

## Shmanners 391: Wax Seals

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[Intro, 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. When are we gonna get our tattoos? We talked about this.

**Travis:** Right now!

**Teresa:** No!

**Travis:** [imitates tattoo needle] Um...

**Teresa:** We should get `em. Well, I guess we need to design them first.

**Travis:** We need to design `em and we need to plan a date.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** Yeah. Um—

**Teresa:** Because you're the deer, you're going to have a deer. And I'm the dove. So I'm going to have a dove.

**Travis:** Yeah. I know, man.

**Teresa:** I know.

**Travis:** I know, bud.

**Teresa:** Okay. Okay!

**Travis:** We just gotta do it.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** I've noticed lately because in *Adventure Zone: Dracula* my character has like an Appalachian accent, that I've been slipping into 'em more and we have noticed our kids find it in that diphthong "A." I don't know why.

**Teresa:** [Appalachian accent] "Daddy."

**Travis:** But like they—

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Both our kids have started saying, [Appalachian accent] "Hey Daddy!" And I'm like, "What?"

**Teresa:** [continues laughing]

**Travis:** "Wha— Where the— Okay? Alright..."

**Teresa:** Well, both of us had our accents removed from us at school.

**Travis:** Surgically, yes.

**Teresa:** [laughs] At school.

**Travis:** No, I think I had... I stopped doing it, at least cut back on it, before then.

**Teresa:** Oh, really?

**Travis:** Yeah, I mean, I probably still had it noticeably. But like, there are videos of me at like five years old like, [Appalachian accent] "Hey, brother, what're you doin'?"

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** And by the time I was in like, theater and stuff- By the time I was in high school, I didn't sound like that.

So, I think I worked on it and was like doing a bunch of acting classes and stuff.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** I don't remember ever making the decision to be like, "I'm not gonna have an accent anymore." But I remember, like, growing out of it, I guess, more or less? I don't know, man.

**Teresa:** It may not have been explicitly said at my alma mater, but I had the feeling that they were trying to erase us to a blank slate, pretty much in every way, and then build us up again.

**Travis:** I remember in... We're not- this episode is not about accents at all. We could do one about accents.

**Teresa:** We could.

**Travis:** But anyways, my freshman year, I remember auditioning for a guest director who was doing a Neil Simon play, *Rumors*, and I auditioned for it. And she goes, "Are you from West Virginia?" And I was like, "How do you know that?" And she's like, "Oh, I can hear it in your voice." And I remember being... not horrified... but like... "No... no."

**Teresa:** "No, you can't."

**Travis:** So I must've, at some point prior to that, made the effort to not sound like that anymore, right?

**Teresa:** Mm.

**Travis:** But I don't remember... I mean, my memory is not great anyways. Anyways, we're—

**Teresa:** Were you— Did you bring this up because I said, [Appalachian accent] "Tuttoo"?

**Travis:** No, it's 'cause the way I said, like, [Appalachian accent] "You're listenin' to *Shmanners*."

**Teresa:** Oh, okay.

**Travis:** I think I hit it a little bit hard.

**Teresa:** So you were already on that when I brought in the tattoos.

**Travis:** Yeah. What are we talking about this week?

**Teresa:** [laughs] We're talking about sealing wax.

**Travis:** Like wax that's on the ceiling?

**Teresa:** [sadly] No...

**Travis:** Haha. Zing. No, I know. It's like wax seals, right?

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** On letters and stuff. A thing of that I am not a hundred percent wasn't made up for like sword and sorcery movies and like stuff to show like kings like, very dramatically— Like it just seems impractical to me.

**Teresa:** It definitely wasn't made up.

**Travis:** [skeptically] Okay... No, I poked you, you're here.

**Teresa:** But when I hear the word sealing wax, I do think of Puff the Magic Dragon.

**Travis:** What?

**Teresa:** The song.

**Travis:** Oh- Wait. Okay. The— It's just a very specific pull. What is there in there—?

**Teresa:** There's the line from the song. Let's see... Something about like, painted... [singing] "Painting wings and sealing wax and other fancy stuff."

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Right?

**Travis:** Just not where my brain goes at all.

**Teresa:** No.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Okay. Anyway, sealing wax. A lot of people have, including myself—

**Travis:** Just to make it clear, [inaudible] S-E-A-L-I-N-G.

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Travis:** Sealing wax.

