

Shmanners 477: Sweetest Day

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["Shmanners Theme" by brentalfloss 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 threw myself off for a second, because I said my name so quickly and with a weird break that it sounded like Travis Smackleroy.

Teresa: Oh, did it? I wasn't even listening. [chuckles]

Travis: And... it just, it brought back my old roller derby days, when I was Travis Smackleroy. Oh! How I used to durb... I durbed so hard. Rolled and durbed and... everybody was like, "Yeah, man! Look at Smackleroy go." But those days are behind me now, because of my old creaky bones and I lost my roller skates.

Teresa: I wondered where this was going. [titters]

Travis: That's it.

Teresa: That's it.

Travis: Yeah. So—

Teresa: Do you remember when you told our daughter that you were a champion skateboarder, and she basically called you out until you had to admit that you don't know how to skateboard?

Travis: Yeah! I thought it was pretty obvious. At one point—

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: At one point, I told her I couldn't do it anymore, because one time, I skateboarded so good that a man was so impressed, he had a heart attack and died. And after that, I swore I'd never skateboard again, because I'd taken a man's life. And she said, "That doesn't make any sense. You could still skateboard, even though he died. Why won't you skateboard?" And I said, "Also, I lost my skateboard." And she said, "You can use mine."

Teresa: [chuckles]

Travis: And then I said, "Okay, I don't know how to skateboard. Can we drop it now?"

Teresa: [chuckles] That's the kind of children you're raising.

Travis: Yes! A heavy skeptic. And I love it.

Teresa: [chuckles] Speaking of skeptic, a lot of people—

Travis: Huh?

Teresa: Are skeptic about our topic today.

Travis: Okay. I thought we were going to talk about skepticism, which, one, I'd love to talk about the manners of skepticism and the manners of debate—

Teresa: Write it down.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Sweetest day. Tell me your feelings about Sweetest Day.

Travis: I love the Swedish! I love—

Teresa: No-no, no-no, no, no—

Travis: The IKEA and—

Teresa: *Sweetest Day.*

Travis: [sings] 'Oh, the sweetest day.' See, I could have gone either one of those ways. That's why I went both. [titters] That's the Travis Smackleroy way!

Teresa: [chuckles] The Travis Smackleroy way.

Travis: So, I don't know—

Teresa: Okay?

Travis: What it is.

Teresa: Have you ever heard about it? Other than right now.

Travis: Here's the problem, I think that I'm conflating it with like Galentine's Day, or this idea of like a friendship Valentine. I know I've heard about it before.

Teresa: Okay, so you have heard of it.

Travis: I have heard about it before, but you gotta know all the things that are kicking around in my head. We were actually talking about it yesterday, Teresa's family didn't have cable until like she was in college. So—

Teresa: And I wasn't there to enjoy it.

Travis: So, you have so much more memory space for other .

Teresa: Mm-hm.

Travis: Where I have to remember specific episodes of Quantum Leap and like you know, all kinds of weird Nickelodeon shows from when I was a kid, Disney Channel Original Movies. You don't have to worry about any of that, you have room to remember things.

Teresa: I think this summer was when our family discovered Disney Channel Original Movies, and they were all new to me.

Travis: DCOMs.

Teresa: DCOMs.

Travis: So, you've never seen Under Wraps?

Teresa: Nope.

Travis: [gasps] *Hah*. You've never seen Alley Cats Strike?

Teresa: Nope.

Travis: You've never seen Brink?

Teresa: Nope.

Travis: You've never seen... My Mom is Dating a Vampire?

Teresa: Nope.

Travis: I think that's one, anyways... Susie Q?

Teresa: Nope.

Travis: My goodness... So anyway, Sweetest Day.

Teresa: Anyway, okay. [chuckles] I knew about Sweetest Day—

Travis: I think given a half hour, I could list off ten more.

Teresa: I bet you're right.

Travis: But I won't do that right now.

