

Shmanners 137: Wakes

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Travis: Teresa. Teresa!

Teresa: [irritably] What?

Travis: Okay, just checking.

Teresa: It's *Shmanners*!

[theme music plays]

Travis: Hello, internet! I'm your husband host, Travis McElroy.

Teresa: And I'm your wife host, Teresa McElroy!

Travis: And you're listening to *Shmanners*.

Teresa: It's extraordinary etiquette...

Travis: For ordinary occasions! Hello, my dove.

Teresa: Hello, dear.

Travis: How are you?

Teresa: I'm ready... [spooky voice] for the spooktacular festival of Halloween!

Travis: Ookay. Um...

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: ...I wasn't expecting...

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: ...all of *that*. But here we are. So, as my beautiful wife has mentioned—

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: —it is Halloween. And we kind of ran through what we've done. We've done seances before. I think that was a bonus episode?

Teresa: Yeah, mm-hm.

Travis: For last year's Max Fun Drive?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Um, and I think we've done funerals.

Teresa: Mm-hm.

Travis: And I started thinking about...

Teresa: And we did Trick or Treat.

Travis: We did Trick or Treat. Um, when we were in Ireland recently, we went to the Irish Whiskey Museum, and there we were told a story—and I want to remind you, this was at a museum. We were told this by someone who worked at the museum—that—we'll explain why I explained that later—[laughs quietly] but what she told us was that when, uh, people first started making, you know, hooch—making, you know, their own, distilled—

Teresa: Hooch at home.

Travis: —liquor, um, specifically whiskey, that, like, apparently the first third of it—

Teresa: I think she said it was called pou... poutine? Pou—no?

Travis: Nope. That's—that's—

Teresa: No.

Travis: —the thing with, like, cheese and gravy and fries. Poudan?

Teresa: Poi—poitin. Poitin.

Travis: It's something. It's like pot—whatever.

Teresa: Yeah, it's—it comes from—

Travis: I think Putin is the guy in—

Teresa: No...

Travis: —it's not important.

Teresa: It comes from the—the name of the pot.

Travis: But—so the idea was that—

Teresa: They make it in.

Travis: —what she said was that—I think it was the first third of it was, like, so... powerful, that sometimes it would kill people. But other times, it would just kind of knock them into a heavy coma?

Teresa: Well—and this makes sense, because from our whiskey distilling adventures—not making it, but watching it—um, there is a separation of—of the actual distilled... liquor.

Travis: The head, the heart, and the...

Teresa: Tail.

Travis: And the tail.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: Where the head does usually contain, if the temperatures are not, you know... uh, attended to... properly, can contain some methanol.

Travis: Right.

Teresa: Um, and then—

Travis: And especially—we're talking about, like... hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of years ago.

Teresa: Yeah. And then the tail usually contains, like, sediments or things like that. So it—it can be used as flavor, when mixed kind of with the other stuff at a smaller percentage. But that—the head is supposedly the—you know, the super powerful stuff. So that kind of makes sense.

Travis: And so what she said was that what people started doing was holding wakes... and waiting—I think she said, like, three to five days or something?

Teresa: Well, she said—

Travis: Three days?

Teresa: —it started with three days, because the Irish are notoriously religious. Usually—

Travis: Ohh, and it only took Jesus three days.

Teresa: Yeah, usually Catholic.

Travis: And then what she said was—is that then, if people didn't wake back up out of the coma, they were buried. And I think at some point that extended. Now, here's the thing.

Teresa: Mm-hm.

Travis: My lovely bride, in her research—

Teresa: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

Travis: —wasn't able to back that up.

Teresa: Yeah. I really—I really tried to explore—not the deep web. Don't go there.

Travis: No, no, no. A deep dive. A deep google.

Teresa: I—I did a deep google. And I—

Travis: With, like, four O's!

Teresa: —put all—

Travis: A Goooogle!

Teresa: —of the different sort of, like... I looked for, um... you know, newspaper articles, and I looked for, um, like... church articles, and I tried to find some—something that kind of correlates in a medical way, and—and I couldn't find anything to really substantiate this claim.

