

Shmanners 283: Ghost Hunting

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Travis: Which ghost school has the best performing arts program?

Teresa: I don't know.

Travis: A lot of people think it's Boo-liard, but actually it's N-Y-Boo!

Teresa: It's *Shmanners*.

[theme music plays]

Travis: It could also be Boo-C-L-A. I don't know, I haven't—

Teresa: I— yeah.

Travis: There's a lot it could be.

Teresa: There's a— there's a lot in there.

Travis: Do you wanna hear the jokes I didn't use?

Teresa: No? Yes. Okay, fine.

Travis: Okay. This one might have to get cut. It's a little risqué. Why was the terrified ghost naked?

Teresa: I don't know. Why?

Travis: He was scared sheetless.

Teresa: Oh no, that's fine. You don't have to— okay.

Travis: That was pretty good? Okay, here's the other one.

Teresa: [holding back laughter] Okay.

Travis: Why did the ghost become a pirate?

Teresa: I don't know.

Travis: For the Boo-ty!

Teresa: Yeah!

Travis: Okay. Uh, 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: [sighs heavily]

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: I am among the living, which is good.

Travis: Ohh, I— I get it, yeah. Uh, listen. We're potty training. By "we" I mean primarily Teresa.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Because she is the only one of us—

Teresa: No, wait a second.

Travis: —with patience.

Teresa: I am potty trained. I am potty training...

Travis: I know, I know.

Teresa: ... Dot.

Travis: I think people probably got that from context clues.

Teresa: You never know.

Travis: That's fair. Hey, I wanna get right to the topic, 'cause it's something near and dear to my heart.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: We're talking about ghost hunting.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Um, right off the bat, I wanted to ask you...

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: ... about your belief level in ghosts. And not just you, Teresa, but I asked folks at home as well. I did a little poll this morning and got over 3000 responses.

Teresa: Nice.

Travis: The options were, uh, so, "Are ghosts real? Options: Yes, definitely. Not sure, but maybe. Not sure, but probably not. And, definitely not."

Uh, and the leading answer with 30% was "Not sure, but maybe."

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: Uh, followed closely by "Not sure, but probably not," at 26.7%, followed by "Definitely not," at 25.5%, and then bringing up the rear, "Yes, definitely," at about 18%.

Teresa: And if you wanna check out the specifics of that poll, it's on Travis's Twitter.

Travis: So, where are you at?

Teresa: I am not sure, but probably not.

Travis: Oh yeah? That's where you're at?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: I'm at not sure, but maybe. Here's— this is my thought on it. If ghosts are a thing... I don't think it's the way most people think of ghosts.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Maybe I've said this publicly somewhere before, but I— you know, just going— listen, I'm not a scientist, but going off the basics of, you know, energy can neither be created nor destroyed, there's energy in the human body... I think there's a part of me that wants to believe and could easily be convinced that if you die in an extreme enough emotional state, right? That that kind of energy can imbue a place enough—

Teresa: Okay, so I'm gonna say that I believe in the human ability of empathy, right? So, if something truly terrible happened in a place, I believe that empathic— empathetically?

Travis: Empathetically?

Teresa: Empathetically, people can feel that, live people. That's what I believe.

Travis: Yeah. I don't think there's, like, apparitions and spirits in Victorian clothes. Like, "Ooooh! It was Derek what killed me!"

Teresa: As far as the thing that is the feeling, I think it's people that are feeling, not ghosts. But what I do believe in is playing the game, right?

Travis: Oh yeah, absolutely! We talked about this in our seance episode as well.

Teresa: Yeah. So I believe that if you are deciding to go ghost hunting, or to, you know, mess around with some of this, like— like, reading equipment or whatever—

Travis: [crosstalk] Ouija board.

Teresa: We haven't yet.

Travis: Yeah, okay.

Teresa: But I do believe that playing the game is part of the fun, right? And that's the etiquette along with a lot of this ghost hunting business, is whether you believe in spirits, ghosts, I mean—

Travis: Goblins, ghouls.

Teresa: —gob—[laughs quietly] uh, and—

Travis: Uh, gnomes. Other G words.

Teresa: All of that stuff. Playing the game is the important part. That's the *Shmanners* bit.

Travis: Well, and not just that. There's also, especially when we're talking about, uh, ghost hunting specifically, there's also a lot of real-world manners as far as, like, where you should and shouldn't go. That kind of thing.

Teresa: Right. Right. [laughs] So to give a little bit of background about— let's call it...

Travis: Paranormal investigations.

Teresa: Okay! That's not— that's not what I was gonna say.