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Wax for sealing, particularly envelopes.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** A lot of people have these kind of like fancy, do-it-at-home, like sealing wax kits.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** I have one. I have used it.

**Travis:** Can we start saying "wax seal kits"? 'Cause "sealing" it's really throwing me off.

**Teresa:** [laughs] Okay. Wax seal kits.

**Travis:** Uh-huh.

**Teresa:** I have one. I have used it... I think once. Because it takes... it actually takes a little bit of practice.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Because the wax hardens a lot quicker than you think it will and it can splatter. And I did it once and I was like, "Mm. I don't want to practice this." So I haven't done it in a while.

**Travis:** Can you do the wax, heat the seal, and press it down into it?

**Teresa:** But how would you not burn the paper?

**Travis:** I don't know, man! That's not for me. That's for science to figure out.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Non-flammable paper. Why haven't we done it yet? Come on, people.

**Teresa:** I guess if you had a wax warm— like a candle warmer thing, you could do that.

**Travis:** Sure.

**Teresa:** But that seems like a whole setup.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Let's talk about how- First of all, the history. And then there's some really great Shmammers about the color of the wax.

**Travis:** Really?

**Teresa:** Which I would love to talk about a little later. And you know, how it could even be a little bit of a secret language.

Okay. [laughs] You didn't seem very impressed by that.

**Travis:** No, I'm just... I know it's a...

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** [sighs] I don't know, man. I think I just get angry when I learn about like, the fan... We were talking with Bibi about like the fan code.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** You know, where people would use their folding fans to do stuff. Or we'd talk about like the flower code, or we'd talk about- And I just am angry we don't do stuff like that anymore.

**Teresa:** [laughs] I'm sorry that it really galls you.

**Travis:** I just wish we were more clever in this day and age. I guess there is some of it, right? Actually, emojis.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** I guess would be the modern day of it, because they always have like a secondary thing.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** Maybe that should be like our... Have we done an emojis?

**Teresa:** No.

**Travis:** We could do an emojis—

**Teresa:** I don't think so.

**Travis:** ... *Shmanners* for our bonus episode this year.

**Teresa:** Oooh! I love it. The history of letters.

**Travis:** We'll start with "A".

**Teresa:** [laughs hard] Wax seals are actually older than paper itself.

**Travis:** [sarcastic] They used to seal rocks?

**Teresa:** Ah, no.

**Travis:** Oh, okay.

**Teresa:** So it was a stamp that was invented to sign clay tablets as a form of authentication.

**Travis:** Okay...

**Teresa:** We have examples of this from ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia. And these were, you know, they were not just sealing clay tablets. It was really to put any kind of like... without chiseling... stamp of approval on something, right?



**Travis:** Sure.

**Teresa:** And the way that we think of wax seals took off during the Middle Ages.

**Travis:** That makes sense.

**Teresa:** Yep.

**Travis:** That's when I picture it.

**Teresa:** Couple... A couple of reasons for this. Most people couldn't read. Right?

**Travis:** Uh-huh.

**Teresa:** The peasantry could not read. Some of the gentry could not read. But mostly it was the royalty that could read. But you would use the wax to sign off of, like contracts and agreements and letters and things like that as a way of... Easily recognizable. This has been approved by the King or whatever.

**Travis:** And so that's like, where we think of like signet rings, right?

**Teresa:** Absolutely.

**Travis:** Where it's just like you have a ring, it's not replicated anywhere. Boom, you press it in, right?

**Teresa:** Yes, exactly. And there was such a kind of hierarchy, and it was almost like it was your identity?

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Stored in these signet rings. People would often wear them and never take them off because your identity could be stolen—

**Travis:** [gasps]

**Teresa:** ... if somebody took your signet ring. And also they could be... You could bequeath them to your progeny.

**Travis:** Well, yeah. Because when we... When I think about signet rings and kings and stuff, right? That is how I think of it.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** Where like the... War of the Roses, that kind of stuff? The Tudors...

**Teresa:** Absolutely.

**Travis:** Wore the rose, right? They wore roses? Somebody.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** Anyways. You would have like a family crest or a family symbol or something that was very specific to that royalty and then you would pass that ring down and it was part of the thing.

So there's a lot in like, court intrigue kind of stories and movies and stuff of like, "But there's only two of these rings! The King and the Prince. And so who... Oh, it must have been the Prince! Ohhh!"