Travis: But I do want to remind everyone, we were told this at a museum, by somebody who worked there, who was Irish. And so—

Teresa: It is a good ghost story though, isn't it? It's kind of spooky!

Travis: Well, and this is the thing. This is a much bigger—this is why it popped in my head while I was thinking about Halloween things. So, listeners to this show may or may not know this, but I have, uh, bordering—somewhere between a, uh, irrational fear and—an irrational obsession with death. And I especially got really fascinated by the idea of being buried alive when I was teen, because... here we are.

But one of the things I read about was, like, they used to, um, tie—like, so, they'd bury you.

Teresa: Mm-hm.

Travis: And tie to, like, either your fingers or toes a—a line that then ran up above ground to a bell.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: And this is where the term "saved by the bell" literally comes from, because the idea would be if you woke up, the bell would start ringing, and whoever was working would, like, come dig you up. But here's the thing: the problem with this is, if there's a strong wind—

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: —comin' through, suddenly—oh, that poor grave keeper!

Teresa: All of the bells are ringing.

Travis: Everything's ringing. It's terrifying. There was also, like—people would be buried in, like, above-ground glass mausoleums, so you could, like, look in and see them, and—there was a lot of that stuff. And so this kind of fits in that same deal.

Teresa: Well, and that all—that all really fits into—especially the, you know, Victorian era, uh, spiritualism revival. Um, where, you know, everyone was kind of really grappling with this idea of, "What is the life like after death, and how does that relate to religion that we've come to know?" And things like that. Um... but—

Travis: I also want to say, probably a lot of my obsession with this also came from—thank you, middle school and high school, for making us read a lot of Edgar Allen Poe—

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: —especially around the holidays. And, uh, y'all? Edgar Allen Poe—I think every other story he wrote was about being buried alive.

So, we are talking about wakes. And I know—listen.

Teresa: Well, I have—I have just another thing I want to talk about as far as this story goes. I did contact... our—our sister-in-law, Dr. Sydnee Smirl-McElroy—

Travis: Cohost of *Sawbones*, coauthor of *Sawbones Book*, available at bit.ly/thesawbonesbook!

Teresa: And what I said to her, um, was... I said, "Could it be possible that maybe an average not-doctor of, say, the 17th century... um, mistakes someone suffering from alcohol poisoning, either methanol or ethanol—" because although, I mean, the stuff that you want in your drink is ethanol, that can mess you up too, obviously. And, uh, methanol can kill you, like, right off the bat. Anyway,

"Could someone mistake someone suffering from alcohol poisoning for being dead? Um, and then... could they also be so far gone, unconscious, comatose, uh, that you could wait three to five days? You could hold a wake, you could hold a funeral, and then bury them? Is this medically possible?"

Travis: And Sydnee said, "Who is this? How did you get this number?"

Teresa: [laughs] And Sydnee said, quote, "I suppose it is theoretically possible, if the degree of poisoning is profound enough to induce coma. If that were true with methanol poisoning though, uh, I'd expect the person to actually die. Ethanol? Could be possible. Either way, the person pronouncing them dead would have to be doing a pretty cursory examination, because they would still have a pulse, and at least shallow breathing."

So overall, unlikely, but not impossible.

Travis: Now, I will say, though—you said 17th century, but I seem to remember that, like, when our tour guide was telling us that it was more like... 1200's, 1300's, 1400's. Like, this is... way, way back.

Teresa: Well, no, because she talked about the Anglo-Saxon invasion.

Travis: Hmm?

Teresa: Um, which—

Travis: Who knows when that could've happened.

[pauses]

Teresa: Which happened later than the 12th century.

Travis: Oh. Okay.

Teresa: Um, so—but the thing is... for—for that to be absolutely fact, and not just kind of, like, embellishment, I would have to say that, like, the circumstances, medically speaking, surrounding this would have to be so specific that I can't imagine that this was a common thing.

Travis: Here's what I would bet. Here's how I could justify it. If you're drinking illegal whiskey... are you goin' to the doctor?

Teresa: Nope.

Travis: Or are they just like, "Ope, they're dead! Mm, better cover this up." And bury 'em.