Teresa: I kind of knew about Sweetest Day. It wasn't anything that I ever like celebrated, but it was kind of like the rumor's out there, that there is a Sweetest Day. But I always thought that it was in—

Travis: [spoofing a Shakespearean voice] "I've heard—I've heard that somewhere, there's a sweetest day!"

Teresa: Mm-hm.

Travis: "We must cross—follow the stars!"

Teresa: I always thought that it was in spring, like it was in March or April, but it's not, it's in October.

Travis: Oh, see, I would have said Valentine's Day area.

Teresa: Yeah, you would have said adjacent to Valentine's Day?

Travis: Yeah. Because, honestly, there was a part of me that's like, sweetest day, it's about giving candy.

Teresa: Okay?

Travis: And so, the best time to shop for that is February 15th.

Teresa: Oh, okay>

Travis: The day after.

Teresa: Who do you think that Sweetest Day is for?

Travis: Sweethearts?

Teresa: Okay?

Travis: People important to you?

Teresa: Okay?

Travis: People. Human beings?

Teresa: Humans, yes.

Travis: But not all of 'em. I don't know! I don't know what it is!

Teresa: [laughs] Okay, so, many people think that sweetest day is kind of like a Valentine's Day lite, right? Where—

Travis: What is it?

Teresa: Women could not wait for their February times of chocolates and flowers, so they invented a Sweetest Day in October, so they could get more gifts.

Travis: Can I tell you—

Teresa: But that's not it.

Travis: Okay, I was gonna say, if that's the case, that makes me incredibly sad, that it's like, my partner—and in this case, where we're talking about women and invented, I'm guessing not like in the last 20 years. So, "My husband or boyfriend only gets me—like only thinks about me once a year."

Teresa: I know, right?

Travis: "So I must invent a day."

Teresa: Mm-hm.

Travis: Where I have a wife who says, "Please stop buying things."

Teresa: [chuckles]

Travis: "We must set a budget for how much stuff you're allowed to buy for me." And I say, "Oh, but I saw it and thought of you!" And you're like, "Yes, because you think about me all the time, and you like buying things." And I'm like, "Hm, guilty."

Teresa: [chuckles]

Travis: And I find that if I buy you candy, I can wait four or five days, a good window to give you first crack at it—

Teresa: And then eat your candy.

Travis: And then I can eat it too.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: You know.

Teresa: Yeah-yeah-yeah. Sweetest Day, nowadays, is overshadowed by another October candy holiday.

Travis: Well, yeah.

Teresa: Which is Trick or Treat.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Right? For Halloween. So, that is why it's largely forgotten at this point. It's kind of, I don't want to say archaic, because it was never really super-big. Unlike Valentine's Day, right, which celebrates romantic love almost exclusively, Sweetest Day seems to be a much further-reaching celebration. So, if you're not coupled, right? And if you would like to promote kindness and philanthropy, love and charity towards your fellow man, Sweetest Day was made for you.

Travis: Okay, listen, already, I can tell you that, conceptually, I like it, but it's too broad and vague. It's never gonna catch on. I need a specific thing. You know? We need a hook.

Teresa: Yes. You're right. And on May 10th, 1916, the National Confectioners Association—

Travis: Yeah, I bet they'd be into it.

Teresa: Held its annual conference at the Hotel Statler in Detroit. And it was there that they decreed that the third Saturday of each October would henceforth be known as Candy Day. Okay, that was the first one, and it would take place on October 14th. And the tagline was, "A little effort and hard work by all hands in our industry will make Candy Day the happiest and sweetest day of the year."

Travis: We need to be careful, because if word gets out to other companies that you can just declare a day where people have to buy your product— [chuckles] If they're like, "Yeah, let's see, the second... Tuesday of every March is Toilet Day! You gotta buy a brand-new toilet, and give it to somebody, or you're a bad friend. Yeah!"

Teresa: When October 14th, 1916 rolled around, all right, Candy Day was not a sweeping success.

Travis: No.

