

Shmanners 394: Victoria and Albert

Published on February 16, 2024
[Listen here on themcelroy.family](#)

[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: I love you.

Teresa: Hap... Hap... Happy Valentine's Day.

Travis: Oh what?! Is it Valentine's Day?

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: I was just saying I love you because that's how I begin every morning. I wake up from a complete sleep and I go, [gasping breath] "I love you!"

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: [catching his breath]

Teresa: Well, today is Valentine's Day. Our listeners will be listening to this a few days after, but it...

Travis: Yes, in Valentine's Day twice removed.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: As they call it. In, "Welp, there's the Easter Candy" Day on the shelves.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Can I tell you, I'm a old curmudgeon now.

Teresa: Oh, no.

Travis: As you know. I'm... I'm... I'm... You're never gonna believe this, 40 years old.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Do you remember? I feel like... Everybody talks about like, Christmas creep and, "Oh, Christmas starts earlier." And I'm like, "I don't care about that." What I do care about, is one of mine and Teresa's favorite things to do, early days, early days.

So Teresa and I had our first official date on February 13th, right? Day before Valentine's Day, because I thought it would be weird to have our first official date on Valentine's Day.

I don't know what the... But then, as if saying, "But no, you don't understand, it's 12 hours before that day, so it's fun."

Teresa: [laughs] When you're—

Travis: But also—

Teresa: ... young, these things matter.

Travis: I told Bebe that yesterday, side note, and I said, "Yeah. Had our first real date on Valentine's Day." And she goes, "Huh. So you had like a fake date before that?" And she thought she was joking.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: And I was like, "Oh, yeah, baby, I did."

Teresa: Actually, yes.

Travis: I was very nervous asking your mommy on a date. So I tried to make it seem like a friend date, but she was the first person I asked and the only other person I could get to go was Uncle Griffin.

So my real first— well, I guess my fake first date with your mom, was with Griffin.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: But one of our favorite things to do—

Teresa: We all love this story, by the way. We—

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: Griffin told it at the wedding.

Travis: Yes. It's true. It is true. And he was like, "It's gonna be weird." And I was like, "It's not gonna be weird."

Teresa: [laughs] And it was weird.

Travis: And it was like... it was weird.

Teresa: It was weird.

Travis: We had a great time. It was wonderful. Because when you marry me, you basically marry my whole family. But one of our favorite things to do used to be like, the day after a major holiday...

Teresa: Yeah!

Travis: Or a major candy holiday, was go and start hitting up those 50% off, sometimes 75% off, candy shelves, right?

Teresa: They're... they're almost giving them away.

Travis: Because they're like, "Oh, you don't understand. Now that the love's gone, the candy's not good anymore." Or whatever.

Teresa: [laughs hard]

Travis: But now they start clearing the show... I don't know if it's like, "Okay, 11:59, boom, clean it." Because you come in the next day and there's like two feet of shelves with candy on it. And I—

Teresa: I don't know, man.

Travis: I think they've wised up. Because I know from my olden days of working Best Buy, that you would then like, ship that stuff back, right? As unsold product or whatever and get money back on it.

Teresa: Mm.

Travis: Or whatever the case may be.

Teresa: There might be some flowers left. I don't think you can ship flowers back.

Travis: But I don't eat flowers.

Teresa: Well, I—

Travis: Not anymore.

Teresa: I like flowers.

Travis: Not since—

Teresa: Not to eat. But to look at.

Travis: Yeah. But I want to eat candy.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Alright. But we're not talking about candy. We're not talking about Valentine's Day.

Teresa: We are a little bit—

Travis: This morning, by the way—

Teresa: We're talking about Ill...

Travis: Can I say something nice about our daughters?

Teresa: ... Illlove? Yes.

Travis: This morning we gave them... We got these like sour candy heart things that we gave `em for Valentine's Day. And Bebe said, "And I have a present for you." And then she hugged us, which was very sweet. And she said, "And my other present... I care for you."

Teresa: Awww.

Travis: And I was like, "Okay, you don't have money. That's fine."

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: "You didn't get me anything. That's fine." I didn't say that. I appreciate it immensely and I loved it very much.

Teresa: Yes. Yes.

Travis: Okay. So.

Teresa: So. If Emily Post is our patron saint, I would say that Queen Victoria is our mascot.

Travis: Well, I would say, in the etiquette world, there is no bigger influencer in history than Queen Victoria.

Teresa: The OG.

Travis: I would say like, you could point to a lot of people where you could be like, Marie Antoinette was like a... was a culture influencer. And like all kinds of people throughout history, right?

Teresa: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Travis: But I think that in this modern day of, like, the things we do every day and take for granted, of like... "Yeah, that's... Yeah, you do this thing and that's how weddings go. And this is how Christmas goes. And this is..." right?

Teresa: Right.

Travis: It all traces back to like, Queen Victoria was this huge cultural turning point in a lot of our modern traditions.

Teresa: Let's call it what it is. Phenomenon.

Travis: Yeah, I mean, really.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Like, no exaggeration, like so much of what we do. Even like when we do our idioms episodes, a lot of it traces back to like, "And then this person wrote about Victoria. And then they went to, like, the wedding of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert and they said this."
"And then during the Victorian era, this is what came out of it." Right?

Teresa: Yeah. I mean, and not just for the US, right? Because she had such a far and wide-reaching presence.

Travis: One could almost say that the Sun never set on all the different places that she claimed to own.

Teresa: [laughs hard] Yes, that is true. But for today, we're going to talk about a very specific aspect of her life.

We are going to talk about her and her husband Albert's epic [emphatic] love story.

Travis: Why did you say it like that?

Teresa: [same emphasis] Lloovvee story. [giggles]

Travis: Why did you- You're an adult. Why did you say it? Why did you say it like we're gossiping on the playground.

Teresa: You- You can just... You can just hear my smile.