Teresa: I mean, in a rural area, you probably didn't have a doctor. And even then, like, doctors in those days, [through laughter] if you listen to *Sawbones*, you know that they got it wrong... *a lot*.

Travis: Okay. I will say at this point, we're talking around—

Teresa: Okay, alright.

Travis: —this is all general things. So now, tell me: what is a wake? How is it different from a viewing? That's, like, the number one—'cause I'm used to... uh, the unfortunate number of funerals I've been to, that basically you go to a viewing that is either the day before or the day of the funeral. You all walk by, pay your respects, and that's usually where it's kind of general—not general public, but more expanded guest list.

Teresa: Mm-hm.

Travis: And then you have the funeral, where it is a smaller, like, core group of people. So, what's a wake?

Teresa: So, a wake is kind of the precursor to a viewing. Um, back when people used to be, um... used to die at home, frankly, uh, the body would stay at home until burial. And, you know, funeral parlors are actually a—a pretty recent construct.

So, the wake was like a social gathering to pay your respects in the same way that you would do a viewing. Um, but the wake usually lasted several days, because, you know, people would travel in, they would come in and out, and there was—you know... there are a couple of different, like... religious and spiritual justifications for the length of time. Uh, but, like... it seems, from... the way that—that it kind of shook out is that... the wake was more about coming to terms with the actual death.

Travis: Mm-hm.

Teresa: Right? Um, whereas the funeral is kind of like, "This is for..." or the memorial, right? Uh, this is for, like, the community, the people around. This was more, like... feeling like, you know... especially if it was a young person, or someone who died unexpectedly. It was kind of gettin' it through your head, you know?

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Um, the other kind of spiritual things were the idea of, um... the—the waking the dead, right? Where it's, um, a combination of—maybe the person might be mad that they died, and you're trying to appease them. Or, um—

Travis: Protecting them from, like, evil spirits? That's one.

Teresa: Protecting them from evil spirits, things like that. But it's very old. Um, again, another sort of tick in my brain being like, "Well, but it's probably not something... that was invented in Ireland specifically," because it's even mentioned in *The Iliad*.

Travis: Oh, okay.

Teresa: Yeah. It's quite old.

Travis: Well, and I also know—ugh, and this is such weird point of reference for it—but, like, I'm pretty sure it's in *American Gods*, um, where Neil Gaiman writes about, uh, one of the characters, like, basically doing this very weird, like, seven day—I think—vigil for a character. I don't wanna spoil anything. But, like, that's very, you know, Norse, uh, mythology.

I also... it's—and I am—I am pulling from general hazy knowledge—but is there something similar to this in, like, Jewish custom? Of, like, sitting in shiva?

Teresa: There is, mm-hm.

Travis: Is that it?

Teresa: Absolutely. Um, that custom is a lot more solemn than a—than the kind of wake idea, where although in the room where the person lies dead is probably very quiet and solemn, the rest of the home is often, you know, people playing games and drinking and eating and gossiping and—and things like that. Um—

Travis: There's a song, uh, called "The Night That Paddy Murphy Died, " and it might've been covered by—oh, now I can't remember the name of the band! Anyways, it's something I have listened to on many, uh, St. Patrick's Days. And there's a line in it of, uh—about putting a bottle of whiskey with the corpse to keep the whiskey cold, and it's basically about a wake, and about these people getting drunk and, like, losing the body. And, like, um, getting loaded drunk—you know, as part of the wake.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: And I think that that's the thing that people came... maybe stereotypically people think about the idea of, like, an Irish wake being like, "Let's get drunk." But I think of it more of like a celebration of life. And which in general is how I come to think about funerals and stuff, uh, nowadays.

But anyways, you were saying?

Teresa: Certainly. I was saying that there's a—a practical side to it as well. Um, so... when someone dies, they don't begin to decay immediately, *but...* if you're gonna let 'em sit out for, like, three to five days, there is going to be some decomposition.

Travis: Mm-hm.

Teresa: Um, and practically speaking, the idea of a wake is kind of like guarding the body from maybe... rodents? Cats? Uh, you know, what—insects?