**Teresa:** Absolutely.

**Travis:** Not absolutely. You don't have to go with that. I know that was a wild thing to say. My brain didn't order it correctly, it's just what I think about.

**Teresa:** [laughing] It's alright. I'm... I'm going with you.

**Travis:** Thank you.

**Teresa:** These were particularly important to the Papal regalia, right?

**Travis:** Mm. You gotta kiss that ring, right? That's a thing.

**Teresa:** Sure, yes, yes. But the Papal Signet Ring was made to... as a stamp of Saint Peter, who was a fisherman before becoming an Apostle. So it shows the Saint fishing from a boat and is meant to drive the idea that apostles were fishers of men.

**Travis:** Sure.

**Teresa:** And was used by the Pope himself, passed down, to seal official Vatican documents until 1842.

**Travis:** Mm. When he lost it.

**Teresa:** No.

**Travis:** And they were like, "Where is...?"

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** "Where did I put...? Does anybody see my ring? It's... It's got that one gem in it that changes color depending on how I feel? You guys have seen it, right?"  
"The dog ate it."

**Teresa:** Oh no!

**Travis:** Yeah, the papal dog.

**Teresa:** So these rings...

**Travis:** Pope Woof Woof.

**Teresa:** ... were not only use— [laughs] Pope...

**Travis:** He'd the dog Pope. Pope of Dogs?

**Teresa:** [laughs] Okay.

**Travis:** This is my children's story that I'm writing—

**Teresa:** [laughs harder]

**Travis:** ... about the Dog Pope.

**Teresa:** These rings—

**Travis:** You gotta pick up your Dog Pope.

**Teresa:** Dog... Oh, gosh. I can't.

**Travis:** Well, one day the Pope gets sick and the Dog Pope has to fill in. That's the hierarchy.

**Teresa:** That's... That's the hierarchy.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm. There's not assistant popes or...?

**Travis:** You're picturing it, though, right? It's kind of cute.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** He has a little hat. Yeah? You love it?

**Teresa:** [still laughing softly]

**Travis:** Yeah?

**Teresa:** Anyway...

**Travis:** You love it.

**Teresa:** Anyway... Anyway...

**Travis:** His little vestments?

**Teresa:** Not only was this kind of like, official—

**Travis:** He has a smaller balcony next to the big balcony?

**Teresa:** [exasperated] Give me a break! [laughs]

**Travis:** That's not his catch phrase. His catch phrase is, "Throw me a bone!"

[deep sigh] If you'd read my 27,000 page children's book, *The History of the Dog Pope*, you would have known that.

**Teresa:** Somebody help me. Okay. It was not only a functional process, but also a ceremonial one, right? Nobles, clergyman, rulers, all of them... Was not- Like it wasn't just authentic to them.

**Travis:** Mm-hmm.

**Teresa:** It was kind of like a symbol of the authority.

**Travis:** That's the thing too. I feel like it's in, like, *Three Musketeers* or something?

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** But this idea of like, "How will I prove to them that you sent this and we're like... I'm acting on your authority?"

And they'll like, give them their signet ring, right?

**Teresa:** Right.

**Travis:** It's this idea of, like, "Not only is this a signed paper, but I have the King's... So much of the authority, that they gave me their signet ring."

**Teresa:** Right.

**Travis:** Is like a huge deal.

**Teresa:** And so these rings not only did that, they also, practically, allowed you to seal documents, right? And so it made it kind of tamper-proof, in a way, right?

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Like you were talking about you have the correspondence or whatever from the King. "Not only do I have it from his hand, but I also have the ring or whatever that shows it was stamped." All this kind of stuff.

**Travis:** So that way, because you could say like, "Well, can't you just heat up the wax and do it?"

But then you would lose the imprint of the—

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** That's why just sealing it with just a blob of wax isn't the same as having a- very thin, because when you press it in, it makes a very thin layer of wax where it's pressed.

**Teresa:** Right.

**Travis:** And so they would break if you tried to open it, and if you had to re-melt it to reseal it, you would lose the imprint.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. So as time went on, the wax seal continued to be used administratively, but also for [suggestive voice] personal correspondences and—

**Travis:** Ooh la la!

**Teresa:** ... and love letters. Because it was... It was kind of romantic in a way, right? "For your eyes only" deal.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** It added an air of mystery and anticipation to a message. Not to mention it was actually cheaper, as postal prices were usually based on the weight of a letter.

