

Shmanners 413: Dowry

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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 today?

Teresa: Pretty good!

Travis: You look so beautiful.

Teresa: Aww, thanks, sweets.

Travis: And I look like a grub.

Teresa: That's not true at all.

Travis: I do! 'Cause it's date night, and you've gotten ready and I haven't gotten ready yet.

Teresa: I mean, but you're always ready.

Travis: I'm not—well, first of all—

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Hello. I'm still in my gym clothes from this morning, 'cause I did a lot of work.

Teresa: You look pretty fine.

Travis: Not to go out to dinner, though!

Teresa: I mean, sure. You gotta put the guns away to go to dinner.

Travis: That's true. I am in a tank. People at home, calm yourselves. This is a family show. If we were a celebrity couple, which we are, and the paparazzi snapped some pictures, they would tear into me. Comparatively—

Teresa: They would say that you were looking rugged.

Travis: No they wouldn't! They'd say, "Look. Another dude not putting in any effort." Except for the purple hair, which does cover a lot. Speaking of dudes not putting in effort, we're talking about dowries this week.

Teresa: Uh, okay, yes. [laughs] Now, wait a second.

Travis: Huh?

Teresa: Let's couch this all the way around.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: We've been watching Bridgerton.

Travis: Yeah, a lot.

Teresa: And Queen Charlotte, a Bridgerton spinoff.

Travis: A Bridgerton story.

Teresa: Indeed.

Travis: Watching is putting it lightly, I would say. Uh, binging perhaps would be—inhaling, mainlining.

Teresa: Dissecting, for sure.

Travis: Injecting. Yeah, we watched, uh, all three of the seasons of Bridgerton in 10 days, something like that? 11 days. It's so our stuff?

Teresa: Yeah, it's right there.

Travis: Of, like, historical, and also romance-y, and also funny. It's just, like, right down the middle.

Teresa: Okay. "Historical," mmm...

Travis: No, it is historical-adj—I mean—

Teresa: Adjacent.

Travis: —it's historical fiction.

Teresa: It's historical fiction, yes, indeed. Because there is definitely that...

Travis: It's a period piece.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: That's a better way to—'cause it's not historically accurate, but it is definitely a period piece.

Teresa: Yes. Yes.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: And as the seasons have progressed, it has become less historically accurate, because as the audience comes along with you you're able to expand and make it more fantastical and more beautiful, and expand and expound.

Travis: And it's also like—it's not... [sighs] I don't know who's watching Bridgerton—I said this the other day. I don't know who's watching Bridgerton, like, expect—like, "This should be historically accurate."

It's like, it's not masterpiece theater, you know what I mean? Like, it's a romance novel kind of deal, but that's downplaying, 'cause it's very good. We love it very much. But it's like, it's not historically accurate, and it shouldn't be expected to be so.

Teresa: On that subject, there is a lot of talk about marriage.

Travis: A lot! It's the whole—

Teresa: It's the whole thing.

Travis: It's the whole thing!

Teresa: It's the whole thing. Um, and a little bit talk of dowries. And we started to talk about this amongst ourselves, and I think that we talked—we've talked a little bit about the dowry as part of, like, the wedding kind of tradition, right?

Travis: Yeah, but here's—the thing that struck me, right? Is they talk about dowry I wouldn't say as much as some other stuff. But it definitely comes up, especially in, like, season one. As far as the Featheringtons go and stuff, it's talked about a lot. And the question I was struck by was like, they keep saying it and everybody knows the concept from history, but what are the mechanics of it, right? Of like—I was like, is it a standard number? Is it something where it's like, the older daughter has a higher dowry, a younger daughter has a lower? What's the... ins and outs of it? What number are we looking at? What's the expectation? All these things.

Teresa: And that's what we're gonna get into.

Travis: Okay, 'cause this is what I'm very curious about.

Teresa: Um, so quick note.

Travis: Uh-huh.

Teresa: Dowries are not just history. They are actually still used in many different parts of the world today, and there are deep marriage traditions in every color. So we're gonna be very Eurocentric in this episode, because Bridgerton is what got us talking about this. So we're mainly talking about Regency era England.