Travis: [Like he's on the playground] "I hear Queen Victoria and Prince Albert are in lllloovvveee. And they're dead." [laughs]

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: [Like he's on the playground] "I hear they're in love zombies." Are they zomb— They're not zombies, right?

Teresa: No, they're not.

Travis: You would tell me, right?

Teresa: They're not zombies, and we'll talk about how they end a little later.

Travis: Oh, I thought you were going to say, "We'll talk about how they're not zombies."

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: I was like, "That's in the copy?! This is an episode for all time!" Okay.

Teresa: Alright. So. If we are to start at the very beginning, her childhood doesn't really look like she's set up for success.

Travis: No. She was an orphan.

Teresa: No.

Travis: Adopted into the royal family.

Teresa: No. Not... not exactly.

Travis: She was born on the streets...

Teresa: Okay, no. Listen, listen. She was definitely part of the royal family, but originally she was not... They weren't thinking that she was going to be Queen, right?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: So Victoria's uncles were very much in the limelight. They were lampooned in political cartoons and mocking tavern songs for their like, aristocratic excesses, right?

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: They were kind of like... If we think about everything that's like prim and proper as Queen Victoria, they were the absolute opposite—

Travis: They weren't—

Teresa: ... of that.

Travis: They weren't the ones who... I think I'm confusing like her uncles with her sons, who ended up being like the rulers of a bunch of different places.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Yes. Correct. Correct. Her uncle, King George the Fourth was a well-known philandering divorcé.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: And—

Travis: Philandering is a word we need to bring back. I mean, I think it underplays what it is.

Teresa: A little bit, yeah.

Travis: But it's a fun word, right? It's one of those words- And this happens sometimes when I do like crossword puzzles and stuff where you look at it too long...

I was helping Bebe do homework yesterday and we were trying to figure out a sentence she could write that had the word "these" in it.

Teresa: Mm.

Travis: And I said it too many times. Also in those sentences she went to write was "whose" and I spelled it too many times. And I was like, "That can't be it."

Teresa: That can't be it. [laughs]

Travis: None of these... T-H-E-S-E? T-H-... These. These. The... It lost all meaning.

Teresa: Um—

Travis: It's early in the morning.

Teresa: It is.

Travis: And I got a lot- I'm vibrating.

Teresa: I know that you are.

Travis: With love for you.

Teresa: [laughs] So Victoria was actually behind about a dozen children in line for succession.

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: But it was determined that only one of them was a legitimate heir, and the rest were... not.

Travis: How was this determined? Like a battle of skill? A test of brains?

Teresa: No, no. Bloodline.

Travis: Oh, yeah. Okay.

Teresa: So like... But it... It has to be where like, everyone in Parliament or whatever, everyone in the ruling body, decides that, "Well, this one was with an actress and we're not married to her, but like we were married to this one. So maybe that one's legitimate."

Like all this kind of stuff, right?

Travis: Can I just say, in a real-life ramifications of all that, messy and... and... bad.

Teresa: Definitely.

Travis: In a storyline of like, compared to like royal family line of succession now? Way more interesting though, right?

Teresa: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Travis: Like... Okay, I'm not saying I wish that upon a real family and having to deal with, like, cheating and adultery and... Adultery a way clearer word than philandering, by the way.

Teresa: It's true. [laughs]

Travis: But if you're telling me a story.

Teresa: Philandering almost sounds like charity.

Travis: Philandering sounds like frolicking too much, I think. Of like, "He was just frolicking around kissing other ladies."

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: "Adultery" is biblically bad, you know?

Teresa: So then, when she was only eight months old, her father passed. And so they very quickly found themselves in search of money. I wouldn't say destitute, because Victoria's mother was allowed some rooms at Kensington Palace. Where Victoria spent her childhood being molded into a perfect Princess—

Travis: Wait, I'm confused.

Teresa: ... by her mother and her confidant, John Conroy.

Travis: So, wasn't her dad the King?

Teresa: No. Her uncle was the King.

Travis: Ohh... Okay.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Because when you say like, "not destitute, but kind of hurting for money," I'm like, "How bad was England at the time?"

Teresa: Oh, no, no.

Travis: No. Okay. Okay. I'm with you now.

Teresa: So then, I mentioned John Conroy.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Because he and her mother conspired, right? To control Victoria, believing that they would make her Queen.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: So, there was kind of like, a scheme for this, even though she wasn't, at the time, directly in line for succession, right?

Travis: Okay. Listen. I'm trying so desperately to remind myself that these are real people and a real historical thing, but I am hanging on every word of like, this is one of the greatest TV shows I've ever seen.

I'm thinking about *The Great*. I'm thinking about *Succession*. I'm thinking about all of these things and I'm in it. Okay.

Teresa: So, her mother and Conroy, they had a very strict regime for her, which they referred to as "The Kensington System."

Travis: Ooh!

Teresa: Which was built on rigorous academic study and nearly constant surveillance[sic], surveyance [sic]... sur... sur... surveillance[sic]... vey...
ance?

Travis: Why are you adding an extra "I" in there? You're either removing an "A" or adding an "I." Surveillance.

Teresa: Surveillance. Sorry. [laughs]

Travis: That's okay.

Teresa: A little glitch there.

Travis: I just watched you heart like... Yeah, you short circuited for a moment. I watched your brain reset.

Teresa: Because Victoria's own mother actually slept in the same bedroom as her until Victoria became Queen.

Travis: Okay... Okay.

Teresa: I mean, it was like they said, "We are going to make sure that this one gets into ZERO trouble."

And you know—

Travis: You were talking about *Victoria*, was the name of the thing with Jenna Coleman?

Teresa: Ah, yes!

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: Mm-hmm. Yes. Yes. Alright, [sighs] so...

Travis: Can I just say, once again to interrupt, I'm just so excited.

Teresa: Always.

Travis: Yeah. We talk about Queen Victoria a lot. So this is a like- feels like a behind the scenes of a movie I've loved and watched a million times.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: That explains so much because that sounds very infantilizing.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: And then you think about so many things that we attribute to like... Just, for example, like Christmas stuff, right?