Travis: All that stuff.

Teresa: Things—all that stuff! And so, uh—

Travis: Wild animals.

Teresa: [laughs] Sitting with the body, staying *a wake*, watching it, um, was something that was a necessity. Because you couldn't preserve it, you couldn't

refrigerate it, you know, like a morgue. So something had to be done. Somebody had to do it.

Travis: Hmm, okay. Alright. [pauses] Alright. So, it feels like—because if you had asked me before this episode... the difference between, like, a wake and a viewing, right? I would've said, like, "Well, a wake's a party." But not necessarily. It seems like a wake and a viewing are actually very similar, but a viewing is, like, the end... is—is the latest evolution of a wake.

Teresa: Yes. Especially now that, um, most of these events take place out of the home, uh, in largely funeral parlors. This is kind of like before the formal ceremony, have your own kinda private ceremony, between you and the deceased.

Travis: Okay. Because I also would say that in modern day terms, and I would define a wake now as being a social... yeah, celebration of life, more of a party kind of deal that either happens—

Teresa: Memorial type thing.

Travis: Yeah, but, I mean... literally now I think about it as, like, a party.

Teresa: Yeah, okay.

Travis: Where it's, like, either before the viewing or after the funeral, you know? Where it's like the viewing is your chance to, like, say your solemn goodbyes. The funeral is a chance for, like, the family to say goodbye. But a wake is a time to, like, tell funny stories about the deceased and, like, remember them and, like, talk about the impact on their life, while you all celebrate their life.

Teresa: Sure.

Travis: Right? Not that any of those are mutually exclusive from one another, but if we were *really* trying to nail down the division of terms...

Teresa: Mm-hm.

Travis: That's what I would call a wake now.

Teresa: Sure. I can dig it.

Travis: Okay. Well, we solved it—

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: —and we're gonna be back to answer some of your questions. But first, a thank you note to some of our sponsors!

[theme music plays]

Travis: Hello, everyone. I would like to say a thank you note to Squarespace. I'm starting to consider getting a Squarespace tattoo, because I love them very much, and I talk about 'em all the time. I—listen. I remember being a kid, and the internet starting, and, like, everybody building really, like, dumb websites. And now here we are, 46 years later—

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: —and it's a chance to, like, build a beautiful website that's functional, and—what do you need to do? What do you wanna do? You want to showcase your work? Are you an artist? Are you a writer? What do you wanna do?

Do you want a blog? You wanna publish content? You wanna sell products and services? You can do that! Through Squarespace! It's amazing!

They have beautiful, customizable templates created by world-class designers. They have powerful e-commerce functionality, so you can sell stuff through your site. They have built-in search engine optimization and analytics, and 24/7, award-winning customer support. And you do not need to know anything about, like, coding, or anything like that. It's super easy. And, there's, like, countless tutorials you can find for it.

If you wanna see, um, like, what can be done with it in, like, 15 minutes, you can either check out, like, mcelroyshows.com, or buttercupisaverygoodgirl.com, the website that I made, dedicated to our very good dog, Buttercup.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Um, and so you, too can build a website, if you go to squarespace.com/shmanners for a free trial, and when you're ready to launch, use the offer code "shmanners" to save 10% off your first purchase of a website or domain. Go check it out!

Teresa: *Shmanners* is also sponsored in part, um, by Away! Makers of first-class luggage at a coach price.

Travis: Oh, I get it.

Teresa: Yeah. Um, so... we received a, uh—a promotional item from them, a carry-on size... [pauses] luggage bag. Yeah, there it is.

Travis: Okay, we got there.

Teresa: We got there. Um, and the thing that I was so impressed with is it looks so sleek, but it is complete—it's, like, featherweight.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: It's super, super light, but still doesn't feel like—you know, it doesn't feel cheap at all. It feels very sturdy.

Travis: Feels sturdy, yeah. Durable?

Teresa: Yeah!

Travis: And it also has... listen. We travel a lot, and especially with a kid, we have gone through a lot of suitcases in the last, like, five, six years.

Teresa: Mm-hm...