Travis: Okay. And let me also say, if you belong to one of those cultures that still uses dowry, I'm going to be speaking about this from my point of view from my culture. It's not a concept I'm wild about in theory. I look forward to learning about. But from my personal standpoint, you might hear me disparage it from time to time, but that's 'cause I'm from a different culture, and it's not something I'm wild about. Okay, go on.

Teresa: So, it is a set—

Travis: Mostly 'cause I have two daughters. I don't wanna pay people to marry 'em. Gross!

Teresa: That's not exactly what it's supposed to be.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: It is a set of assets that the bride's family gives to the groom when the pair are wed. And we say the groom because the groom becomes the head of household for the bride, right? So they are in all legal purposes treated as one entity after they get wed.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: Is that why it's called, like, the bridegroom?

Teresa: A little bit.

Travis: Like, this is the bridegroom.

Teresa: Not—not exactly. But anyway. Um, so the assets can take many forms, depending on the culture and the period in history. They can be anything from money, to livestock, to material goods, to real estate, to plots of land, right?

Here's the thing.

Travis: Tell me the thing.

Teresa: We all would like to say that you wouldn't get married for real estate alone, right?

Travis: What kind of real estate?

Teresa: [laughs] I'm certain that it did happen. But the majority of cases were not just about bettering the groom's circumstance. It was about bettering the family's circumstance. Um, and so it would help the newly married couple with the means to build a home and start a life together.

Secondly, it would give the bride some collateral if her husband suddenly became abusive, or if marriage ended in divorce. It's kind of like, if you, groom, mess this up, us, bride's family, we take this back.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: It reverts. Right? But, like, that does give the bride a little bit of protection, although it doesn't give her agency, right? Um, and also, if a woman left a marriage because of the man's mistakes, it didn't exactly go to her. It would either go back to her family, or it would go to her children.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: And it was used as a bargaining chip for society climbers, right?

Travis: Well, yeah.

Teresa: So a strong—

Travis: That's what I think of it as, right?

Teresa: Right, yes. A strong dowry was an incitement to potential suitors that would make a family's daughter seem more marriageable. That's what we see in Bridgerton.

Travis: But here's the trick. This is the thing that I want to know. Of like, if I'm a Bridgerton, right? And I'm a well-established, well beloved, well respected family, I feel like the dowry I'd have to put up for my daughter wouldn't have to be as much, right? 'Cause it's like, you're marrying into Bridgertons. That should be enough.

Whereas if I'm an un-established family, that's where I'd be like, I need to hike that dowry up, 'cause I gotta entice somebody who's already established to marry in. But I don't think that's the case, because the way you become an established family is by lavishing, you know, by paying for things, right?

Teresa: Right. Well, so, I mean, in a sense I guess that makes sense. But you would be expected as, say, a Bridgerton, to provide a certain lifestyle for the daughter, right? And so you couldn't just lowball her dowry, because that reflects poorly on you, because if your daughter cannot afford the things that she's accustomed to—carriages and dresses and whatever, right? Full staff. Then that reflects poorly on the Bridgertons, right?

Travis: Okay. And so I guess in my mind I need to shift my mindset away from paying someone to marry my daughter to setting my daughter up for success in her married life.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Because if I'm paying someone to marry my daughter and they're a well-established family, I shouldn't have to pay them to marry my daughter. They're lucky to get to marry my daughter. But if I'm saying this is the money I've saved for you to move out of the house and have a good life

right off the bat without haven't to, like, save up to buy a house and save up to do these things, right off the bat, here's the money.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: And then there's another thing. Something that you mentioned earlier is—I mean, just the idea of, like, paying someone to take your daughter, right? There is also something called the bride price.

Travis: Oh?

Teresa: Which would be the price a groom's family would pay to the bride's family in exchange for losing her as household labor.

Travis: They never talk about that on shows and movies and stuff.

Teresa: It's not something that happened specifically in Regency England, but it is something that was associated with dowries in the ancient world, and up until, like, the mid 1600's, so Tudor times.

Travis: Yeah, 'cause that wouldn't track—that wouldn't track in Regency because they weren't doing household work.

Teresa: No.