Teresa: They really couldn't like get the word out, I think, for advertising, for people to give candy to other people.

Travis: Well, can I tell you what their biggest mistake was? There's no lore to it.

Teresa: Mm-hm.

Travis: You need lore top it.

Teresa: We're gonna get to that.

Travis: Okay. Because Valentine's Day works, because there is a thinly-veiled like, "Yeah, and there was a guy, St. Valentine, and he like helped pass letters or whatever. Anyways, buy this box of chocolates. Go!"

Teresa: [chuckles] Candy Day would be short-lived, however, for this first iteration.

Travis: Because of World War I?

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Boom!

Teresa: That's right.

Travis: See, this is—I love when we talk about anything originating or crossing over the years of like 1915 to like 1925, or like 1935 to 1945. And you're like, "But then something happened," and I'm like—

Teresa: Right there.

Travis: "I'm 90% sure I know what it is."

Teresa: [chuckles] Herbert Hoover, who was, at the time, the head of the US Food Administration, soon to be the FDA, heard about Candy Day and was livid.

Travis: *Oh?*

Teresa: Because—

Travis: He hates candy.

Teresa: No, one of his jobs—

Travis: He's allergic to chocolate.

Teresa: No.

Travis: Because candy killed his dad!

Teresa: [chuckles] No.

Travis: Because his brother, Candy, was more popular than him. Candy Hoover, they called him.

Teresa: One of his jobs as the head of the Food Administration was to make sure that soldiers fighting abroad in World War I were properly fed, which led him to keep stores of essentials, like sugar and wheat.

Travis: Ah.

Teresa: And so, he reminded the candy-makers, in no uncertain terms, that the nation was at war, there was a sugar shortage, and any attempt to promote, quote, "National Candy Day," ran contrary to the war effort to conserve sugar.

Travis: Can I just say, knowing nothing about Hoover... okay, cool, man! That's a good move!

Teresa: I mean, he was also not a super-good guy.

Travis: Yeah, that's fine, but that's also a good call. You know what I mean? Like, "Hey, we need that sugar for a thing. We're sending candy to the boys!"

Teresa: Yeah, even—

Travis: "The boys need candy!"

Teresa: Even the worst dudes can have good calls.

Travis: Wouldn't it be fun if the secret that they weren't telling anybody was like, they relied on sugar rushes to keep them going? So they would just

send 'em like big ol' industrial-sized Pixy Stix, to then be like, "Before we go over the trenches or whatever, go for it. Pixy Stick up, boys."

Teresa: I think it was chocolate.

Travis: Okay, but in my world, in my thing—

Teresa: Oh, in Trav Nation?

Travis: This is—yeah, in Trav Nation. This is like a giant, you know, like... like a hamster drinking out of a straw—

Teresa: Oh?

Travis: But a Pixy Stick.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: That would get 'em all revved up and ready to... war.

Teresa: Okay. So, Candy Day was kind of lost at that point. And the fact is, with all of the Scottish and Irish immigrants coming over during the Industrial Revolution, which was just before, right—

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: World War I. Well, kind of into it, anyway... war helps industrialize things, anyway. Halloween was becoming a very candy-centric holiday, right?

Travis: Yeah!

Teresa: So, even though the Confectioner Association was like, "Hey, this would be a great way to promote candy," they kind of backed off it at this point.

Travis: They didn't need it!

Teresa: Because they didn't really need it.

Travis: That's the other thing that kills me about this proclamation of Sweetest Day being... trying to will it into existence, is we already have several holidays that specifically center around candy.

Teresa: Mm-hm.

Travis: Now I understand if at the time they were like, you know, people are doing homemade baked goods for these things, or whatever. They're not buying candy for these things. But push for that!

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Because like right now, I'm looking at the calendar in my head and I'm like, Easter, Valentine's Day, Halloween, Christmas, and that's just like the Christian holidays that I know of off the top of my head.

Teresa: Mm-hm.

Travis: Let alone everything else. I mean, you know, there's gelt, you know, for Hanukkah, but there's other...

