta town. What else could it be?

Teresa: Okay. Well, so you're absolutely right. A drawing board is a physical item of furniture used by mechanics or architects or other artists, right? To draw out plans. So, um, the phrase comes from, like you said, the idea that if it doesn't work you go back and make a new idea.

Travis: Right.

Teresa: Thing idiom first originated in the 1940's, and is attributed to artist Peter Arno. He was a cartoonist who used the phrase as a joke in one of his comic strips.

Travis: So it's not... it's about—

Teresa: Drawing on the board, a cartoon. Right?

Travis: But it's about cartoons!

Teresa: And he used the joke—he used it as a joke.

Travis: [simultaneously] Not, like, blueprints or designs or—

Teresa: Well, so, like I said, it probably—

Travis: [simultaneously] What was his name?

Teresa: [laughs] Peter...

Travis: Peter Arno.

Teresa: ... Arno.

Travis: How do you spell Arno?

Teresa: A-R-N-O.

Travis: Gotta see what he drew.

Teresa: Uh, so it probably did—was in language before that, right? Because it makes absolute sense. This idiom is something that feels very literal, right? Um, but it is attributed to him because that's when it first appeared in print.

Travis: Wow. Okay. So, like, his cartoons were like New Yorker stuff. He wasn't like a comic strip kinda guy. Okay, got it.

Teresa: Here's the next one.

Travis: I can't believe it's not that. I thought I had it. You know what it is? It's hubris. Is—that's what happened, it was hubris.

Teresa: [laughs] "On the ball."

Travis: There is is! Right there, look.

Teresa: Yeah, I see it.

Travis: It's about a crashed plane. Well, back to th—okay, so but this interesting.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Because it is about the design of a machine. 'cause it's talking about the plane crashed, well, back to the old drawing board.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: But he's talking about a design of a plane, so not about the drawing.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: I thought it—'cause when I was picturing a comic strip, right?

Teresa: Ohh.

Travis: I was picturing, like—

Teresa: A little more meta than that.

Travis: Yeah, right? Like, something they would do in, like, Far S—or, like, do in [unintelligible]. Um, of, like, uh, acknowledging that they're drawings or whatever. But this is interesting 'cause it's a drawing... where he's saying "Back to the drawing board." But it's about a design. Huh.

And I think the joke of it's supposed to be, everybody else is rushing to help the pilot of this crashed plane, but the designer, engineer is like, "Well, back to the old drawing board," and he isn't fazed by the crash at all. Okay. Weird. Okay.

Teresa: Like I said, it makes so much sense, especially in the area of design and industry and stuff, that people were saying it before, and they

were actually literally going back to their drawing board, but that's the first time that it is cataloged as an idiom.

Travis: Okay. Also, Peter Arno also worked on the Circus Magazine by Barnum and Bailey.

Teresa: Cool.

Travis: I didn't know Barnum and Bailey put out a circus magazine. Okay, sorry, anyways, go on.

Teresa: Alright, alright, alright. I had already started, but I'll go back to it again.

Travis: Okay, sorry. I was caught up.

Teresa: I know. "On the ball."

Travis: So on the ball is like, you know, you're—you're paying attention, you're very focused or, like, you're on top of things, you're getting stuff done. Uh, you know, like you would say, like, "Oh, that guy? Oh yeah, he always turns his projects in on time. And there's no mistakes in them. He's really on the ball."

Teresa: Yeah, that's exactly it. But where does it come from?

Travis: Circus related. Is it circus related? When you balance on a ball.

Teresa: I think you might have circus on the brain.

Travis: I've got circus on the brain now, but I will feel weird—I wanted to deny that impulse because I was like, "It's 'cause you just looked at circus."

I was like, "Yeah, but then you'll feel really silly when it is circus."

Teresa: I think you might have to unwind just a little bit, 'cause it's about baseball.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: It's from baseball.

Travis: Oh, like keep your eye on the ball.