Travis: And what you find is, like—the form—like, the shell of a suitcase, right? It's hard to look at and say, like, "Oh, that's why that one's better than this one."

It's the stuff of, like—"Oh, and there's a pocket here. Oh, that's perfect for that, so this won't roll around. And oh, it has a built-in charger!" Like, the—

Teresa: Or, like, the wheels feel like—

Travis: Yes!

Teresa: —solid.

Travis: The handle is, like, good, and isn't gonna, like, break apart halfway across the airport.

Teresa: Doesn't feel wiggly or wobbly.

Travis: Right!

Teresa: So they use high-quality materials, and they're able to offer a much lower price by cutting out the middleman and selling directly.

Um, so we talked about a few of the—the... the thing—

Travis: The features?

Teresa: —the features, yes. Um, and one of those is a patent-pending compression system—

Travis: Thank goodness.

Teresa: —helpful for over-packers like Travis, or maybe you need [holding back laughter] three or four, uh, new t-shirts a day, like Bebe. [laughs]

Travis: Oh, I thought you were gonna say "Like Travis." Okay, great.

Teresa: Ehh. Um, and these carry-ons are able to charge cell phones, tablets—you know, anything you use your USB cord for. Um, and a single charge of this carry-on will charge on iPhone five times!

Travis: That's amazing.

Teresa: Uh, so you would have to use it as a carry on, if you are going to, uh, take the charger with you, because it is a lithium battery.

Travis: But the—the battery is removable, yeah?

Teresa: It's removable! So you can take it out and check the luggage if you want to. Um, there's a lifetime warranty, and if anything breaks, they will fix or replace it for you... for life.

So... our special offer for our lovely listeners is: for \$20 off a suitcase, you can go to awaytravel.com/shmanners and use code "shmanners" at checkout, for \$20 off! Fantastic.

[dramatic sound effect]

Voiceover: [movie trailer voice] In a world dominated by dudebro movie podcasts...

[dramatic sound effect]

A world where Casey Affleck has an Oscar... and Angela Basset... does not.

[dramatic sound effect]

Only one podcast is brave enough to call bull-[censor beep]. *Who Shot Ya?*

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Ricky: A lot of people don't know. Porgs? Puerto Rican.

Voiceover: Alonso Duralde.

Alonso: I would eat Okja.

April: [gasps]

Voiceover: April Wolf.

April: I wanna interrupt and say that the fish man was real sexy.

Voiceover: Drea Clark.

Drea: I have a real soft spot for King Kong.

Voiceover: And women of color.

Speaker One: I was like, "Damn!"

Speaker Two: Ryan Coogler got final cut!

Speaker One: Coogler got final cut?!

Speaker Three: I just felt like the film was both sour, and so completely... irrelevant, to basically anything in life?

Voiceover: *Who Shot Ya?* Listen every Friday on Maximum Fun, or wherever you get your podcasts.

[music plays]

[music plays]

Narrator: You never know who you'll run into in Fairhaven, the city under The Bubble.

Alison: Alison Becker.

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[music plays]

Travis: Um, so this—we got some good questions here.

Teresa: Oh, good.

Travis: This first one comes from Charlotte.

"What to do if the other people invited are people you don't see too often? Former colleagues, distant relative, etc. Is it okay to catch up, as long as you're quiet? Or should that be saved for a different time?"

Teresa: Um, well, we were talking about kind of the differences between these things. And I think at a wake, um, you are encouraged to be a little less formal than you would, uh, during any other kind of service.

Um, because, you know, a lot of these places will have food available, um, which is a social stimulant. Um, so yeah, you can—you can chat.

Travis: Even at a viewing, I would say that it is okay to catch up, as long as you're, like... removed, away from, you know, where the—the deceased is laid.

Teresa: Mm-hm.

Travis: Um, that kind of a deal. But yeah, I mean, these things, like... for centuries, funerals and wakes and viewings, all of these things have been social... you know, a—a—you talk about distant relatives. Think about if you had relatives come in town where you couldn't call them, or, like, Skype video with them or whatever. Like, yeah! Of course there is a social aspect to this.