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Like, there's other confectionaries being eaten. And they were like, "What we need though is another one, that's just candy day."

Teresa: [chuckles] So, after the war was over and sugar was unrationed again, they attempted a resurgence, a revival, if you will.

Travis: Of this nonexistent holiday.

Teresa: Yes. And here is the story of Herbert Kingston. A Cleveland advertiser and candy enthusiast named Herbert Birch Kingston, which is very difficult to say—

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Renamed Candy Day, Sweetest Day, officially, right? And reorganized the very first Sweetest Day to be held in Cleveland, on October 9th, 1921. According to legend—

Travis: Ooh.

Teresa: This first Sweetest Day wasn't even about making candy sales, right? In fact, Kingston instead wanted Sweetest Day to be a day of spreading good cheer, especially to those who needed it most. So, boxes of candy were prepared to be distributed to community members who were homebound, who—or populated local orphanages and senior homes, and other charities, right?

Travis: Okay, listen, I don't want to be cynical.

Teresa: Mm-hm.

[pause]

Travis: Cool.

Teresa: Okay, yeah?

Travis: Right? Giving candy to people who need some cheering up.

Teresa: Mm-hm.

Travis: But it kind of reeks a little bit of first taste is free, doesn't it? Of just like, "Yeah, it's Sweetest Day! It's just about giving it away!" Like maybe... candy. We share some free candy! Wouldn't be cool if we gave candy every year? Think about it."

Teresa: He ran a multi-page ad in the Cleveland Plain Dealer newspaper with the headline, "Remember friend, wife and loved ones with gift on Sweetest Day, October 8th. Nationwide observance to become yearly event."

Travis: Once again, just proclaiming it. Just like—

Teresa: I know, right?

Travis: "Hey, this is the thing." Feels a little bit like trying to give yourself a nickname, you know?

Teresa: Mm-hm.

Travis: Just like, "I'm Ace now." [titters]

Teresa: And to further this, they hired two of the most popular movie stars at the time, the silent film artists, Theda Bara and Ann Pennington. You may—

Travis: I don't recognize either name.

Teresa: Well, Theda was a—was the star of Cleopatra, 1917's Cleopatra.

Travis: Oh, okay.

Teresa: And she's credited as being one of the first women to create the quote, "vamp fashion esthetic."

Travis: Cool.

Teresa: And Pennington appeared in over 20 films, as well as—was a respected and adored actor, singer and Ziegfeld Follies girl.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Okay?

Travis: I recognize that as well. Thank you for giving me that.

Teresa: So, at the time, this would have been like Zendaya and Anya Taylor-Joy, right? Just coming—

Travis: Sure!

Teresa: Coming to give away candy, coming to a town near you. Ohio.

Travis: Zendaya is coming here?

Teresa: No.

Travis: Oh... Cleveland is kind of a town near us, comparatively speaking. I mean, it's like, what, four or five hours away, but—

Teresa: This was Toledo.

Travis: Once again, Ohio, still. I'll take it

Teresa: Yeah, yeah. The eight men credited in Kingston's paper advertisement distributed over 10,000 boxes of sweets to the underserved in their city, while both movie stars passed out thousands more at local movie theaters. According to the story, Ann Pennington distributed about 2,500 boxes by herself to Cleveland news boys, who had heard about the event and came to the advertising club seeking sweets. And all told, more than 20,000 boxes of candy were enjoyed that day.

Travis: This is starting to sound a little bit like a math logic problem, where you're like, "If this many was given out and she gave this many, and there were this many men, how many on average did each man give?" And I think it's 55 miles per hour.

Teresa: So—

Travis: Nothing?

Teresa: It was a—it was a—no.

Travis: Nothing? I said 55 miles because I turned it, like it was a train?

Teresa: I mean, yeah, but I knew that's where you're going with the math problem.

Travis: Damn it.