Teresa: Exactly, right.

Travis: Oh. That makes a lot more sense.

Teresa: It's widely—

Travis: I mean, it makes a different kind of sense.

Teresa: A different kind of sense.

Travis: Like, I was picturing elephants balanced on a ball? Sure. But that's a thing, 'cause if you take—hey, listen. If you're an elephant on top of a ball and you lose focus, you're gonna fall off that ball.

Teresa: That's true. Uh, it's widely accepted—

Travis: Don't make elephants go on balls. That's not—they don't like it.

Teresa: No.

Travis: No.

Teresa: That, uh, being on the ball is a truncated version of "Keep your eye on the ball," which had been practical advice ever since baseball and other stickball games, right?

Travis: Yeah, it's hard to hit the ball if you're not looking at it.

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: That's what I learned from my years and years of being bad at baseball.

Teresa: [laughs] I mean, and it's kind of cute, right? Because baseball, unless you are a professional... baseballer...

Travis: That's what they're called, yes. A ballman.

Teresa: [laughs] Yeah. It's kind of a game that kids play, right? Uh, a lot of those stickball games—

Travis: [simultaneously] Hey, babe—sure, yeah.

Teresa: And it's really great to see that advice, right? That you teach your child—

Travis: [simultaneously] But it's weird to hear you—

Teresa: —you teach your child to play. You say "Keep your eye on the ball," and that grows up with you as an adult.

Travis: Sure, yeah, but it's also weird to hear you describe baseball as a kids' game.

Teresa: I said if you're not professional about it.

Travis: I'm saying that there are some non-professional grownups who would be like, "[deep voice] I play baseball."

Teresa: [laughs] The point I'm trying to illustrate is you learn about it—

Travis: That it's a game for babies.

Teresa: No.

Travis: Yeah, no, understand.

Teresa: You learn about it—

Travis: [crosstalk] first.

Teresa: You get the advice as a child to keep your eye on the ball.

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: Is what I'm saying.

Travis: And then you grow up and put away such childish things.

Teresa: No! You keep that. You keep it.

Travis: You play grownup sports like lacrosse!

Teresa: No, you keep that thing, and it turns into "On the ball."

Travis: I don't know anything about lacrosse. I don't know why—I shouldn't have invoked it.

Teresa: Why are you giving me such a hard time about baseball?

Travis: 'Cause I love you so much.

Teresa: When you don't know anything about lacrosse?

Travis: I think that's more acceptable, though. Lacrosse isn't known as America's pastime.

Teresa: It should be, because it's a very indigenously-played game.

Travis: Is it?

Teresa: Yeah!

Travis: I need to learn about lacrosse. We're gonna do a whole episode on lacrosse now. I've decided that. We'll do lacrosse. We'll do polo. Cricket. All the things that I don't know.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: We'll do a whole episode about things I don't know and then I'll know everything.

Teresa: Great.

Travis: Hmm. I don't know how I felt about that "great."

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Let's to a break to hear a word from some other Max Fun shows.

[theme music plays]

[music plays]

Rachel: I'm Yucky Jessica.

Griffin: I'm Chuck Crudsworth.

Rachel: And this is...

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Rachel: It comes out every Wednesday, the worst day of the week, wherever you download your podcasts.

Griffin: For our next topic, we're talkin' Fiona the Baby Hippo from the Cincinnati Zoo.

Rachel: I hate this little hippo!

[music and ad end]

[music plays]

Manolo: Hey, when you listen to podcasts, it really just comes down to whether or not you like the sound of everyone's voices. My voice is one of the sounds you'll hear on the podcast Dr. Gameshow. And this is the voice of cohost and fearless leader, Jo Firestone.

Jo: This is a podcast where we play games submitted by listeners, and we play them with callers over Zoom we've never spoken to in our lives. So that is basically the concept of the show. Pretty chill.

Manolo: So take it or leave it, bucko. And here's what some of the listeners have to say.