Travis: And I assume of course we're talking about, like, you know, titled families here whereas, like, you know, the whatever class is below that—I don't wanna say lower class, that feels so judgmental. But you know what I mean.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: The normal folk. Like, they probably weren't as worried about dowries and whatnot.

Teresa: I mean... you would be a little bit. Because you didn't want—you didn't want, like—you send your daughter off to get married, and then...

Travis: Question mark, question mark, question mark?

Teresa: Where do they go? What do they do? I mean, maybe they move in with you. But eventually you might want them to go someplace else.

Travis: Yeah. Just get 'em a tiny house. Park it in your backyard.

Teresa: Something like that. I mean, it's to try and set them up as a family unit themselves.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: But it's also—the dowry is kind of like—think about an advance on inheritance.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: In a world of primogenitor, where everything passes down specifically through the male line, the inheritance that you might get is—it's like a down payment, the dowry is the down payment for the inheritance that you might be entitled to.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: It could be subtracted from your inheritance, actually.

Travis: Well, let me ask you this, and this might come later, or you might not know, or it might be, uh, I don't know. Why didn't they dude then have a thing like that? Why was it just through the bride? Why wasn't the groom like, "And here's my half that I'm bringing too."

Teresa: Well, because he did. I mean, he was expected—she took his name. He—he provided things for what, like, the family was going to use. So, like, the house and, like, things for the children, education, stuff like that. And the dowry was supposed to be her money.

Travis: Okay, so this is—

Teresa: That was the i—okay. So, and it wasn't even just that money. Okay, in an ideal scenario, right? She has a dowry. The dowry is invested. And she takes her living expenses out of the interest earned from the dowry. So things like her allowance, right? For dresses and shoes and throwing parties, or whatever it is that she wants to do. Not things for the household, which is what the male is supposed to, like, be the provider of.

Travis: So it's like they have separate accounts.

Teresa: It is, kind of. But, I mean, her account is much smaller. Um, her account is basically like her spending money.

Travis: So, is—I think what I'm understanding is the reason no one talks about, like, a groom's dowry or whatever is that's just hi—like, what he as a head of household, established person is doing.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: And so hers gets added to his, but his does not get added to hers kind of deal.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Okay. Alright.

Teresa: That's what it is. That's what it is. And—so do you remember in season one when Antony tells Daphne...

Travis: Slight spoiler for season one of Bridgerton. Just slight. Just skip ahead 30 seconds. Go ahead.

Teresa: Do you remember when Antony tells Daphne that the Duke did not take her dowry and she is affronted at first?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: And then Antony elaborates and says he put it into a trust for you.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: So not only does that mean that she will be able to keep whatever interest, right? As her spending money. But he is showing—the Duke is showing that he will be taking care of her wholly. And so if things go bad, she will be able to take—the entirety of the dowry is in her name.

Travis: So he has no access to it.

Teresa: He has no access to it.

Travis: Got it, okay. This is all making sense. Okay.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Okay. And the reason that all of this works together is the marriage contract. And all of that is decided by the two families when people get together, right? Um, so the wife's dowry is administered by her husband. Because it is considered part of the family assets.

Travis: Correct—okay, yes, I'm getting this.

Teresa: And so... if you divorce, the husband is responsible for returning both the dowry and, if it is applicable, the bridal price to the bride's family.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: So, I mean, that is like the root of the dowry. And that was, like, back in Babylonian times, right? That's where all of this kind of stems from. And so it changes a little bit over time. That's not exactly how Regency era, which is like 1811 to, like, 1823? Something like that.

Travis: That's a small window!

Teresa: Well, because Regency is just while the Prince Regent is in charge.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: The King is still alive. The Queen is still around.

Travis: Oh yeah, 'cause it's Georgian, and then Regency, and then Victorian?

Teresa: Yes. I mean—

Travis: I pay attention.

Teresa: —I mean, there's a little bit in between Regency and Victorian, but only because people kind of, like, die off real quick.

Travis: Sure. Speaking of real quick, we're gonna take a real quick break—

Teresa: Oh, okay!

Travis: —to hear a word from another Max Fun show.

[theme music plays]

[phone rings]

[music plays]

Speaker 1: Hello, podcast recommendation service.