Teresa: Yeah, totally. Um, and, you know... you'll probably have tea. You might be there for—for hours, depending upon the—uh, you know, the custom in your area.

So, you know, there's—there's no need to be, like, super somber the whole time.

Travis: I can also say, as someone who has been one of the family members hosting a viewing, some sort of social aspect is, at least for me, I appreciated it, because it—so that way it wasn't just... the whole time, like, somber and sad.

Teresa: Yeah, put your—put your sad face on the whole time. You don't need to.

Travis: No. This question—speaking of, this question is from @kingcharacter.

"I'm one of those people whose involuntary reaction to sad or distressing situations is to laugh. How do I explain this to folks in a way that isn't awkward or disrespectful, if I accidentally lose control and giggle or grin?"

Teresa: Oh. Giggle? Grin? You should be able to be a—to do that, especially if you are recalling and regaling fond memories of the deceased.

Travis: That's what I was gonna say. 'Cause you can always say, like, "I was just remembering this really fun time I had with them, or this great joke that they said." But that's the thing—also... listen.

Everybody experiences things in different ways, and I understand your desire to not upset anyone or ruin someone else's emotional catharsis or whatever. But you're also allowed to experience things the way that you experience them, so I

think the fact that you are worried about it means that you're probably doing a good job being reasonable about how much you're reacting to it.

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: I think you're probably doing okay. But yeah! Man, listen. If you need to grin and giggle a little bit, I get that way too, you know what I mean?

Teresa: You're always trying to lighten the mood.

Travis: Yeah. And more than that, like, sometimes I just get a little, like... I don't know. Just, like—slaphappy's not the right word. But kind of... I mean, gallows humor. Is that the right word?

Teresa: I think that is.

Travis: Yeah. Where, like, you end up wanting to just break the tension a little bit, and sometimes that comes through as crying, and sometimes it comes out as laughing. It happens. I think it's totally normal.

Um, this is a question from @grilledcheeseby. Sure.

"What kind of gifts are appropriate for bereaved loved ones? I usually would buy flowers and make food, but is there anything that could be more meaningful?"

Um—

Teresa: Um... well, I mean, I think food is a very common thing. Um, flowers are often reserved for the funeral. For, like, the actual kind of ceremony?

Travis: That probably comes from—not to jump back or be weird, but that probably—you were talking about the body smelling a little bit, right?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Is that probably why we did flowers?

Teresa: I wouldn't put it past it.

Travis: I bet that's it.

Teresa: Um, but, I mean, it really just depends on how—how well you know the family, how close you were. Um, because you may find something that really speaks to you as a gift, um, but things... people can bring, like, cake, right? Like food, a dish—

Travis: A dish. Like a lasagna or casserole.

Teresa: If you—if you want to, you could also ask if there's anything you can do for, like, the physical preparations. Like, maybe bring extra chairs, maybe bring extra plates. Um, things like that are always appreciated.

Travis: And I also think that when it comes to this, you can't overestimate the value of, like, time, effort, listening—those kinds of things that you can give someone of, like... "Let me take care of this, and you just go sit and talk with people, and I'll clean up the kitchen." Or "I will, um, do—how are you doing?"

You know what I mean? That kind of thing is worth more than, I think, anything you could buy. 'Cause that's really—what you're doing with food is not just giving them food but you're saying, like, "I've taken care of dinner tonight for you, so that you don't have to."

Teresa: Yeah. It's kind of—it's a gift of time.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: But... you shouldn't feel obligated to really bring other than maybe a—a card.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Expressing your condolences, if you can't do it through your words face to face. But, like, I don't know—I don't think that gifts are something that people expect at wakes, other than what we said of maybe food or, um—or, you know, practical things like chairs, to assist.

Travis: And you know what, I will also say, if the person does drink alcohol, some sort of—listen. I would say, I would appreciate a bottle of whiskey. Um, that—you know, depending on what kind of wake you're going to, that's always a

thing. Or, you know, maybe just a bottle of wine, if you don't wanna go, like, full-on whiskey.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: But that's one option. Um, this question—

Teresa: Again, people who know you would know that.

Travis: Yeah. Um, this question is from Krista.

"Do I have to wear black?"