Speaker 3: It's funny, wholesome, and it never fails to make me smile.

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Manolo: You can find Dr. Gameshow on Maximumfun.org.

[music and ad end]

Travis: Okay, we're back. What's the next one?

Teresa: "Pulling your leg."

Travis: Okay. I have no idea what it's from, but I know what it means, which is like to, uh, kind of joke with somebody, to make 'em believe something, right? Not just, like, telling them jokes, right? But almost like, uh, tricking them in a joking way. Like, "No, I'm just pulling your leg." Like, you know? Uh, if you said, "Oh, wow! There's a fire-breathing dragon outside," or whatever. And like, "Nah, I'm just pulling your leg," right?

Teresa: Right.

Travis: I'm just joking. Once again, not telling a jo—you get it.

Teresa: In a tricky kind of way.

Travis: Yeah, I'm tricking—

Teresa: Trying to trick you, yeah. This is another one where we don't know for sure, but the most sensible explanation, which is—

Travis: Wait, can I guess?

Teresa: Oh, okay.

Travis: The—connected with the thing would be like, if it's, like, pretending something's biting your leg? Or, like, you're getting pulled into something, literally pulling someone's leg, pretending its something else, and then saying "No, that was just me, pulling your leg."

Teresa: You are very close. Because the accepted origin is from the Middle Ages when it's believed that thieves would sometimes trip or quite literally pull on someone's legs so they could rob them after they fell over.

Travis: I see.

Teresa: Uh, so you're literally pulling on someone's leg. But—

Travis: And tricking them, and tripping them.

Teresa: But tricking them and tripping them, that's right. It's not completely verified but, I mean, it's funny. [wheezes]

Travis: That makes com—it makes complete sense.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: I was picturing sort of a "I'm pretending to be a crocodile when you're not paying attention and I bit your leg," and I'm like, "Hah! That's just me, pulling your leg." But yes, that—your thing, uh, probably is more sensical.

Teresa: [laughs] Uh, here's one that I love. "Every cloud has a silver lining."

Travis: So this is about looking on the good side of things—or, no, more than that. This is like, "Listen, something bad happened, but let's see if something good comes of it." Or "Something bad happened, but also here's a good thing that happened at the same time," right? This is about, uh, looking on the positive side of things, not focusing on the negative.

Teresa: Absolutely. This is a shout out to Julia. I don't think she listens. But my college roommate Julia and I always loved that phrase, talked about it, had jokes about it. It was great.

So, it comes from a poem. So, the phrase comes from John Milton, who coined the phrase "silver lining" in his poem Comus: A Mask, which was presented at Ludlow Castle in 1634.

Travis: Wait, Ludlow Castle? Have I been there? Hold on.

Teresa: May—maybe? While I read it, you look and see if you've been there.

"I see ye visibly, and now believe
That he, the Supreme good, t' whom all things ill
Are but as slavish officers of vengeance,
Would send a glistring Guardian if need were
To keep my life and honour unassail'd.

Was I deceiv'd, or did a sable cloud
Turn forth her silver lining on the night?
I did not err, there does a sable cloud
Turn forth her silver lining on the night,
And casts a gleam over this tufted Grove."

Travis: Can I tell you what's wild? I thought—yeah, John Milton also wrote Paradise Lost.

Teresa: Hmm.

Travis: That's wild.

Teresa: So it compares the silvery-looking lining edges of the cloud—you know when it's, like, backlit by the sun or moon—to the unseen silver lining of the back of the cloud, right? So you see the front of the cloud, but on the back it's hit with all the light, either from the sun or the moon, and you can

just see the edges of the brightness poking out. And, I mean, it's a beautiful metaphor and imagery. And we all—

Travis: [simultaneously] Yeah, and if the cloud open sit—

Teresa: —fell in love with it.

Travis: If the cloud opens its jacket, you can see the silver lining.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Every jacket has an inner lining. That—I don't know what that means.