Teresa: Sorry... It was a large success, right? Making its way to other states, to spark a little joy on the third Saturday of October. And in 1922, the Sweetest Day story in the Cleveland Plain Dealer encouraged their readers to steal enough time from the turmoil of routine affairs to bring a bit of good cheer to those you love. Of course, now we have the greeting card companies joining in. You know, Hallmark even included a paragraph on the back of each one of their Sweetest Day cards about Herbert Kingston creating the day to celebrate in good cheer.

Travis: Okay?

Teresa: And in October of the year 2000, right, much more recent, Herbert Kingston's youngest daughter, Janet Kingston Knapp, wrote a letter to the company, thanking them for including a bit about her father's legacy on their products. Quote, "My dad was the kindest, loving man, not only to his children, but to everyone." How does that sound? How do you like that lore?

Travis: Okay, it's lore...

Teresa: Mm-hm?

Travis: But it's not like, "Ah, the—we—this is all based off of an ancient... you know, ah, back in Rome, this would happen." Or oh, you know, when, I don't know, spirits come out and we have to give candy to, you know, keep kids safe, or whatever. I don't know what Halloween is anymore. But there's no like, oh, the reason we do this, it's because it's always been done in some form or fashion. It just feels like they said like, "We want to start a thing," right?

Teresa: Mm-hm. So, you are a little skeptical about that lore?

Travis: Not skeptical, so much as it's like, I don't feel like you can just say like, this is a holiday now that we expect. It feels like, you know, there's a marathon here in Cincinnati called the Flying Pig—

Teresa: Mm-hm.

Travis: Which I think happens on Thanksgiving? Or something like that.

Teresa: Something like that.

Travis: But it's been going for many, many years, right? And if they were like, "And so every buddy needs to celebrate the Flying Pig Marathon, because we do it." [titters] And it's like, what? No, you can't just say that. You can't just be like, "We started doing the thing, so now everybody has to do it."

Teresa: Mm-hm... What if I told you that Herbert Kingston doesn't exist?

[pause]

Travis: *What?* Okay, wait, stop the presses.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: We'll be right back—

Teresa: I love—

Travis: No—

Teresa: I love your face. [titters]

Travis: We'll be right back after a word from another Max Fun show.

[theme music plays]

Speaker 1: [sighs] Ah! Moving is the *worst!*

Speaker 2: Yeah, but it's exciting too? Our new Max Fun HQ office in downtown LA is actually gonna fit all of us in it!

Speaker 1: Oh?

Speaker 2: And the new studio is gonna be so nice. Plus, we'll have space for hangouts and events.

Speaker 1: Yeah, you're right, it's gonna be worth it. But boy, is it expensive... Maybe we could get some help?

Speaker 1 and 2: Hm...

Speaker 1: Hey, cool listener. If you want to get fun stuff and help us move, go to maximumfun.org/movingday, where you can get vintage merch, or by naming rights of stuff around the office. If you help us move by buying something, we'll invite you over for pizza and beer at our new place. Maximumfun.org/movieday.

[break]

Drea: If you want to know what's going on in the world of movies, you should be listening to Maximum Film, so we can tell you all about it.

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Alonso: Classics we can't get enough of.

Kevin: I'm comedian and writer, Kevin Avery.

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Alonso: Together, we're Maximum Film. Smart about movies in Hollywood, so you don't have to be.

Kevin: But if you already are, that's also great. And hey, we see you.

Drea: New episodes every week, on maximumfun.org.

[break]

Travis: Okay, we're back. What? What?

Teresa: How do you like them apples?

Travis: Yeah, listen, me? I'm hooked! Reel me in.

Teresa: This is the story. The story that they told to get people to celebrate Sweetest Day.

Travis: None of this is true.

Teresa: Probably not.

Travis: So, wait, who told this? When? How? What?

Teresa: So, let me set the scene—

Travis: I've also never felt more betrayed. I thought I could trust you.

Teresa: [laughs] Let me set the scene. One of the things that we normally do for Shmanners is we talk about the etiquette of the holiday, right?