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Of the enjoyment of like the baubles on a Christmas tree and like these big fancy cakes. Right?

And it's like, yeah, that sounds like "I never got to have these things." Or like, "I'm still kind of a child because I didn't mature out of it because I was basically like treated as a child long into my adulthood. You know what I mean?

And then so she, like, loves fancy bubbles and she likes big cakes at weddings and stuff, you know?

Teresa: Well, maybe.

Travis: Not to play armchair psychologist, but I just look at that and I'm like, "Yeah, man, that kind of connects."

Teresa: Sure. Let's... let's throw in a dash of like, this... So we have this royal pressure, right?

Travis: Uh-huh.

Teresa: And then a dash of never alone.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: She did become a very avid journaler.

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: It's pretty much surmised that her mother read her journals, but maybe she had a secret one that she didn't let her mom read. I don't know.

Travis: Mm. It was voice activated.

Teresa: Kids... kids are always hiding stuff. And we have journals from her from about age 13 to her death. And so she often turned to her diary—

Travis: That's a lot of journals.

Teresa: That's a lot.

Travis: She lived a long time. Yeah.

Teresa: It's a lot. She turned to her diary when she needed to share her more intimate feelings about something or someone. And that—

Travis: Or some place, or some time—

Teresa: Sure, but—

Travis: ... or some some.

Teresa: That's where we get to hear all the adorable details about when she first met Albert. On her journey that Conroy and her mother were pushing her along, a lot of bachelors were lobbed her way.

Travis: [snort-laugh]

Teresa: And... [laughs]

Travis: I just picture, [as a bachelor arcing through the air] "Woah!"

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: [laughs]

Teresa: And she didn't like 'em. She didn't like nearly any of them. Right? But that all changed in 1836, on her 17th birthday. And Albert was, well, to put it bluntly, not a first-round draft pick.

Travis: Mm. Underdog.

Teresa: He was her first cousin.

Travis: [uncomfortable] Okay.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Oy.

Teresa: Which is not uncommon as far as royalty is concerned.

Travis: Sure... Different times.

Teresa: Different times. He was from the German side of the family and anti-German sentiment was rising in Britain at the time.

Travis: Mm.

Teresa: Many Royals felt that a match between them would be a bad idea. Also, Albert wasn't a flashy, fancy kind of guy. He loved science and history and art and he was very logical and smart. I would say he was like, pragmatically German, in that, right?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Often to the... Like, he was blunt, often to the point of harshness, is what I'm going to say.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Um—

Travis: But once... Okay. Once again, not to play armchair psychologist, but I will a little bit.

Of if you've been treated like a child, right, your whole life and everything has been controlled and every decision has been made for you and you've been infantilized.

And then you meet this person who seems logical and pragmatic and doesn't speak to you like a child. Like speaks to you bluntly—

Teresa: Hmm.

Teresa: And speaks to you like prag- And then is just like, "I don't like that." And is, like, not coddling you and not doing that thing. I can see where that's very appealing.

Teresa: Alright, alright.

Travis: Like—

Teresa: You're painting a lovely picture for me.

Travis: I'm just, once again, sorry to treat this like a story that I'm hearing, but like if I'm working on character motivations and I'm working on like how do we build this like structure, that's the person you come in, right?

It's the Darcy to... uh... what's her face? Elizabeth. Right?

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: No, is that it?

Teresa: Yeah. Well, sure.

Travis: Is that her name?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Oh, God. Elizabeth. Right?

Teresa: Yeah. Yeah.

Travis: Okay, Lizzie. Because then it's like, oh, yeah. No man that's like, "Oh, my God, you're so great" is gonna do it for her, right? It's gonna be the guy who challenges her.

Teresa: Oh, okay.

Travis: Right?

Teresa: Alright. Alright. I'm with you here.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: So the first meeting was at her 17th birthday party in 1836 and the pair was introduced by their uncle, King Leopold, the first King of the Belgians.

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: And according to her memoirs—

Travis: For a second, I had to remind myself—

Teresa: What?

Travis: ... that that was probably his real title and not like a nickname like.

Teresa: [laughs] No.

Travis: Like, "Oh, that guy? King of the Belgians, that guy."

Teresa: [laughs] There was an immediate spark.

Travis: [romantically intrigued] Mmm...

Teresa: And Leopold had been hopeful that this might happen. I mean, despite the discouragement, I would say, of the King of England.

Because before the pair met her uncle, the King, had attempted to set Victoria up with one of the Princes of the Netherlands. Specifically, the second son of the Prince of Orange.

And Victoria knew about this attempt and was not into it, at all. Because, she said, "The Netherlander boys are very plain. They look heavy, dull and frightened and are not at all prepossessing."

Travis: Okay. I like the frightened part. [laughs] [makes frightened noises as Netherlander]

Teresa: Which, contrastingly, what she wrote in her diary about meeting Prince Albert. "Albert is extremely handsome. His hair is about the same color as mine. His eyes are large and blue. He has a beautiful nose, a very sweet mouth with fine teeth. But the charm of his countenance is in his expression, which is most delightful."

Travis: Aw, that's cute.

Teresa: Mm. I know. She's got like a fangirl moment here going on right?

Travis: There's something... I think the most charming part of that, to me, is the beautiful nose. Because that feels so specific and like not... Especially a thing now, that if, like, someone started dating someone, right? And they're like, "Tell me about him!" And they're like, "Aw, man, he has a beautiful nose."

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Like, that's not a thing that I think we would think to comment on necessarily. At least, not like in the opening description. That would be like a, "And you know what? I like, his nose." Right? But this was like the third [laughing] thing that she says about him, like, "Beautiful nose. You gotta see the nose on this guy."