Speaker 2: Hello there young man. I'm looking for a new podcast to listen to. Something amusing, perhaps.

Speaker 1: Ooh, what about Beef and Dairy Network?

Speaker 2: Something surreal and satirical.

Speaker 1: Well, I would suggest Beef and Dairy Network.

Speaker 2: Ideally it would be a spoof industry podcast for the beef and dairy industries.

Speaker 1: Yes, Beef and Dairy Network!

Speaker 2: Maybe it would have brilliant guests such as Josie Long, Heather Anne Campbell, Nick Offerman, and the actor Ted Danson?

Speaker 1: Beef and Dairy Network!

Speaker 2: I don't know. I think I'm going to stick to Joe Rogan.

Speaker 1: The Beef and Dairy Network Podcast is a multi-award-winning comedy podcast, and you can find it at Maximumfun.org, or wherever you get your podcasts.

[music and ad end]

[music plays]

Speaker 1: Somewhere in an alternate universe where Hollywood is smarter...

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[music and ad end]

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: So, things have changed. Got it.

Teresa: Right. Um...

Travis: How much was it?

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: Like, was it like, 20 bucks? Like, how much was it? What's a good dowry, you know what I mean?

Teresa: Well, it's supposed to be relative to your wealth and status. So I can't, like, give you an exact number. But I can give you a couple of examples.

Travis: Okay. One dowry, please. Like, that's how it always feels. They say dowry like it's a set number. Like, "I will pay one dowry" is kind of how it feels like people use it in, you know, Regency and stuff like that. Where they're like, "Well, I'll pay her dowry."

It always makes it seem like "And you know how much that—we all know what we're talking about here."

Teresa: Here's an example.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: So, this is royalty. When Portuguese princess Catherine of Braganza became engaged to King Charles II, she not only brought money, but trading rights. And when she and Charles were wed, the British received control of Tangier, Mumbai, and Morocco.

Travis: Oh.

Teresa: And as well as trading rights with all the Portuguese colonies all over the world. Right? So that's a ton of stuff.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Because you're basically merging royal lines, right? So that's at the very top there. Um, when you talk about, like, a portion, right? Of the significance of your wealth, or whatever it is.

Here's another example. The fifth Duke of Devonshire who was one of the richest men in the British kingdom at the time bestowed—this is enormous. This is an enormous dowry. This is not reflective of regular people.

His eldest, Georgiana, married George Howard, becoming the Countess of Carlisle. Converted into today's US dollars, three and a half million dollars.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: 30,000 pounds.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Okay, and that's not, like, annually. That's like one lump sum.

Travis: I'm so torn, I will say, so torn. 'Cause on the one hand, yeah, that's a lot of money. On another hand, if we're talking about super rich people, right? It's not—it could've been bi—I guess there weren't, like, billionaires at the time. But it's a lot of money, absolutely.

Teresa: And the thing is, it's not only in proportion to the family's wealth. It's also supposed to be equal to the groom's status. So that's the kind of, like—if, say, for example, this Georgiana didn't marry a Duke. She married a mister, right? Someone with no title. Her dowry would not have been as big, right? Because he is not as elevated a status.

Travis: Uh-huh. Was that a like, you don't want to have the bride be more financially powerful than the groom? Or was it like, a reward for marrying, you know, high status? Like... or was it just like, that's just what you do?

Teresa: I mean, it was more like people of the same social strata are expected to have the same kind of financial situation, right? And so—

Travis: Okay. So a Duke's daughter ain't marrying a mister.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Right. But if she did, her family wouldn't give them as much money. Because his—

Travis: Yeah. For a lot of reasons, I assume.

Teresa: —his status wouldn't reflect that.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: So—

Travis: Which I guess then also would be a good deterrent for, uh, somebody trying to, like, money grub. Of like, seducing, you know, a young woman who didn't know any better in the world and being like, I'm a silver-tongued devil, and convincing her to marry him, and now I'm a rich rake who, you know, cashed in on this woman's, uh, uh, uh, what's the word I'm looking for? Her innocence.

Teresa: So this is something that happens in *Pride and Prejudice*, which also takes place during the Regency period. Um, this is an example of that sort of thing is when Mr. Wickham tries to elope with Mr. Darcy's, uh, sister. Georgiana again. Another Georgiana.