And folding the paper and sealing it with wax made it so you didn't need to pay for the added weight of an envelope.

**Travis:** [high-pitched surprise] Oh!

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** But just because it became more accessible doesn't mean that it made it any less serious from an administrative and legal angle.

Here are some examples of where the wax seals were particularly important to the documents.

When John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, and John Jay sent the Treaty of Paris to Congress, ribbons were threaded through the parchment and wax seals were affixed for security against tampering.

And that was the document that formally ended the Revolutionary War. In China seals weren't just political, they were legendary.

**Travis:** [gasps]

**Teresa:** There are several tales of seals being given to emperors by dragons and phoenixes and bequeathed by deities and things like that, right?

**Travis:** Whoa!

**Teresa:** Pretty cool.

**Travis:** I want that.

**Teresa:** It was "a mandate of heaven" —

**Travis:** I would love to—

**Teresa:** ... that they have the authority to carry this signet ring.

**Travis:** I would love to do that now. Just buy a signet ring somewhere and then tell our daughters, like, “Yeah, so a unicorn rode up and was like—”

**Teresa:** Ooh!

**Travis:** ““Hey, man, this one’s for you.””

**Teresa:** Nice. Henry the Eighth wanted to annul his marriage to Catherine of Aragon, so he sent a letter to Pope Clement the Eighth. The Seventh, sorry. That—

**Travis:** Don't get those two confused. They hate that.

**Teresa:** I’m so sorry. So sorry.

**Travis:** I know they look a lot alike.

**Teresa:** This letter was stamped with the wax seals of 81 noblemen to show their support for the annulment. I mean it... it didn't... didn't work.

**Travis:** Yeah, a lot of history probably would have been different during that time if the Pope had been like, “Cool man. Yeah. It’s fine.”

**Teresa:** [As Pope Clement the Eighth] “Nifty.”

**Travis:** [As Pope Clement the Eighth] “Yeah, sounds good to me, man. I got no skin in the game. Sounds great.”

**Teresa:** The downfall of the wax seal...

**Travis:** Was the fax machine.

**Teresa:** No. [laughs]



**Travis:** Oh.

**Teresa:** Not quite. It was the pre-gummed envelope.

**Travis:** [surprised] Oh...

**Teresa:** Yeah, the industrial revolution in the mid to late 19th century came out with the pre-gummed envelope that you just had to moisten in order to affix together. So that was pretty tamper-proof at that point.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** You didn't really need the wax seals.

**Travis:** And I bet by that point literacy rates were on the rise.

**Teresa:** Definitely, definitely. But we still have them today.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** They are often part of like, packaging. Or you can get wax seals put on your wedding invitations and things like that.

**Travis:** Sure.

**Teresa:** It does still carry a weight, a vibe.

**Travis:** It definitely has like a personal touch, fancy, kind of thing. If I get a letter that has a wax seal on it like, that's something, right?

They're not doing that for those fake mailers of, like, "Hey, you've been pre-approved for a thing!"

**Teresa:** Yep. Yep. And so it really adds something to the brand of whatever it is that you're sending someone. And so I think that they're going to stick around.

**Travis:** Well. Speaking of stick around... stick around, 'cause after this break we'll be talking about the etiquette and the code and all that stuff. But first, how about a word from another Max Fun show?

[ad break, theme music plays]

**Griffin:** From the twisted minds that brought you *The Adventure Zone: Balance* and *Amnesty* and *Graduation* and *Ethersea* and *Steeplechase* and *Outre Space* and all the other ones.

The McElroy Brothers and Dad are proud to reveal a bold vision for the future of actual-play podcasting... it's, um... it's called *The Adventure Zone Versus Dracula?*

**Justin:** Yeah, we're gonna kill Dracula's a[censorship caw]s.

**Travis:** Well, we're gonna attempt— We haven't recorded all of it yet. We will attempt to kill Dracula's a[censorship caw]s.

**Justin:** *The Adventure Zone Versus Dracula.*

**Griffin:** Yes, a season I will be running, using the D&D 5th Edition ruleset and there's two episodes out for you to listen to right now.

We hope you will join us, same bat-time, same bat-channel, for more fun.