Travis: Sure, yes.

Teresa: And this would be the point in the show where we would go, so how do we celebrate Sweetest Day? This is what you're supposed to do. But there isn't any. There isn't any information.

Travis: So, Sweetest Day doesn't exist?

Teresa: On what you're supposed to do. Oh, no—

Travis: So don't—

Teresa: Sweetest Day exists.

Travis: Does it?

Teresa: It tries. But—

Travis: Right now, it feels like a Schrödinger's holiday.

Teresa: [laughs] This Herbert guy probably didn't exist.

Travis: So, it never started—no one ever started this?

Teresa: Probably not. I mean—

Travis: So then it doesn't exist?

Teresa: Wait, the confectioners, the National Confectioners Association, yes, they did. There is documentation that they did try to do it, right?

Travis: Uh-huh?

Teresa: And that it was revived—

Travis: Uh-huh?

Teresa: In 1921, because there is that newspaper article. But the guy does not show up anywhere.

Travis: So he was like an invention of the confectioners, is that probably what happened?

Teresa: That is probably what happened. So—

Travis: Did they actually have movie stars there? Did those movie stars ever exist? Do people live in Toledo? Is Toledo even a real city?! What's Ohio?! Where am I?!

Teresa: [laughs] Okay—

Travis: How deep does the rabbit hole go?

Teresa: Well, the rabbit hole, Alex discovered, starts actually at Wikipedia, because—

Travis: Ah, where all good rabbit holes start!

Teresa: No, no, no... hear me out. Because there isn't a page on him. There is not a page on Wikipedia about Herbert Kingston. Whereas there is a page on Wikipedia about the assistant who helped that guy take the longest road trip forever.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Right? But there isn't one about Herbert Kingston. And an enterprising Wikipedia muckraker has unearthed the record for Herbert Kingston in the 1920s census, okay? His profession was listed as advertiser, but there is no other mention of Herbert Kingston in any contemporaneous documents.

Travis: Can I tell you who I feel really bad for? His granddaughter. When she finds out he didn't exist, she's gonna be heartbroken!

Teresa: Mm-hm. Probably also fictitious...

Travis: She's dead?!

Teresa: No.

Travis: You unmade her right now with your words, you witch.

Teresa: [chuckles] Never alive, probably. *Probably?*

[pause]

Travis: What...

Teresa: Both the Hallmark trade group and the retail confectioners international repeat this story on their Sweetest Day informational pages, right, online. And the Kingston myth supports the idea that Sweetest Day is not just another selling opportunity, but what the RCI, Confectioners International, calls, "An occasion which offers all of us an opportunity to remember not only the sick, aged and orphaned, but also friends, relatives and associates whose helpfulness and kindness we have enjoyed." Okay? And when they say remember, they probably mean send them candy. That's probably what they mean.

Travis: Okay... okay, listen.

Teresa: Mm-hm, mm-hm?

Travis: I'm heartbroken. [chuckles] No, I'm... I'm torn between what I'm mad about.

Teresa: Okay. Because a Cleveland candy company truly did orchestrate a massive giveaway of candy.

Travis: Cool.

Teresa: And those two starlets did come to the city to hand out candy.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: The new—there was that real newspaper article.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: Right? And there's no reason for us to believe that people weren't touched by receiving candy.

Travis: Right.

Teresa: Right?

Travis: But crediting it to this one visionary man—

Teresa: Right.

Travis: Seems like he was a... almost, not like a mascot, but like a figurehead representative. So that it wasn't like, yeah, the head of Nestlé or whatever said buy more candy, but rather a man who was like, "You know what this is a great chance for?"

Teresa: Mm-hm...

Travis: Okay. But here's the other side of it.

Teresa: Yeah?

Travis: It's not a holiday.

Teresa: No.