Teresa: I mean...

Travis: I don't know what the metaphor is.

Teresa: Is the jacket the bad part and the lining the good—the good part?

Travis: No, it's just two different parts of the jacket. It's not a metaphor. It's just a statement, I think, at this point.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Here's another one. "Ballpark figure."

Travis: Okay, so then is when, like, you're estimating... something, right? And it usually is, like, an estimation where you're not trying to be exact, or you don't have information. You're just kind of, like, uh, guessing, almost? But using a little bit of intuition.

Where I would say, like, if I said "Well, how much of this do you need?" And I'm like, "I don't know, I didn't measure it." And like, "Well, just give me,

like, a ballpark figure." Right? So it's a bit like, "Well, just kind of loosely estimate."

Teresa: So, I can see how that is its common usage today.

Travis: Uh-huh.

Teresa: BUT when it first appeared it actually had a lot to do with someone who had some experience and had a rough idea already giving an estimate, right? So, here we go. Baseball, for sure.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Right? But once—

Travis: Lacrosse.

Teresa: No. [laughs quietly] No?

Travis: No, it's not based on lacrosse. Okay.

Teresa: So a baseball stadium or a ballpark has a set number of seats. And on the day of the game it was customary for an announcer to estimate the number of people attending the game based on how many seats he saw were filled.

Now, it is based on the observation of the commentator, right? So no one took it to be 100% accurate, but guess was not random, right? Because the commentator did know how many seats were in the stadium, right?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: So it's not just about having no idea. It is within a parameter of someone who does have a little of experience and an idea of what it might fully be, right?

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: So ballpark figure isn't completely correct, but it is a credible estimation based on the knowledge that you—that someone knows what they're talking about.

Travis: Got it. Okay.

Teresa: Yeah, so you were very close on that one.

Travis: I was in the ball park.

Teresa: [laughs] Here's one. "Easy as pie."

Travis: Okay. So, this is... easy as pie is like, uh, someone might say "Easy as one, two, three," or like "It's so easy, you don't even have to worry about it. We're gonna do this, we're gonna do this, then it's done. Easy as pie."

But this is very tricky, because making a good pie is very tough. Like, getting the crust right is difficult. It's hard. Making a pie is not the easiest... thing, I would say.

Teresa: Right, because that's not how the idiom started.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: So, it used to be "Like eating pie," because eating the pie is the easy part.

Travis: Sure, it's fun, yeah, it's awesome.

Teresa: That's the easy part, right? That's the good, easy part. Making the pie is the hard part. With the crust, and the lattice, and the fruits or whatever kind of fillings—

Travis: [simultaneously] The what-have-yous, yes.

Teresa: —that you're making, right?

Travis: The hula hoops and the jazz music.

Teresa: Um, so it was first used in 1910 as a play on the phrase "Like eating pie," which was already established, right? Back in something like 1886. That's when that first appeared in print. So "Like eating pie," 1886. Then by 1910, "Easy as pie" was what it morphed into.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Okay?

Travis: The more you say it the weirder it sounds to me, by the way.

Teresa: Yeah, I know, right?

Travis: Like, I feel like we've said "Easy as pie" too many times.

Teresa: Yes, yes. Another beloved theory is that the phrase actually comes from New Zealand in the 1920's. The Maori, the indigenous people of New Zealand, have a term meaning "good," which is pronounced "pie."

Travis: Ohh.

Teresa: So saying something as easy as pie meant to do something simple, if not also fun. Right? Something good.

Travis: Okay. I was just—I was sitting here thinking about, like, the other versions I've heard of, like, "Easy as falling off a log, easy—" and then I thought about... the—what has now, I think, become an idiom of, like, "It's like riding a bike." Right?

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Where you would say that to somebody who didn't know the rest of that and be like, "What are you talking about?" Like, how is this like riding a bike?

Teresa: Because riding a bike is not simple. It is—but the riding of the bike is that you never forget how to do it.