Teresa: She was so smitten immediately that she actually wrote to King Leopold and thanked him for introducing them. Because, she said, "Thank you for the prospect of great happiness you have contributed to me in the

person of dear Albert. He possesses every quality that could be desired to render me perfectly happy."

"He is so sensible, so kind and so good and so amiable too. He has, besides the most pleasing and delightful exterior and appearance you can possibly see..."

Travis: Ooh la la!

Teresa: So she's like, "I like the insides, but the outsides I really, really, Like."

Travis: Yeah, that's nice. I like that.

Teresa: You know what I would like?

Teresa: What?

Travis: How about a word from another Max Fun show?

Teresa: Okay.

[ad break, theme music plays]

[*Valley Heat* theme plays]

Doug Duguay: My name is Doug Duguay and I'm here to talk about my podcast in the middle of the one you're listening to.

It's called *Valley Heat*, and it's about my neighborhood, the Burbank Rancho Equestrian District. The center of the world when it comes to foosball, Frisbee golf and high-speed free wheel roller skating.

And there's been a Jaguar parked outside on my curb for 10 months. I have no idea who owns it. I have a feeling it's related to the drug drop that was happening in my garbage can a little over a year ago.

And if this has been a boring commercial, imagine 45 minutes of it.

Okay, *Valley Heat*. It's on every month on maximumfun.org or wherever you get podcasts. Check it out, but honestly skip it.

[psychedelic distortion commences]

These are these are chronicles of the Rancho Equestrian District, Burbank, California. These are the events taking place in my house and around my home...

John Moe: [softly] Hello sleepyheads. *Sleeping with Celebrities* is your podcast pillow pal. We talk to remarkable people about unremarkable topics, all to help you slow down your brain and drift off to sleep.

For instance, we have the remarkable Neil Gaiman...

Neil Gaiman: I'd always had a vague interest in live culture food preparation.

John Moe: *Sleeping with Celebrities*. Hosted by me, John Moe, on maximumfun.org or wherever you get your podcasts. Night night.

[ad break ends]

Travis: Okay, so Victoria is smitten.

Teresa: Yes, but not ready to marry. She was only 17. And neither of them decided to seek a formal engagement at the time.

But they were very hopeful, right? And it turned out to be a little quicker than they really wanted or expected, because King George died in 1830.

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: And his brother William was ruling when she met Albert. But King William passed away in the summer that Victoria turned 18.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: So that meant it was time... to become the Queen. And here is why it all got kind of rushed, right? They needed to crown her Queen, but it was unsavory for a queen not to be married, right? So bound by social convention, she still had to live with her mother. Even being Queen. And everybody thought that, not only was it torturing for her—

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: She didn't like it. But also people thought that there would be outside pressure on decisions. Like for, you know, royal matters—

Travis: Well, and... Yeah.

Teresa: ... if she was living with her mother and... She was still living with Conroy and her mother. And Conroy was her mother's advisor, right? Not her advisor.

Travis: Well, and I mean, you're not wrong, right? Because that seemed to be their whole goal from the outset of, like, "We're molding her to be the Queen we want her to be."

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: And I also have to imagine that if you're like, "Hey..." especially at this time, the world ain't exactly like firmly set, right? There's a lot of upset. There's a lot of like, "Ooh, intrigue. Are we at war? Are we going to fight these people?" And if you send the image of, "Our leader's a kid!" right?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Like it doesn't exactly set her up for success to be like, "She's basically a baby who still lives with her mom!"

Teresa: So, all of this could be avoided if Victoria got married.

Travis: Mm.

Teresa: Right?

Travis: And then you're also shoring up relations between Germany and England.

Teresa: That's true. So after they met, on her 17th birthday, Albert was like, "This is gonna be it." And started to educate himself on what would be expected of him as the Queen's husband.

Travis: Uh-huh.

Teresa: Which would be Prince. And—

Travis: Not King.?

Teresa: Not King.

Travis: You're only King if you're... kin?

Teresa: You're only King if it's your bloodline on the throne.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Right? So, she can be Queen.

Travis: Uh-huh.

Teresa: But he is Prince.

Travis: Unless it's a month that begins with M.

Teresa: No. [laughs] No. So, on their second meeting, in 1837, October of that year, Victoria proposed to Albert.

Travis: [incredulous] On their second... Okay.

Teresa: Well, I mean, they had been exchanging letters.

Travis: Sure, sure. Yeah.

Teresa: It... But it's still- You're right. It was a little odd, right? They had only met a couple times. but they had been exchanging letters.

Travis: And it's not like I don't know that it works out. [laughs]

Teresa: Right.

Travis: I don't know why I'm like, "Oh, this is gonna end bad!" [laughs]

Teresa: And think about like, Henry the Eighth, right?

Travis: Sure. I always do.

Teresa: He married Anne of Cleves after just seeing her portrait. Right?

Travis: Yeah, and—

Teresa: And it was... Setting up people, especially Royals, was totally common.

Travis: I also... Man, I'm starting to suspect that my... So, I don't know how much of my understanding of this is from real life as opposed to like, movies and TV shows.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: Because when you talk about like, "Oh her uncle, the King wanted her to marry this guy, right? And she was like, 'I don't want to marry him.'" And I'm like, "Oh, she got to pick. How cool!" Right?

But I also don't know... Maybe everybody got to pick and my idea of, like, [Kingly voice] "You will marry this man!" comes from like movies and TV shows. And in real life it was like, "Oh, yeah, you don't have to marry this dude. It sucks."

Teresa: I think it's kind of a mix of both.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Yeah. So, she proposed to Albert, as was necessitated by her status, right?

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: Because they didn't want... It had to be that the Queen was in control of the marriage.

Travis: Yeah!

Teresa: Right? This is what she wrote in her journal after he arrived at Windsor.

Travis: "OMG."

Teresa: "I sent for Albert. He came to the closet where I was alone." Side note: "Closet" might mean "bathroom."

Travis: But it definitely doesn't mean like, "closet." [laughs]

Teresa: No, they—

Travis: It definitely doesn't mean like, three-by-three...