Teresa: Um, no. Because black is—is usually, um, reserved for, like, the funeral, which is kind of—or even the burial, which is kind of like the official start of the mourning time.

Travis: And isn't that—mourning is, like, for the family, right? Like, tradition—

Teresa: Right.

Travis: —I'm—

Teresa: Traditionally.

Travis: —I'm talking about, like, traditionally, customarily, like, you don't have to wear black if you just, like, knew the person. You could.

Teresa: You could, you absolutely can. You don't have to. I would say that you should stay away from, like, vibrant prints, because those often seem quite celebratory.

Travis: Mm-hm.

Teresa: Um, but solid black, head to toe, is not necessary, especially for a wake, which we've—we've now defined as more of a social event.

Travis: Right. And also, once again, just 'cause it's always important, I think, for us to clarify this—there is different customs and different ideas of, like, what represents mourning and what represents—what colors.

Teresa: Mm-hm.

Travis: You know what I mean? And, like, I just think about—just across the globe, you know, it's not necessarily that everywhere you go it's gonna be black. You know what I mean? And, like—

Teresa: That is very true.

Travis: —so I would say, you know, you do you. Um, just so long as you're being respectful, and thinking about it in those terms. You know, maybe no, like, t-shirt and jeans or something along those lines, but I don't think you have to, like, go full-on Lydia Deetz.

Teresa: Like I said, try—probably stay away from, like, vibrant prints.

Travis: Uh, this question is from Kaylee.

"Is it appropriate to not attend a wake if there's also a funeral? I have an odd relationship with death, and wakes make me uncomfortable."

Listen, Kaylee. This is me, your friend Travis.

Teresa: [laughs quietly]

Travis: Host of the show. And I am not being flippant when I say, I understand. I also, as I said, have an odd relationship with death. It has been a thing that I have—this is not a joke—been anxious about since I was four years old. Um, and I get it! It's very upsetting for me. But here's what I will tell you. A wake, um, and that kind of thing... that's usually very—a chance to support the people.

Teresa: And be supported.

Travis: And that's—yeah, that's what I mean. And so, like, a funeral is, I think, important. But a funeral is much more about saying goodbye, whereas I think a viewing, and especially a wake, is much more about being there for the people who maybe it is, like, directly impacting, so you're all together and saying, like, "Hey, we're in this together."

And so you don't have to necessarily, like, go up to the body.

Teresa: Yeah. That's what I was gonna say.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: There—there is no rule about how close in proximity you have to get to any—any deceased body.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: Um... as—but the—the wake is really a chance to... to come together. Uh, and—and build your relationship, even if it's not—not very, um... you know, big at the time.

Travis: And you also don't have to stay forever.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: You know what I mean? Like, that—like, this—Allison also asked:

"How long do I have to stay?"

And I think, like, especially if it's—like, you're going for a friend for whom the deceased was, like, directly connected or something, you're going to say, like, "Hey, I'm showing my support for you. Do you need anything? I just wanted to let you know that I love you and I'm here for you."

And then, you know, they—

Teresa: Once that is accomplished...

Travis: Yeah. Because also, there's probably going to be a lot of other people there that are, like, talking to them and that they are kind of hosting. So you don't have to stay long.

Listen, I also will say, Kaylee, if you absolutely, positively, like, can't go, I also get that. But I think—this is one of those things where you really have to decide, like, will it really matter to this person that I was there to support them in this time?

Teresa: Certainly.

Travis: Um, but yes. As far as how long you have to stay, there's, like, no set length, I think, as long as you have shown your support. Um, and also, Mimi asked:

"Is it appropriate to go to wakes, even if you don't know the deceased, but want to be supportive to your friend/their family?"

Yes.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Absolutely. Um, because that's the thing. Listen, not to be—I don't know—callous maybe is the word? But that dead person doesn't care if you're at their wake or not. You're not goin' for them. You're goin' for the living, you know? That's the way I look at it. And so you're going to support your friend.

Like, no one's gonna say, like, "You didn't know the—" like, no. You're there to support your friend. And, once again, not to get up on this horse, but having been on that side of it, seeing my friends there and knowing that they came to show love and support for me meant all the world to me, so yes, I think it's totally appropriate.