Travis: 'Cause there's George. You gotta name people after 'em. A lot of Elizabeths and Victorias, I assume.

Teresa: I mean, I guess so. I guess so. So he tries to elope with her, telling her that he loves her, and wants to be with her. But really he is after her significant dowry.

Travis: [simultaneously] Her cheddar. Trying to get that money, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Teresa: Um, and he might have gotten it if he had been able to get her, like—'cause that's basically kidnapping. Right? It's not—

Travis: He does end up doing that, right?

Teresa: He does end up doing that in the book. He does end up—

Travis: Not her, though.

Teresa: Not with her, but with Kitty.

Travis: Kitty.

Teresa: And basically they have to pay a bunch of money to him to make it look, like, legitimate, right?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Because they eloped. And so in order to save the family's, like, uh...

Travis: Street cred. Their rep?

Teresa: Their rep. [laughs quietly] Uh, they have to, like—they let Darcy give some money, and Mr. Bennet gives a little money, and like, makes it look like this was all kind of on and everything was fine.

Travis: I bet that was shady as heck. Because, like, if—if a ne'er-do-well scoundrel, a rascalion absconds with your precious daughter, right? And you're like, "Ugh. I'm not supposed to pay this dowry because he is of lower

status," or whatever. "But I love her very, very much and I don't want her to have to live by his means."

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: "So I will—ugh. I'm gonna figure out a way to do it where it's not a dowry, or pay it, or whatever."

Teresa: And this is where the marriage contract comes in. So, another *Pride and Prejudice* example. When Mrs. Bennet marries Mr. Bennet, the settlement outlined includes 1000 pounds when invested at 5% interest, takes care of her, and also provides the dowry for their daughters if he dies. So, 5000 pounds invested at that rate would only result in 250 pounds annually, or about 25,000 dollars a year in modern US. So the Bennets...

Travis: And they have a lot of daughters.

Teresa: Yes. The Bennets are pretty well off, but they have a lot of daughters. And so that's where the comedy of Mrs. Bennet's meddling character is born, right? Because she is trying to keep her daughters—what they're used to, right? The leisures of their lifestyle, right? But also knows that she can't provide for it all with her dowry. And Mr. Bennet is in a situation where—this is a totally different thing. But his estate as part of, like, a protections act, doesn't pass to hi—doesn't pass to him. He can't really, like... he takes care of it. But he can't sell it. And he can't change it. And he can't mortgage it.

Travis: And it ain't gonna go to his daughters if he passes.

Teresa: I mean, of course not. But it's another thing with him. So it passes to Mr. Collins, right?

Travis: I love how this has become a simultaneous summary of both *Bridgerton* and—

Teresa: [laughs] And *Pride and Prejudice*.

Travis: —and *Pride and Prejudice*. Which—

Teresa: They take place concurrently. I mean, "take place." You know what I mean. And so she is trying to secure matches for her daughters to make sure that not only they are taken care of, but they can take care of her when everyone is gone, right? The children and the husband, right?

Travis: And that works out pretty well. I would say.

Teresa: For her. I mean, it does, for her.

Travis: Well, for most of 'em. At least two.

Teresa: Yeah, no, no, no. What I'm saying is it does work for Mrs. Bennet. It didn't always work out for everyone in the Regency Era.

Travis: No, no, no, no.

Teresa: Right. Um, and so... if—okay. So, that was also why there was a lot of pressure on Regency couples to have children. Because if the couple died without any kids, the woman's dowry is returned to her family, so the groom doesn't get that anymore, right? It's not part of—it's not considered part of his assets, although apart from his assets.

Um, and so if the groom's family, say like a titled man who doesn't work, right? If he relies on the cash of the investment from the dowry, or on the land rights, or on the livestock or the other things that come from the bride's family, this outcome is not acceptable, right? So they have to produce heirs, because if they don't produce an heir, then the groom—he's worse off. He keeps nothing of that. But it goes to his children if she does die.

Travis: Now, when you say "heir," did it have to be a boy? Because, like, if they had a girl, right? Then he—if—okay. If the girl married somebody, he wouldn't inherit. The groom wouldn't inherit the father's estate. Right?