Teresa: Right.

Travis: Like, room in the... Like, a hole-in-the-wall room where I hung my clothes.

Teresa: Because they had wardrobes, right?

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: "Closet" might mean "bathroom" at the time.

"And after a few minutes I said to him that I thought he must be aware why I'd wished him to come here, and that it would make me too happy if he would consent to what I wished." Parentheses. "(to marry me.)"

"We embraced each other over and over again, and he was so kind, so affectionate. Oh, to feel I was, and am, loved by such an angel as Albert was too great delight to describe. He is perfection. Perfection in every way. In beauty, in everything. I told him I was quite unworthy of him and kissed his dear hand. He said he would be very happy..."

And he... She writes in German, "das Leben mit dir zu zubringen, and was kind and seemed so happy that I really felt it was the happiest, brightest moment of my life, which had made-up for all that I had suffered and endured. Oh how I adore and love him, I cannot say."

Travis: That's so sweet.

Teresa: Mm-hmm. She wrote that in 1839.

Travis: That's very nice.

Teresa: Very sweet.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Okay. Royal wedding starts getting planned, right?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: And Albert is tying up affairs in Germany.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Here is a letter from him before their marriage:

"My dearest, most beloved Victoria, I am so touched by the evidence of trust that you have given me in sending your letters, and by the so affectionate

sentiments that you expressed towards me therein, that I scarcely know how to reply to you."

Travis: [As Albert] "Do you like me? Check 'Yes' or 'No'."

Teresa: [laughs]

"How I have earned so much love and so much warm-heartedness, I am still unable to accustom myself to the truth of all that I see and hear and can only believe that heaven has sent down an Angel to me. Whose radiance has intended to brighten my life. May I succeed in making you quite, quite happy, as happy as you deserve to be. With body and soul I remain forever your slave. Your devoted Albert."

Travis: My goodness, my gracious. These two poets. They are poets. And can I say, what I like about this, and let this be a lesson to everybody listening who is in a relationship or pursuing relationships in some way. Both of them are basically telling the other one like, "I don't think I deserve you."

And the other is, like, "No, no. I don't deserve you." And so this thing of, like, "I will work hard to make you happy." And the other one's like, "I will work hard to make you happy." "Well, just being with you makes me happy." Right?

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Like this... this exchange of like... "You don't have to do anything because you're great."

And the other one went, "No, no, no!" Right? So this thing of like they... It's that thing of, I think people have talked about it before, I know Justin has talked about before, the 60/40, right?

Teresa: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Travis: Of like, if both people always give 60 percent, right, then it's like, "Yeah. Great. You're gonna be great." Right?

And it sounds like here are two people who made the decision of like, "I will be happy when they are happy."

And the other person saying, "I'll be happy when you're happy." And so they're both putting each other's happiness before their own while still focusing on their own happy- I think it's very sweet.

I think they're very sweet.

Teresa: Um, one more letter. He talks about where they arrive at some sort of port before they get to Windsor, the next day.

And it says, "I need not tell you that since we left, all my thoughts have been with you at Windsor and that your image fills my whole soul.

"Even in my dreams. I never imagined that I could find so much love on Earth. How that moment shines for me when I was still close to you, your hand in mine.

"Those days flew by so quickly. But our separation will fly equally so. Earnest wishes to say a thousand nice things to you, with promises of unchanging love and devotion.

"Your ever true, Albert."

Travis: [whispers] Oh my goodness gracious.

Teresa: I know. It's so great. Okay—

Travis: I wanna know what they fought about. Did they—

Teresa: Uh, I will tell you.

Travis: Okay, great.

Teresa: [laughs hard]

Travis: Because this is all very sweet and stuff, but I wanna get to like, "And their first fight." Right? And it's like, "And they argued about whether they'd have a TV in the bedroom or not." You know?

Teresa: Well, passion runs its course through all things, I would say.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: And so they loved hard and they fought hard.

Travis: [whispers] I love that.

Teresa: But they finally wed on February 10th, 1840, in the Chapel Royal of Saint James' Palace in London.

Travis: Oh, so we're just a few days out. What... February 10th... what? What year?

Teresa: 1840.

Travis: Okay so... Eighty-four... A hundred and eighty-four years ago?

Teresa: Mm.

Travis: Is that right? Yeah.

Teresa: I can't do math.

Travis: Yeah. Yeah. Well, I- Yes, yes.

Teresa: Yes. I believe you. And it was the most royal of all royal weddings. Everything that we picture that a royal wedding should be, it was.

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: Because that's what gives us the idea of the royal wedding.

Travis: And in many ways what we think of as "a wedding."

Teresa: Right. Their wedding cake weighed [laughing] 300 pounds.

Travis: [in disbelief] What?

Teresa: [laughs hard] It weighed 300 pounds. Their wedding cake was 300 pounds of cake.

Travis: Okay, here's what I'm thinking. I'm a pretty strong guy, right?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: I think I could comfortably, like without really, uh, worrying about dropping it, right, carry around 50 to 60 pounds just like [hoisting noise] a bag of like, flour or something, right? [hoisting noise] And you carry it.

So you're talking about like six guys my size to carry a cake barely- Like, so you probably have like 10 people on a big platter. Or they just built it where it was.

Teresa: [laughs] Maybe.

Travis: They brought it out in sections like, "There's no way."

Teresa: There's no way.

Travis: Or was it one big sheet cake? It was just one big sheet cake that was like a hundred feet long and 50 feet wide.

Teresa: According to tradition, I believe it was a fruit cake.

Travis: That's a lot of fruit.

Teresa: That's a lot of fruit.

Travis: Very dense. What if it was like, only like 12 by 12, but—

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: ... made of, like, dark matter?

Teresa: A dark matter cake?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: How would you chew it?

Travis: You wouldn't. You'd just look at it and go, "That's great" as it sunk through the core of the earth.

Teresa: There actually are slices of this cake that are still around today.