Travis: You never forget how to do it. It's like riding a bike. It comes back to you, right? Which I will say this. It's been a while since I rode the bike. I don't know that I'd be hittin'—like, hittin' the s—you know, the road. Like, "I'm gonna run, I'm gonna jump on this bike, and I'm never looking back." [laughs quietly]

Teresa: I feel like every time I get on a bike I think about that, but then my body knows what to do.

Travis: That's true. Yeah, that's like me and rollerblading.

Teresa: I have not fallen off a bike since the first several times when learning.

Travis: I mean, it's been a while since I went rollerblading. I was gonna joke about it but now I kind of want to do it. [sighs] I want to rollerblade. Anyways.

Teresa: [laughs] We need to find some blades, I guess.

Travis: I was watching—yeah, watching Barbie, and I wanna rollerblade.

Teresa: Aw, yeah...

Travis: Yeah!

Teresa: Alright. "Being born with a silver spoon in your mouth."

Travis: So, this is about you got a lot of lucky breaks, or like, you were born privileged, right? Is what it is. Like, you're born into a family, you never

knew—you didn't have to work for anything, you never knew a hard day, uh, you never went without. And it has to come literally from, like, baby teething spoons, right? That were made of silver. Right?

Teresa: Very close. So, so, so, so close. Uh, all the way back to the early 1500s, owning silverware was a sign of high status, because other utensils could be made from other metals or even wood, like whittled from wood, right? But if you were wealthy, you had silver things, which is a—

Travis: And you tore up your Teflon-coated pans.

Teresa: Well, which a very malleable metal, by the way. It's not super strong.

Travis: That's true.

Teresa: It's stronger than gold, but—

Travis: Yeah. That's why you bite gold. Whenever you see people bite, 'cause if you leave teeth marks it's real. Now, here's the thing. How many times can you do that before you're like, "This coin is just covered in teeth marks. Gross."

Teresa: Then you don't have to bit it. You can see the teeth marks.

Travis: Well, then you start making fake coins with teeth marks in 'em!

Teresa: Oh, no!

Travis: Right?

Teresa: You cracked it. Um, so families—

Travis: Who was going around making all these fake gold coins? Alright, go on.

Teresa: When families did a christening for their children, it was often customary to give a silver spoon as a gift, right? So not quite born with a silver spoon, but literally a child would be given a silver spoon because they were of wealthy status.

Travis: That's the exaggeration though, right? Because it would be rather than being given a silver spoon, you're so lucky and fortunate and rich, you were born with one in your mouth.

Teresa: Hmm.

Travis: Right? So, like, I think that's probably the evolution of that, right? Were somebody was like, "I heard he was given a silver spoon at his christening." Like, "Given one? He was probably born with one in his mouth."

Teresa: That is a great idea.

Travis: That's probably how it came about.

Teresa: That's probably how it evolved, you're right.

Travis: Seems like a weird insult to give someone. Like, one, that's not how babies are born. It would be wild if a baby was born, it came out and like, "Is that silver? What did you eat?"

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Um, but also, like, [crosstalk] "Yeah, you're so—"

Teresa: Those two—those two parts of your body aren't connected.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: You know that, right?

Travis: Yes, I know. They didn't know that in the 1500s.

Teresa: No they didn't.

Travis: Yeah. Okay. [laughs]

Teresa: [laughs] Okay. "Get someone's goat," or "Someone's got your goat."

Travis: So, this is, like, you frustrated somebody, or you got on somebody's nerves. Um... I guess that's probably the way I would use it, or it could be, like, uh, got their goat, like, they've really gotten under your skin—well, that's another one, right?

Teresa: That's another one.

Travis: They've really irritated you to the point where you now have, like, actual bad feelings about them and you, like, are mad at them. They got your goat. Or like they tricked you? I don't know. Now I'm losing confidence as I talk more.