Teresa: Um... it depe—

Travis: Let's say Mr. McElroy—

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: —Lord McElroy, right? My daughter—you're dead. Uh, in this scenario. Sorry.

Teresa: Okay, okay.

Travis: Bad news. My daughter marries Mr. Smith, Lord Smith, right? Or whatever. When I die he doesn't become the new Lord McElroy, right?

Teresa: No, he does not. Their son does.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Cool. Okay. [sighs] It's confusing.

Teresa: Only the first son, also.

Travis: But if they don't have a son yet and I die, it goes to my brother or something?

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Oh my lanta. Okay.

Teresa: And that is just regular. If it's in—

Travis: This is not even dowry. Now we're on inheritance. I'm so confused.

Teresa: If it's in that weird thing I can't remember the name of that Mr. Bennet's estate was in. Uh... then it might not even go to the heirs. It would—so it wouldn't go to Elizabeth's son or whatever. It still would go to Mr. Collins.

Travis: Okay. So.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Dowry.

Teresa: So, all told, it is a very old tradition, right? And it began to fall out of favor in Victorian England, right? Although it still exists in arranged marriages around the world. Um, because it became more popular for people to marry for love, right? And be—

Travis: Inspired, I assume, in part by Victoria and Albert, right?

Teresa: Certainly.

Travis: This epic love story and all that—all that razzmatazz.

Teresa: Certainly. And at some point they were even made illegal in parts of the world, because like you said before, it does kind of boil down to the idea of buying someone, a little bit. Um, but that doesn't mean that they don't exist, like I said. In fact, parts of Greece only outlawed dowries in the 1890—sorry, 1980's.

Travis: Oh, okay.

Teresa: India, parts of the Middle East, South Asia, still practice providing a dowry. Parts of India it's been illegal since 1961, but in arranged marriages it is still quite commonplace for it to be part of, like, a prenup negotiation, right?

Travis: Yeah. I tell you, it's interesting, because it's not really selling someone. Because, like, I'm saying "You marry my daughter, so you get my daughter. And also, I'll give you money for that." Right? So it more feels like paying someone to marry someone. But yeah, it's m—yeah. It's weird.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: But I can see—okay.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: I will devil's advocate for just a second.

Teresa: Alright.

Travis: I will argue for the angels for just a second. Is that in an arranged marriage scenario where it's early days, right? If you're doing this, you know, early enough or whatever, I could see where you could make the argument of, I don't want it to be okay, we're married. They're going to get married. Now we can kind of rest on our laurels and count on their family to take care of our kids when they're married. Right? Of wanting to say like, we will— both families will be bringing something to this. And it's not just fully reliant on you. So that's, like, the deal, is like we're kind of both investing in our children's future.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: I can see that makes sense to be from that point of view.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Okay. I just wanted to say, from that point of view if you were to phrase it like that, I understand that.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: As, like, we're both kind of paying into a savings account for when our kids get married?

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: So let's go back to Bridgerton, a little more spoiler. Season two.

Travis: Uh-huh.

Teresa: When Lord Featherington...

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: ... uh, no longer has dowries for his children, we see at least one marriage proposal broken off, right?

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: And normally that would be on the bride's family to say, "This situation doesn't work anymore."

Travis: I think it's season one, but yes.

Teresa: No, that's season two, I think.

Travis: No, it's season one.

Teresa: Anyway. Whatever it is, um, we see that being broken off, right? And then returned to later once an income, a salary—or sorry, a dowry is established again. And it kind of makes it feel a little more like the buying and selling of people, because once she doesn't have money, she doesn't get married. But like you said before, it's an idea of like, families coming together to provide.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: And so even though—if you're not familiar with the idea of the dowry, watching that you might be like, "[scoffs] I thought they loved each other!" Right? But it wasn't the way that it worked at the time.

Travis: Yeah. I also—I think that that, now to come from the other side, I think there's an element to it where on one hand, right? If it was like, "We're gonna get married." And then, like, I lost my job or whatever. We might keep dating and be like, "Hmm, maybe this isn't the right time to, like, start planning a wedding until we get my finances back in order." Makes complete sense. I think it's that the added layer of, "But it's not up to you children. Let the grownups figure it out."