Travis: Oh yeah! There was on... uh... uh... in one of the first seasons of—

Teresa: *Great British Bake Off*.

Travis: *Great British Bake Off*, right!

Teresa: Mm-hmm. Yep. And this is where Victoria famously donned her white dress.

At the time, it was more traditional for brides to wear very colorful gowns with gold or silver embroidery.

Travis: Right.

Teresa: However, the Queen opted for white silk as a sign of her family.

Travis: But now... it's standard.

Teresa: Now it's standard. Maybe she wasn't actually the very first one, but she was the most famous first one.

Travis: Well, that's what— When we talk about influencers...

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Right? It's not that you're the first one to do it. You're the one to popularize it.

Teresa: Mm. Mm-hmm. A little bump in the road.

Travis: Oh no!

Teresa: The wedding night did not go exactly as planned. Victoria came down with a headache, probably from drinking.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: But he did... He was very kind and was very sweet to her while she was lying down. She wrote a love-struck passage in her diary. I'm not... I'm not going to read all of it.

"My dearest, dearest, dear Albert sat on a footstool by my side and his excessive love and affection for me gave me feelings of heavenly love and happiness. I could have never—"

Travis: "He turned on HGTV and really let me zone out."

Teresa: ... [laughs] "... hoped to have felt before." [laughs]

"At 20 minutes past 10, we both went to bed, of course, in one bed, to lie by his side and in his arms and on his dear bosom, and be called by names of tenderness I have never yet heard used for me before was bliss beyond belief."

"Oh, this was the happiest day of my life. May God help me to do my duty as I ought and be worthy of such blessings."

Travis: Oh my goodness, my gracious! I love this.

Teresa: So she had a headache and they just layed down—

Travis: They spooned.

Teresa: ... and cuddled.

Travis: They just spooned.

Teresa: It was great. Um. Okay. The honeymoon: also rather short, by these standards. I mean, it's possible, as a royal that you could do like a month for a honeymoon, right?

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: But it was a little short. They only went to Windsor for a few nights before returning to their duties because Victoria was under a lot of pressure. Not only was she the first queen in a long time, but her uncles, I mentioned earlier, had left quite a mess for her to pick up.

At this point, the monarchy had a rather raunchy reputation, which deeply disturbed the growing [posh British accent] religious middle class.

Travis: Oh sure, yeah!

Teresa: Yeah. The young queen was heralded as "the nation's hope."

Travis: Cool. [sarcastic] No presh!

Teresa: [sarcastic] No pressure! She was expected to portray herself as a beacon of purity and class in order to turn the monarchy around.

Travis: See this once again is where we get, I think, one of the defining juxtapositions, the defining dichotomies, of the Victorian era.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Which is, we think of it as this very staunch uptight, like, I mean puritanical thing.

But in reality, no, there was a lot of fun and there was a lot of excuses to let loose. And yeah, it was like, you scratched the surface of it a little bit and there's all the stuff underneath it.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: And that's what we're talking about with Victoria, right? Of like, "Hey, we want you to come in and be this beacon of like, purity and stuff."

And it's like, "You got it. Anyways, here's a passage about me laying my head on his bosom."

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: And you're like, "Whoa!", right?

Teresa: Well, these weren't discovered until much later, of course.

Travis: Well, sure, but this is what I'm saying. You scratch the surface a little bit—

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: ... and here is a passionate young woman underneath who wants, you know, fancy. And wants fun and wants to just like, be passionately in love with her husband. And it's like, "Yeah, but be uptight." And it's like, "Okay. I will, here, when you're looking at me. But as soon as you turn away, it's back to the fun and passion and stuff."

Teresa: Albert wanted to be known more than simply the sire of royal children.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: And he also brought a lot of money into the union and so he got very frustrated about the idea that he was just some foreign fool using the British Crown.

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: There was a very vicious rhyme that went around: "For better or for worse, England's fat Queen and England's fatter purse."

Travis: Gross.

Teresa: Yeah. Not very nice. But Victoria had every right to be very protective of her power.

She knew that she was coming to the throne during a very precious time in Britain's history. Not to mention that marrying a German was very risky at the time.

So they became frustrated with each other quite often. Victoria was known to be moody and Albert could be logical to the point of insensitivity.

Travis: Mm.

Teresa: Right? Yeah, I was talking about this earlier, right?

Travis: I bet he tried to fix her problems instead of just listening.

Teresa: Maybe.

Travis: Where she was like, "Oh, I'm so frustrated with, I don't know, Prussia or whatever, you were worried about at that time." And he was like, "Do you want me to invade them?" And she's like, "No, I don't want you to invade them. I just want you to listen about how I'm mad."

I'm like, "Okay, I don't understand. You said you have a problem with Prussia. What if we just conquered Prussia?"

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: And it's like, "No, Albert!"

Teresa: Something like that. Apparently, their fights were rather... tense? Oftentimes they would have to retreat to separate apartments in order to cool down.

Travis: You mean in like that They didn't keep [laughing] places in town?

Teresa: [laughing] Oh, no, no, no. That's what different areas of the palaces were called, "apartments."

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Um—

Travis: I do love the idea of Albert just having a place with like, neon beer signs and like a pool table.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: It's like, "This is just where Albert can be Albert!" You know what I mean?

Teresa: Rumor is that they used to pass notes to each other to fight on. They didn't like yelling at each other, or maybe they did like—

Travis: They would tell their servants to tell each other that they weren't talking to each other.

Teresa: [laughs] Something like that.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: It started to shift a little bit when they had their first child. Surprising no one, Victoria was pregnant shortly after the marriage.

Travis: And then, pretty much from then on.

Teresa: Yeah, yeah. They would go on to have nine children in all.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: But each pregnancy would take a deep toll on Victoria. It's been speculated that she might have already had some mental health issues, and

her pregnancy often left her incapacitated. Not only mentally but also physically, right?

Travis: Mm.