**Clint:** Hey, bats, I see what you did there.

**Ellen:** People say not to judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree.

**Christian:** Which is why here on Just the Zoo of Us, we judge them by so much more.

**Ellen:** We rate animals out of ten in the categories of effectiveness, ingenuity and aesthetics, taking into consideration each animal's true strengths.

Like a pigeon's ability to tell a Monet from a Picasso. Or a polar bear's ability to play basketball.

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**Ellen:** Listen with friends and family of all ages on [maximumfun.org](http://maximumfun.org) or wherever you get podcasts.

[ad break ends]

**Travis:** [increasingly animated] Tell me the secret code. Teresa, tell me the secret code now! Tell me the secret code! Or else.

**Teresa:** [mock tearfully] I... I can't think of anything.

**Travis:** No, there's a— You said there was a code to the colors of wax.

**Teresa:** [laughing] Oh, sorry! I thought you were asking for like a password.

**Travis:** No!

**Teresa:** Or something that I didn't know. [laughs]

**Travis:** You said there was a secret code of the color of wax. The panic on your face.

**Teresa:** Did you see my face? I got so scared.

**Travis:** You were so scared but you said there was a code and I want to know the code.

**Teresa:** There is. There is. And I—

**Travis:** My God.

**Teresa:** Okay, okay, dude.

**Travis:** What just happened?

**Teresa:** I thought that we were doing a bit and you needed a password.

**Travis:** You just... You completely short-circuited.

I don't normally require a password to come back from the break, baby.

**Teresa:** That's why I was so scared.

**Travis:** Okay. Do we want to set up a password for next time? We'll say *DuckTales*.

**Teresa:** [laughing] Okay.

**Travis:** Go on.

**Teresa:** Alright. As far as etiquette goes, there's not a lot these days when it comes to it. Try and make the seal as neat as you can, so no strings of wax all over, or splatters or things. Aim to get the seal right at the point of the envelope. And of course, try and get a little bit on the top. And a little bit on the body of the envelope, to make sure it seals.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Do not break anyone's seal unless the letter is directly addressed to you. That's pretty self-explanatory, right? But here comes the language—

**Travis:** Ooh.

**Teresa:** ... of the wax seal. And like you said earlier, flowers and fans, we have other episodes about if you're interested, *Shmanners*.

So here's the thing, right? The language kind of developed in eras where you needed to express yourself without actually expressing yourself.

**Travis:** Sure.

**Teresa:** Yeah? So two great times to point this out are the Regency era and the Victorian era.

**Travis:** Both of those track.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** Those were the times I was thinking of.

**Teresa:** Quite, quite repressive, but these are the times when we think of things you know, to express ourselves other ways. The seals' type, color and size all denote societal position. For example, a large wax seal was considered to be very tacky, very showy, right?

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** So you wanted it small and glossy, to show the restraint and the gentility, right? Of your status.

**Travis:** I bet there was also... There was also probably something of like, if you had a simple seal, it was like, "I don't need a lot to let you know it's me," right?

**Teresa:** Sure.

**Travis:** Like when we talk about like the War of the Roses, right? If you just had like, a rose on your ring and it's like, "Well, you know exactly who- Like, we don't need to spell it all out for you. You have an incredible—"

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** Like if you're like, you know, single-name performing, you know you're Sting, you're Madonna, you're Beyoncé right?

**Teresa:** Right.

**Travis:** You don't need all that other detail to let you know. You got a single name.

**Teresa:** That's right. And so it would include maybe a monogram and a crest, but not like your family's coat of arms, right?

**Travis:** Mm-hmm.

**Teresa:** Too much. Too showy. And also the quality of the wax said a lot about your household. For example, cheap, red wax would often turn a sickly purple or ruddy brown because it was melted with additives, right?

**Travis:** Sure.

**Teresa:** Also, you wanted to make sure that you trusted your... your purveyor of waxes, right? Because if you were dubious, as a salesperson, you could actually roll the lower quality wax in kind of like a different color on the outside.

**Travis:** Mm. Yeah.

**Teresa:** And so you wanted to make sure you trusted them, right?

**Travis:** Because then you burn it and you drop it, and you're like, "Well, this is clear."

**Teresa:** Right. Well, it would have been more yellowish, right?

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Because we're talking mostly beeswax.

**Travis:** Not like paraffin.

**Teresa:** Right.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** At this point, we're talking beeswax, basically.