Um... and one last question. This is from @fretzel.

"As a nonreligious person that doesn't feel a personal need to pray at the foot of a casket, but doesn't want to seem disrespectful and not take a moment up there at all, how could I make a gesture of respect without feeling like I'm faking something?"

Teresa: Um, again, I think that you need to focus on the relationship. Um, and remember that... although wakes can be kind of demonstrative—uh, like, about showing how—how you are, you know, affected, um, it's—like you said, it's more about the people who are there, not really about the—the deceased.

So, I think as long as you make a point to connect with the loved ones, the bereaved, that's—that's what you need to do. That's the most respectful thing. I—I don't even think that you need to even be seen... standing over the body.

Travis: I agree. That's the thing. I remember, for a long time, I would go to viewings and stuff for... I don't know, various people. Mostly—a lot more when I was attending church. That was, like, a thing that happened a lot.

And I would walk up to the casket and feel weird, 'cause I didn't... feel... a big emotional reaction to it.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: And eventually I learned, like, you don't have to go up and, like, give your respects or say goodbye or whatever. Like, you're there for that, and if you feel the need to, totally. But, like, it's not obligatory. It's not a thing of, like, "You didn't up to the casket? Get outta here!"

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Like... it's gonna be okay. If the spirit moves you—[laughs quietly]

Teresa: Oh boy. Yeah.

Travis: —and I mean that as, like, lowercase "s" spirit, not capital "S" Spirit.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: Um, so that's gonna do it for us! Thank you so much. Thank you for joining us for this episode, um, that started a little spooky... maybe ended a little touching? Just like every episode.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: You know how every episode of *Shmanners* is a li'l spooky? Have you all noticed that?

Teresa: [simultaneously] Is—is a little spooky?

Travis: It's the normal trajectory of every episode.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Um, let's see. A couple things before I forget. One! Oh, um, we are setting up a McElroy newsletter, um, because listen. At this point, we've got so many weird, different irons in the fire, and we want to make sure that you don't miss any information about it, so if you go to bit.ly/mcelroymail, you can sign up for it.

We've got a *Shmanners*—or, sorry, we've got a *Candlenights* show coming up in December. It's sometime around I think, like, the third weekend. We don't—we don't have the date 100% nailed down, but that's gonna be in Huntington, West Virginia.

Um, that's actually going to be announced—the date is going to be announced in the newsletter! So, sign up if you don't want to miss that. Um... let's see. What else?

Go check out all the other amazing shows at Maximumfun.org. Uh, Book 2 of *The Adventure Zone* graphic novel is available for preorder now, if you go to theadventurezonecomic.com.

You can also order *The Sawbones Book* that we mentioned earlier in the show, written by Justin and Sydnee McElroy.

Teresa: I've already read mine.

Travis: Uh, you can get it at bit.ly/thesawbonesbook. Do you wanna give any kind of review of it, or just say that you read it?

Teresa: Um, I wanna say that... I love the podcast, and I think that it is very well replicated by the tone and—and voice in the book.

Travis: And also the illustrations are great, done by Teylor Smirl. That's Sydnee's sister. And if you are a fan of the podcast, if you're a fan of weird medical history, if you're a fan of things that are funny, or if you know somebody who is—any of those things, get the book. It's gonna make an amazing Christmas present. Or, maybe just present for yourself.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Um... what else, Teresa?

Teresa: Well, we always thank Brent "brentalfloss" Black for writing our theme music, which is super catchy and available as a ringtone where those are found.

Um, also, thank you to Kayla M. Wasil for our Twitter thumbnail art. Thank you to Keely Weis Photography for the Facebook banner of our fan-run Facebook group, *Shmanners* Fanners.

Go and join that. There's a lot of really excellent people in that group, uh, giving and getting some really excellent advice on manners and, you know, life!

Travis: Uh, and I think that's gonna do it for us, so join us again next week!

Teresa: No RSVP required.

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

Teresa: Manners, *Shmanners*. Get it?

[theme music plays]

[chord]

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