Teresa: It's a very physically trying sort of ordeal, to give birth, to make a baby and give birth.

Travis: Yeah, it's hard.

Teresa: It's hard. And so this is when she would finally allow Albert to do-perform some of her royal duties. And over the course of their relationship, he became a very important adviser and confidant, not just partner, but politically speaking, right? He supported a myriad of public causes fighting for the military and educational reform, and even for the abolition of slavery.

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: Um—

Travis: He set up like a ton of charities and like social services and stuff. Like resources for people, if I remember correctly.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: And we've talked about the Great Exhibition of 1851 before. This was mostly his doing. It showed off Britain's technological achievements.

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: It was the first kind of like, World's Fair, right?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: And it was- he was essential- in helping Victoria deal with foreign policy and it made it kind of a dual monarchy, right? Where he would be referred to as "The Uncrowned King."

Travis: But what I really love about this, at least from my understanding of it, right? It's like, he was definitely very influential in it. But at no point, from what I've heard, was there any animosity of like, "But I'm overshadowed by my wife, the Queen." Right? It just seems like— Was there?

Teresa: A little bit.

Travis: Yeah?

Teresa: Um—

Travis: Well, just nobody ever calls it, "The Albertian Era." You know what I mean?

Teresa: It's true, it's true. But some people say that Albert took advantage of Victoria's traumatic pregnancies to seize power that she wouldn't have granted him otherwise.

Travis: But some people say that. Did Victoria ever say that?

Teresa: Uh, I don't know.

Travis: Okay. I don't know. It's hard because when I... Everything I know about them up to this point, not just from this episode, but from the past when we've discussed it, right? Of like...

And maybe I'm projecting on this because so much of what we do right in our relationship is like, divide and conquer. Right? And like, we just have two kids. I can't imagine having nine and being—

Teresa: Well, yeah... You're—

Travis: Yeah, and they have help.

Teresa: They weren't responsible for as much of their children's lives.

Travis: But this point- Like, I just imagine a different version of this where he was like, "I don't care if you're, you know, working out from pregnancy and you need to rest. Get back— I'm not doing it. Get up there."

Teresa: [laughs hard]

Travis: Right?

Teresa: I suppose. Um—

Travis: Yeah, if this was a different story where you were like, "Yeah, and every time she had a kid, he would disappear off to the country with his friends and leaving her to do everything!" We'd be like, "What a jerk!" Maybe I'm defending him because I'm a husband.

Teresa: [laughs] There is a whole conversation to be held about this time period, about like, the imbalance of power and sexism and even the occurrence of mental health issues. Right?

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: So there's a whole... They were of the time, but they were kind of made to be kind of like synonymous with the time.

Travis: And like I said, lay my cards on the table, I'm having a really hard time separating... as I've said previously in this episode... the like story of it and the historical fact of it. Where I'm like, "Not my favorite character!" Right?

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Versus like, "No, this was a real person and these were real times with like, real issues."

Teresa: But we do know that they were very emotionally dependent on each other and at some points professionally dependent on each other.

Victoria sought to make him comfortable, bringing Christmas to the palace. Right?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: We've talked about that. And Albert designed a seaside retreat for their family so Victoria could escape the pressures of life in London. And because of Albert's mediation, Victoria was able to slowly work on repairing her relationship with her mother.

Travis: Cool.

Teresa: So, they stayed deeply devoted to each other for the entirety of their lives. And by several accounts Albert was very protective of Victoria. When the press eventually came around to Albert, was when they witnessed his valor protecting Victoria from an assassination attempt.

Travis: [surprised] Oh!

Teresa: He literally put his body in between the assassin and Victoria. So the press was like, [Borat voice] "Okay, he's a good guy."

Travis: That's what it takes?!

Teresa: I guess so.

Travis: Oh, man.

Teresa: [laughs] He also had a reputation for actually being in the room while Victoria was giving birth. This is corroborated by Victoria's doctor, who wrote, "Nothing could exceed the tender anxiety of the Prince to his wife.

"He sat by her bedside during the whole time, cheered and sustained her, and covered her face with kisses in the acme of her sharpest throes. He was pale and obviously very anxious. But this, though apparent in his blood shot eye and haggard expression, did not render his conduct tumultuous and unsettled in the smallest degree."

So, he was like, he was right there with her the whole time, in a time where... I mean... You mean, you talked about going off to a lodge or whatever, right?

Travis: Right.

Teresa: He was there.

In March of 1861, Victoria's mother passed away and at this point Victoria came upon some of her papers, to find that despite their tumultuous relationship, Victoria's mother expressed that she adored her daughter. And blamed both Conroy and Victoria's governess for their estrangement.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: Mm. I don't know.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: You can love somebody and hurt them at the same time.

Travis: You can also think that it's other people's fault when it's your fault.

Teresa: [laughs] Yes, yes.

Travis: [As Victoria's mother] "Why do these two people keep doing everything I tell them to do?!"

Teresa: In November of that year, Albert and Victoria heard a rumor that their son, Albert Edward, Prince of Wales, was carrying on with an actress in Dublin.

Travis: What?!

Teresa: Appalled, Albert immediately traveled to Cambridge to confront his son about his scandalous affair. But when Albert came back, he was extremely unwell.

Travis: [gasps]

Teresa: He was diagnosed with typhoid fever, but Victoria's doctors assured the Queen that his condition would turn around. It did not.

Travis: [sadly] No.

Teresa: Albert died on December 14th, 1861, just a few months shy of his 22nd wedding anniversary.

Travis: For some reason I lost all track of numbers and I thought you were gonna say "22nd birthday."

Teresa: No, no, no, no.

Travis: And I was like, "That can't be right."

Teresa: That's not it.

Travis: That can't be right. They had nine kids!

Teresa: Officially they said that typhoid fever took him, but it could have been stomach cancer or an ulcer, or some other unidentifiable thing at the time.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: He and Victoria were both 42 years old when he passed.