**Travis:** And if you... if you got some of that fake stuff, that was none of your beeswax?

**Teresa:** Oh!

**Travis:** You don't want that, right?

**Teresa:** Yes. You could also get perfumed wax.

**Travis:** Oooh! But if you had perfumed wax, you didn't want to perfume the letter as well. And so, you know... Tastefully, right?

**Travis:** Yeah!

**Teresa:** Tastefully.

**Travis:** You want a hint... You want it to be sniffed by the [scandalous British accent] the lover reading the note—

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** ... not by everybody carrying it everywhere.

**Teresa:** Each of the colors signified something different. It was customary for men to use red. And women to use a kind of rose-ish color.

**Travis:** Mm.

**Teresa:** So not quite pink, which denoted something else. But if you didn't have different colors, red was a good catch-all.

**Travis:** Yeah. And blue meant sad, green meant envy—

**Teresa:** Nah—

**Travis:** ... yellow was hungry.

**Teresa:** Not exactly. No. No, no, no, no. If you were in mourning or writing to someone in mourning, the letter would have a black seal.

**Travis:** Or if you were a pirate trying to scare somebody, right?

**Teresa:** [laughs] I guess. That's the black spot.

**Travis:** Yeah. But that feels right.

**Teresa:** I guess so.

**Travis:** Red or black for a pirate. I guess you could use any color, but if you're trying to scare someone and you go with a, like a lovely lilac—

**Teresa:** Ooh!

**Travis:** ... that might not be as scary as you think. "Oh, no! It's the lilac killer!"

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** That's not... as intimidating as it could be.

**Teresa:** Various shades of blue would express all the gradients of passion, so the stronger the shade, the more passionate.

**Travis:** That's interesting 'cause I don't... I don't associate blue as like a passionate color.

**Teresa:** We've talked about this when we talk about like color-coded genders, right?

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Where up until the turn of the 19th century, boys were often dressed in red because it was very...



**Travis:** It was a muted—

**Teresa:** It was—

**Travis:** It was pink, 'cause it was a muted—

**Teresa:** It was a red.

**Travis:** ... red, which was a masculine color.

**Teresa:** Right.

**Travis:** Yes.

**Teresa:** And so passion might have been something that was associated maybe with the like, the passionate gender, the woman.

**Travis:** Oh, okay. Yeah. It's just when I think about blue, I think of it as being like a cold, removed color. You know what I mean?

**Teresa:** Right.

**Travis:** A distant... I think of red as the passionate color.

**Teresa:** But if red is the default...

**Travis:** Yeah...

**Teresa:** ... and you want to convey something else, you gotta choose the opposite, right?

**Travis:** That's interesting. Yeah.

**Teresa:** So like, a navy blue stamp might want to be read in private because it could be a love letter. [suggestively] Mm-hmm?

**Travis:** While a light blue, it's just a like letter. You can read that.

**Teresa:** [laughs] Just a like letter.

**Travis:** That's just like, "Yeah. You're cool. Hey, you're cool. I mean, we're just getting to know each other, but you have some points about you that I enjoy. So, you could tell everybody I said that."

**Teresa:** A pink seal was appropriate when the sender was offering congratulations, such as a graduation, a birth or birthday or something like that.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** For grand occasions, gold and silver wax could be used, but metallic was often considered to be a woman's touch at the time. So men typically didn't seal notes with metallics unless they were really trying to show off their wealth, right?

**Travis:** Oh... Yeah.

**Teresa:** So to be reminiscent of like a gold coin or something, right?

**Travis:** Sure. But I bet even that was like, "Alright, we get it."

**Teresa:** Yeah, kind of gaudy.

**Travis:** Kind of gauche, yeah.

**Teresa:** Yeah. Violet seals were appropriate for sympathy.

**Travis:** Once again, that's not what I would have guessed. Not what I would have guessed. I would have put blue at sympathy.

**Teresa:** Mm.

**Travis:** But violet at sympathy. Okay. I'm just trying to keep these all in mind.

**Teresa:** Wedding invitations were sealed in white wax, which is still a thing today.

**Travis:** That tracks.

**Teresa:** Talked about today, to represent purity and innocence—

**Travis:** Ugh, bleh, bleh, bleh.

**Teresa:** ... and things like that.

**Travis:** Blegh, blah, bleh.

**Teresa:** Dinner invitations were often sealed with chocolate-colored wax.

**Travis:** I mean, you don't say brown. Yeah.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** Brown does seem like a hungry color, doesn't it?