Travis: Right? Because it's just saying like, wouldn't this be a cool day to buy candy for people? And I know what you're thinking, isn't that what like Valentine's Day and Eastern and stuff—yes. But what I'm saying is, there's a lot of stuff piled on it, like stories and myth, and like what it really means. And this is—literally just seems like, what a cool day to buy candy.

Teresa: But that's what they're trying to do, right? They try to pile all that on, when—

Travis: Yeah, but like today, I saw on Google that it's like National Fossil Day or whatever.

Teresa: Yeah. [chuckles]

Travis: I'm not gonna observe National Fossil Day? What a great day to go dig up my backyard to look for bones, or whatever.

Teresa: So, this was probably a capitalist ploy.

Travis: No way!

Teresa: [chuckles]

Travis: *What?!* That's the most surprising thing you've said so far! What? Hah! My gob, it's smacked.

Teresa: [chuckles] And I'm sure that when they concocted this farce—

Travis: Marketing ploy?

Teresa: [chuckles] They didn't count on Halloween, right?

Travis: Ah! Nobody ever counts on Halloween, and then there she comes! *Wum-bow, pow!*

Teresa: It's a fiercely adored national holiday in the United States. Candy sales in October are higher than any other month, including December, right?

Travis: I would say that it—maybe not rivals Christmas, but I think it's the only other holiday I can think of, maybe like Fourth of July in America is like a close like third, but that has like a season.

Teresa: Mm-hm.

Travis: Right? Where it's just like, yeah, Christmas, we all talk about the Christmas creep and it starts way early, or people start putting up decorations or whatever. But like, you don't see like lawn decorations for Easter, right? You don't see lawn decorations for St. Patrick's Day. Some people might have 'em. You know, they might put stuff up in like the windows of businesses, or whatever. But like Halloween is like, when do they

start putting the Halloween decorations, you know, up for sale in every store.

Teresa: Right. And—

Travis: I also want to just once again acknowledge that my knowledge of... my knowledge of holidays is not only incredibly, incredibly USA-centric, but also like, I'm a 41-year-old raised Southern Baptist. [chuckles] Like I know like eight holidays.

Teresa: That's okay!

Travis: I apologize, everyone.

Teresa: Halloween candy is practically recession-proof. The studies show that pretty much everything could be going wrong, and Americans will still buy Halloween candy for Trick or Treat.

Travis: Well, it's because it's like the only holiday with like direct repercussions for adults. Other holidays, you have your Christmases and your Easters where you tell the kids to be good, or whatever—they won't get it. Halloween is when it's like, hey, grown-ups, you need to provide these kids candy, or they're gonna like, throw stuff at your house.

Teresa: Mm-hm.

Travis: Or they're gonna yell at you, or they're gonna like make you feel bad and, you know, be mean to you, so you better give 'em candy. We're terrified of children. That's the scariest part of Halloween.

Teresa: [laughs] Is the mobs of terrorizing children.

Travis: Is the mobs of children. Especially if you get some like fifteen or sixteen—

Teresa: Now wait a second—

Travis: Year olds who show up—

Teresa: We've—

Travis: And you're out?

Teresa: We've gone through this. It is mostly myth and legend, about that. But—

Travis: Well, yeah, but, hey, baby, I don't know how to tell you this, so is getting coal from Santa for being bad. But what I'm saying is, this is what we talk about—

Teresa: Yes, that is what we talk about.

Travis: As the thing. And so the lore of Halloween is like, why do we give candy? To be nice? No! So that children don't throw things at our house and get mad at us.

Teresa: Okay—

Travis: That's the lore. There's repercussions for not observing it.

Teresa: [chuckles] Well, there aren't really any repercussions for not observing Sweetest Day, because there isn't even really any etiquette. It's basically, they said, "Hey, just buy some candy and give it away." Buy candy, give it away to people, that's the etiquette. And then Hallmark was like, "When you're giving some candy, you should give 'em a card too. Tell 'em who the candy's from."

Travis: Why not buy 'em a yacht?

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: The yacht industry got into it, and was like, "Yeah, on Sweetest Day, you give everybody candy, a card and a yacht!" What are we doing?