Travis: Okay, so not that old though, I mean...

Teresa: Not that old, right? After his passing—

Travis: And also- I didn't realize they were the same age.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: I think that that's... cool. I don't know.

Teresa: That's great. For the time, especially.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Especially for the time. After his passing she secluded herself from Royal office. Avoiding public appearances for years and wearing only black mourning clothes for the rest of her life.

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: This is where... This is the period where, "The Widow of Windsor" appears, right?

Travis: I also think this is probably where... when most people who don't know the full like, story of Victoria...

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: When they think about like, dour and serious and like, "We are not amused" and that kind of thing?

Teresa: Yeah, yeah.

Travis: This is the period they think about, not like the 22 years, you know of them being together and Christmas and you know 300-pound cakes and stuff, right?

Teresa: [laughs] Yeah.

Travis: I don't think they think... I think they picture like, always wearing black and this like half of her life period of mourning kind of deal.

Teresa: Mm-hmm. By the time of her Golden Jubilee in 1887, Victoria was affectionately known as "The Grandmother of Europe", because her children had married other royals, right?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: And played key roles. They occupied eight European countries.

Travis: Wow!

Teresa: Yeah, so the thrones were all from her.

Travis: It's a game of... A game of it, almost.

Teresa: It is, almost. She is also credited with spreading hemophilia throughout...

Travis: Well, if *Doctor Who* is to be... It's lycanthropy. It's werewolf stuff.

Teresa: [sarcastic] Oh, okay.

Travis: That's... there's the...

Teresa: [sarcastic] That's what it is?

Travis: In David Tennant's like 3rd or 4th episode, "They say it was hemophilia, but maybe it was lycanthropy. The werewolves." That's never brought up again in *Doctor Who*, so...

Teresa: Is it?

Travis: So, I think they were like, "Maybe we should imply..."

Teresa: Maybe not...

Travis: "... that the Royals are werewolves."

Teresa: Victoria passed on January 22nd, 1901, ending her 63-year reign.

Travis: [impressed] Whoo.

Teresa: While her health had been deteriorating for years, she succumbed to a stroke and passed away at Osborne House on the Isle of Wight, which was the house that Albert had designed for her by the sea, right?

Travis: Lovely.

Teresa: She was 82. So obviously, and we discussed this, she left behind an incredible legacy.

Travis: Yeah, man.

Teresa: There are countless streets and public buildings and statues and bridges and all kinds of things named for her.

And her reign is known as the Victorian Period, both in and outside of Britain. It's synonymous with Britain's great age of industrial expansion, economic progress and growth of, quote, "The Empire."

Travis: Love that.

Teresa: Yeah. Her funeral—

Travis: I mean, I don't love the Empire, much.

Teresa: Right. Yes.

Travis: But, the legacy is...

Teresa: The legacy.

Travis: Yeah, you get it.

Teresa: Her funeral was an enormous affair. She wanted a white funeral with a procession and full military service. She wanted to be carried by carriage with no public lying in state.

Travis: Do you think that that, the white funeral, was like, "I've lived my life in mourning since I lost Albert and now I get to be with Albert again. So I'm not in mourning anymore"?

Teresa: Absolutely it was.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Absolutely. Because she wanted her white gown. She wanted family mementos inside the coffin with her. She wanted to be buried with Albert's dressing gown and a plaster cast of his hand. Also with her wedding veil, which she had actually refashioned several times over into different outfits because she loved her wedding clothes so much.

Travis: It was like she was getting married to Albert again because she was rejoining him.

Teresa: Aw, so sweet. But you won't find her buried in Westminster Abbey.

Travis: I wouldn't go looking, baby. I wouldn't try to find her body.

Teresa: Well, because if you ever want to visit her grave, you'll find her final resting place at the Royal Mausoleum near Frogmore House, which is about a half a mile South of Windsor Castle.

Because she enlisted one of her favorite designers to help create like a final resting place for the two of them.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: And her and a team of artists and architects carefully crafted the building with detailed and personal touches that Albert would have loved.

For example, much of the artwork is inspired by Raphael, which was Albert's favorite artist, and—

Travis: And favorite Ninja Turtle!

Teresa: [reluctant chuckle] Sure. Above the mausoleum doors is inscribed "Farewell, most beloved. Here at length I shall rest with thee. With thee in Christ, I shall rise again." So...

Travis: They are zombies.

Teresa: Not yet?

Travis: Not yet!

Teresa: That's a whole other show.

Travis: [in the style of ominous music] Dun, dun, duh!

Okay. Hey, thanks, everybody. Thank you for listening. Thank you to our editor, Rachel, without whom we could not make this show. Thank you to our researcher, Alexx, without whom we could not make this show.

And thank you to you for listening. We think you're great. We're here... I'm glad you're here for this one. I would—

Teresa: We love making the show for you.

Travis: That's true. I really enjoyed this one, Teresa. Thank you for making the show with me.

Teresa: Yeah!

Travis: I think you're great!

Teresa: I think you're great!

Travis: If you haven't yet, go check out merch over at mcelroymerch.com. There's a lot of cool stuff over there, and 10% of all merch proceeds this month go to the Marsha P. Johnson Institute.

What else, Teresa?

Teresa: Thank you to Brent "Brentalfloss" Black for writing our theme music, which is available as a ringtone where ringtones are found. Thank you to Bruja Betty Pinup Photography for the cover picture of our fan- run Facebook groups, Shmanners Fanners. If you love to give and get excellent advice from other fans, go ahead and join that group today.

Thank you to Alexx. If you would love to submit a topic or have questions or idioms, send those to shmannerscast@gmail.com and say hi to her because Alexx reads every one.

Travis: And that's going to do it for us. So, join us again next time.

Teresa: No RSVP required!

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

Teresa: Manners, shmanners! Get it!

[theme music plays]

Maximum Fun.

A worker-owned network...

Of artist-owned shows...

Supported directly by you.