Teresa: Hmm, yeah.

Travis: That's where it starts to get, like, "Oh. Okay. So this is—okay. We don't have a lot of control over what's happening to us here."

Teresa: And I mean if you think about it, the idea of Bridgerton, the debutantes, right? Coming out. They are, like, 16, 17, right? I think Daphne comes out a little late. She's kind of old at that point, isn't she?

Travis: I think she's 18 or something. I don't know.

Teresa: I think she's 17. But when Eloise comes out she's very young. Right? And Francesca is quite young when she comes out.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: She's even younger than Eloise. And so, like, they could have been children. They could have been very young, not understanding this kind of thing. Nowadays we get married at, like, late 20's, early 30's.

Travis: I mean, yeah. We did. We got married at 30, yeah.

Teresa: Yeah. So, like—but these people, especially the landed gentry, right? The lords and dukes and whatever of this, the people that we're talking about, they were pretty young. And so they might need a lot of parental guidance.

Travis: And not just young. Sheltered. Right? So it's not just an age thing. Of course, 16 is young. But also, it's not like they had the internet and cable TV and stuff, right? Where they were exposed to a lot of things, right?

Teresa: The wickeds of the worlds.

Travis: Right. This is like—and we see this come up a couple times in Bridgerton where they're like, "How does this work?" [laughs]

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Um, if you know what I mean. And so it wasn't just that. It was also, like, this is the first nice man that I've met, and he's showering me with compliments, so he must be the one I'm going to marry. Right? [crosstalk]

Teresa: Right, and then the families are supposed to intervene, right? So that not only is it that your daughter or whoever is taken care of well, right? But you have kind of orchestrated this a little bit. The scheming mamas get a bad rap. But they really needed to be there in order to make sure that things were on the up and up. And I'm not condoning the—

Travis: No, that's just the way it worked at the time, you know?

Teresa: I'm not condoning the lack of education. Because I certainly think that a lot of things were very new to especially brides on their wedding night. Um—

Travis: No, go—yeah. Go back. I mean, hey, we could do better on that education now here in America, huh?

Teresa: That's true. That's true.

Travis: Um, but, I mean—

Teresa: But the dowry is a concept that a lot of Europe and America aren't, like, familiar with right now. But it wasn't exactly what it appears on the surface.

Travis: No, it was much more part of the system is what's making sense to me now.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Okay. Hey! Thanks everybody, and thank you Teresa for presenting that all to me. Thank you our researcher, Alexx, without whom we could make this episode. Thank you to our editor, Rachel, without whom we could not make this episode. And thank you to you for listening. We would've made this episode without you, but then we would've, like, thrown it away, I guess?

Teresa: I mean, I like talking to you, but we don't have to record it every time.

Travis: Yeah, we wouldn't have sat at the microphones and done it.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Although I am now at a point in my life where I'm more comfortable in front of a microphone.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Ugh, so cold. And, uh, let's see, what else? Um, go check out McElroy Merch if you haven't yet. Mcelroymerch.com. There's a bunch of new stuff 'cause it's a new month. Um, there's a My Brother, My Brother, and Me and Adventure Zone tour coming up, um, next... no! Next-next week, so I believe it's the 18th, 19th, and the 20th in Detroit and Cleveland. You can find all that information and all the rest of our tours at bit.ly/mcelroytours. What else, Teresa?

Teresa: We always thank Brent "brentalfloss" Black for writing our theme music, 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.

Also, we are always taking your topics, and your questions, and your idioms, and just write to us, say hello.

Travis: We're so lonely. Please.

Teresa: [laughs] Say hello to Alexx, 'cause she reads every single email. Shmannerstcast@gmail.com.

Travis: And I will say, we've covered a lot of Victorian topics, and if we want to move into, like, more Regency stuff, uh, you know, even, I don't

know, different periods of time. We could move into Georgian, we could move into Elizabethan, we could move into '70s.

Teresa: Hmm, oh, I guess.

Travis: I don't know. Roaring '20s? What do you wanna know about?!

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Ask us those questions. Um, let's see. That's gonna 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]

[chord]

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