**Teresa:** It does. It does.

**Travis:** Doesn't it?

**Teresa:** But like you know, a very deep and glossy right?

**Travis:** Oh, sure, sure, sure.

**Teresa:** Like, good chocolate.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Private letters were sealed with dark—

**Travis:** Invisible wax. No, sorry.

**Teresa:** [laughs] Dark green. And lighter-colored green was thought to be more casual, right? The same idea with the blue.

**Travis:** It's a casual secret.

**Teresa:** It's a casual thing. Casual correspondence.

**Travis:** It's like... It's gossip everybody knows.

**Teresa:** "How's the weather today?"

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Would be sealed with the white one.

**Travis:** "Don't tell anyone." [laughs]

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** "It's raining. Shh!"

**Teresa:** You know, this does make a lot of sense to me, actually, now that I think about it.

Because the darker colors would require more dye, right?

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Whereas a lighter color could be just a hint of something. So something casual, something light, could have—

**Travis:** But they darker the dye—

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** Yeah, denotes like an investment, a like commitment to it, of like, "I wouldn't use this on just everything, 'cause it there's a lot more dye in this. It's more expensive. It's rarer."

Yeah, that makes sense. And it's also surprising, but when you said, like, green for like secrets or like, something- Not necessarily secret, but private between people.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** Like, something about dark green. Yeah?

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** I think it's like, I picture like a dark green cloak.

**Teresa:** Oh, sure.

**Travis:** Of like, it's going to blend into the forest and in the shadows. And it's more versatile for sneaking.

**Teresa:** [laughs] Uh—

**Travis:** Whereas if I saw somebody in, like, a black cloak, I'm like, "Well, that's the Grim Reaper."

**Teresa:** [laughs hard] Of course.

**Travis:** Yeah. If I saw someone walking around my medieval town in a black cloak, that's a scary person.

**Teresa:** I guess so.

**Travis:** Right? But I see him walking around in a dark green cloak, that's a Strider kind of person. That person is like—

**Teresa:** That's a mysterious—

**Travis:** They know something. Right. Yeah.

**Teresa:** People who were engaged were allowed to use ruby seals to denote their love.

**Travis:** Ooh la la.

**Teresa:** Right? But generally—

**Travis:** Just dating? Turquoise.

**Teresa:** [laughs] Generally in the Regency era, specifically, soft, pastel shades were used to convey tenderness and affection.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Yeah. That's... That's the language, I think.

**Travis:** [suggestively] The language of love...

**Teresa:** The language of letters.

**Travis:** Oh. Okay, yeah.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** Of sealed letters.

**Teresa:** And I have to say, no matter what color it was, if I got a sealed letter, in the mail, I would be like, "This is important."

**Travis:** Yeah, you're over the moon.

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** Well, I'm over the moon that you all listen to this show, and it's important that you're here. So thank you very much.

**Teresa:** Hey!

**Travis:** Thank you to—

**Teresa:** This gets our... seal of approval.

**Travis:** There it is. [slapping sound] That was us high-fiving.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** A big thank you to our editor, Rachel, without whom we could not make this show. Thank you to our researcher, Alex, without whom we could not make this show. And thank you to you for listening. I refuse to make this show without you!

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** No matter who tries to make me.

**Teresa:** Such passion.

**Travis:** Yes. Let's see. Oh, next weekend I will be at Sketchfest, on February 4th at 7:00 PM.

I will be doing a live actual play RPG show. It's called *The Trav-Enture Zone*, and it features me, DMing, and then our guests are Danny Fernandez, Erika Ishii, Erin Keif, Eugene Cordero, Connor Ratliff, and Griffin Newman.

It's going to be an absolute blast. Come see the show. Have a great time. You can get tickets for that at [sfsketchfest.com](http://sfsketchfest.com).

Also, if you haven't already, make sure you go to [mcelroymerch.com](http://mcelroymerch.com), check out the merch for this month. Starting on February 1st we'll have all new merch which you're going to love. What else, Teresa?

**Teresa:** We always thank Brent "Brentalfloss" Black for writing our theme music, which is available as a ring tone 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.

Also we are continually taking your topic suggestions, your questions, your... I mean... your "Hello, how are yous?" You can send those to shmannerstcast@gmail.com and say hi to Alexx, A-L-E-X-X, because she reads every single one.

**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]

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