Teresa: [chuckles] So, I wish I had some etiquette for you, Shmanners-fanners, but I don't, because there isn't any.

Travis: No!

Teresa: Because it's not real. [chuckles]

Travis: This is bull crap.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: So, when we started this episode, and you asked what I knew about Sweetest Day, and I said, "I know nothing. I have nothing about it."

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: I felt bad!

Teresa: [chuckles]

Travis: I felt bad that I didn't know! I felt like I should know! And now, I'm angry that you told me about it.

Teresa: [chuckles]

Travis: And I love you so much!

Teresa: This must be one of the most unhinged episodes of Shmanners we've ever had. [chuckles]

Travis: I just don't—my whole... my whole world is eroded away—I thought I could trust you.

Teresa: [chuckles]

Travis: We've been married for twelve years, and I thought I could trust you.

Teresa: Do you feel like I've punked you or something?

Travis: A little bit!

Teresa: [chuckles]

Travis: Because from the beginning, you knew. You knew that Herbert Birch Kingston didn't exist, and you were like, "Here's the story." And you let me say like, "No, no, no, but all this. No, I'm so much—mm-hm, mm-hm!"

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: And in your head, you were laughing. You were laughing at me!

Teresa: You're right, I was. [chuckles]

Travis: I knew it!

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: You let me go on and on! In front of our listeners... in front of our listeners!

Teresa: [chuckles] You're gonna make me cry, from laughing.

Travis: You're gonna make me cry! You're gonna make me cry—

Teresa: From laughing.

Travis: Because my heart's broken. I thought I could trust you.

Teresa: [chuckles]

Travis: You're the mother of my children! If you lie about this, what else do you lie about? [sighs] Hah...

Teresa: [exclaims] Hah... whew...

Travis: Okay. I love you very much.

Teresa: I love you too. [chuckles]

Travis: Thank you, this was a great episode. Hey, everybody, thanks for listening! Thanks to our editor, Rachel, without whom we could not make the show. Thank you to our researcher, Alex.

Teresa: Yes, thank you, Alex. This was amazing. Great job.

Travis: This was a great one. Thank you to you for listening. We could do the show without you, if you didn't exist. Like Herbert Birch Kingston.

Teresa: [chuckles] Couldn't they have made a better-sounding name? That's hard to say.

Travis: Especially since Herbert Hoover was the dude who was like, "Don't do it." And they were like—

Teresa: I know.

Travis: "Herbert, great name! We'll use that again!"

Teresa: Herbert Birch.

Travis: They used it again. I even thought when you said Herbert a second time, it was like weird that there's two guys named Herbert in this story.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: I guess the... they came up with "Sweetest Days," clearly, they're not the most creative people on Earth. And they were like, "Herbert! Where have we heard that name before?" Anywho... [sighs] *Heh!* Hey! Go— [chuckles]

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Go check out mcelroymerch.com, for all the great McElroy merch, that totally exists.

Teresa: [chuckles]

Travis: Let's see, what else? Champions Grove is coming back for a third year. Tickets are gonna go on sale November 3rd, at noon, Eastern Time. Check out championsgrove.com for all the information there. Our podcast, Bake On, where we talk about and recap the—each episode of Great British Bake Off, which is back for its sixteenth series. That's going on now. I think we'll be recording episode six soon, so go check that out. Just search for Bake On. What else, Teresa?

Teresa: We always thank Brent 'Brental Floss' Black for writing our theme music, which is available as a ringtone, where that is found also. Also, thank you to Bruja Betty Pin-up Photography for the cover picture of our fan-run Facebook group, Shmanners Fanners. If you love to give and get excellent advice from other fans, go ahead and join that group today. And as always, we are taking topic submissions, questions, queries, idioms, romance novel recommendations. Send those to shmannerscast@gmail.com, and say hi to Alex, 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?

["Shmanners Theme" by brentalfloss plays]

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