Teresa: No, it was the first one. It was right.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: It was right. To, um, to irritate someone, right? To the point of failure, even. So—

Travis: Oh, like you tri—like, you irritated so bad they failed at the thing they were doing? Like if you were heckling somebody?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Yeah. Uh, it comes from... horse racing.

Travis: What? Why—

Teresa: I know, right?

Travis: What's the goat part, then? Shouldn't be got your horse, got your nose, something like that?

Teresa: Here's the thing. Thoroughbreds are famously unstable as far as, like, moods go, and easy to upset, right? They're very temperamental, is the way that they are, right?

And you know what calms down thoroughbreds?

Travis: Goats?

Teresa: Goats!

Travis: Really?

Teresa: Yeah. So there—

Travis: They just see 'em and they're like, "Ha ha, love these guys."

Teresa: There is a longstanding unlikely friendship between racehorses and goats.

Travis: Why?!

Teresa: Because the barnyard animals are very loyal companions, and it's kind of like... it's kind of like an emotional support goat.

Travis: So you're telling me... here's my thoroughbred horse. I spent let's say $500,000 on this horse.

Teresa: Oh, it was a lot of money in there.

Travis: This is a racehorse—oh, it's amazing.

Teresa: Yep.

Travis: And I'm gonna then—here's the goat. And the goat comes over and the horse is like, "I'm freaking out. I got a big race today, I'm freaking out—ha. There's my goat."

Teresa: One would assume that they are often together, and it is not just you give them a goat. You raise it with the goat. They're barn buddies, okay?

Travis: I do like the idea of, like, "I brought you a goat."

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: And so then "got your goat" is like if you take the goat away and it makes it really mad.

Teresa: Yes!

Travis: Oh.

Teresa: Yes! So, maybe it comes from when your horse racing. opponents would cheat by stealing a particularly promising horse's goat companion, hoping that the horse would get antsy and be thrown off and then lose the race.

Travis: We don't curse on this show, but if I did, I would be saying that that is... beeped up right there. Right?

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Like, hey, it's one thing. You could—I—you could do so many terrible things. But you took my horse's emotional support goat, and I think that that is messed up on a level that I don't even want to fathom, frankly.

Teresa: I know, right? I mean, yes, I'm certain that that is something that often happened. But the meat of this idiom is about how if you took someone's goat... away...

Travis: Please don't take my goat away.

Teresa: [laughs] Then they would become agitated, right? So you've got their goat. You're agitating them.

Travis: Yeah. Alright, that's gonna do it for us. I really loved these. This was a really good batch.

Teresa: I told you, this is very exciting for me every time we get to do an idiom episode.

Travis: It was—there were some surprises in there. I feel like I learned something. I laughed a little bit. I loved a little bit. I loved a lot.

Teresa: I loved a lot too.

Travis: I love you a lot. Thank you to everybody for sending 'em in, and we literally—we couldn't do the idiom episodes without you, 'cause you guys send in the ones—and, like, Alexx researches them. Thank you, Alexx, for everything you do. Thank you to Rachel, our editor. We couldn't make this show without Rachel. Thank you to you, Teresa. I love making this show without you—without you? No.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: I love making this show with you, and I couldn't do it without you.

Teresa: Never, never without you.

Travis: Never without you, yes. Um... let's see, what else? Um, we've got some live shows coming up that we want you go to check out. You can go to bit.ly/mcelroytours and you'll find all the information there. What else, Teresa?

Teresa: Well, we always thank Brent "brentalfloss" Black, the writer of our theme song, which is available as a ringtone where those are found. Also, 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, go ahead and join that group today.

And also, thank you to, like you said, all the people who submitted. If you would like to submit an idiom or a topic suggestion, please email us, shmannerscast@gmail.com, and say hi to Alexx, who reads every one.

Travis: And that's gonna do it for us, so join us again next week.

Teresa: No RSVP required.

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

Teresa: Manners, Shmanners. Get it?

[theme music plays]

[chord]