Travis: Oh.

Teresa: I was gonna say connecting with the beyond.

Travis: Okay. Okay.

Teresa: But sure. Paranormal investigating.

Travis: Well, we'll get to why in a second. I'm gonna— I'm— I have feelings on the difference between the term "ghost hunt" and "paranormal investigations," because I'm a nerd, and we'll talk about it later.

Teresa: Okay. The cool thing is that cultures throughout time have different interpretations of specifically what happens after people die, right?

Travis: Yeah. I actually watched— because I was thinking about a lot of— we're gonna talk about. I watched a Bill Nye video today where someone asked him about, like, what happens when we die, and ghosts and stuff. And he said people have been thinking about what happens to us when we die as long as there have been people.

Teresa: That's right, because when there were people, then they died, and people are like, "What happened to them?"

Travis: "Hey, what happened to Bob? Why isn't Bob moving anymore?"

Teresa: A couple of the highlights that, you know, live in the culture today, Dia de los Muertos, right?

Travis: Of course, right. Day of the Dead.

Teresa: Also the ancient Celts have a lot of the, you know, the different traditions that we talk about today. Thinking, like, leaving offerings of soul cakes and, you know, the veil, and Halloween season has to do a lot with them.

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: Um, also, you mentioned the Ouija board, right?

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: Um, there's, again—

Travis: Also called a spirit board.

Teresa: Also called a spirit board.

Travis: I think Ouija board is, like, the brand name.

Teresa: Oh, okay.

Travis: If I'm not mistaken.

Teresa: Um, in Japan—

Travis: Like Xerox, you know?

Teresa: Oh, yeah. In Japanese culture, there's, like, offerings to different ancestors, things like that. There's always kind of, like, this balance between the— when people die, they go somewhere where they can help us, or they stick around where they can mess with us.

Travis: You know, one— I am not, as I've said on this show a lot, I'm not a sociologist. I'm not a... historian? Whatever.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: I'm not a religious expert.

Teresa: You're not a— you're not any of those things. You're just a dude.

Travis: I'm not *just* a dude. There are many things that I am.

Teresa: Podcaster, writer.

Travis: Okay, we don't need to— okay.

Teresa: Comedian.

Travis: Wonderful dad and husband. But, uh— just, pillar in the community. Uh—

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: But, like, it is interesting to me that when I think about, especially in, like— so, I was raised Southern Baptist, which I'm not anymore. Um, but also, like, here in the US and everything, and so much of that specific culture is, like, "Ghosts are bad." Right?

Teresa: Right.

Travis: It's like, if you're not in heaven, that's a bad thing. But so many other cultures, religions, belief systems, are like, "No, no, no, no, no. No, no, no. They're, like, in there, hanging out with us, and they come and chill with us sometimes, and it's a totally cool, chill thing, and not scary at all."

Teresa: Right. Um, so the paranormal—

Travis: Thank you.

Teresa: —uh, entered the kind of, uh, cultural lexicon in the US specifically in 1848. This is when Maggie and Kate Fox were two little girls who lived in upstate New York. Yes—

Travis: Oh, okay, yep.

Teresa: —there's a Drunk History about this. We love Drunk History.

Travis: I know about it from more than that, thank you very much, but that is primarily where I do know it from.

Teresa: [laughs] And there were noises and taps and sounds that couldn't be explained in their home. When they woke up their parents, their parents believed them that it was a ghost.

Travis: Right.

Teresa: In their house.

Travis: Which, can I just say, I don't care what time period it is, I don't care what technology, anything like that. Your kids wake you up and there's a ghost and you, as an adult are like, "There is?! Oh, no!" Then, listen.

Teresa: They didn't know any better.

Travis: Okay. This is what I'm saying. They should have, though. I don't care if it's the Dark Ages. Your kid is like, "There's a dragon outside." Your first response should be a healthy skepticism.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Not like, "My child is a liar. Go back to bed." 'Cause we've all seen the movies. But enough to be like, "[clicks tongue] Okay... " [laughs] Enough to be like, "I'll look, but I don't think there is a gho—" I'm just saying.

Teresa: So they took their show on the road as mediums, right? And later, Maggie would come out in 1888 as, like, showing all the secrets. Like, "We made this up" type thing.

Travis: Like *Magic's Greatest Secrets Revealed* with the Masked Magician.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: But spiritualism, the ball had started and would not be stopped.

Travis: Right.

Teresa: Um, so during the Civil War, countless psychics and clairvoyants and mediums took advantage of people who had lost loved ones, um, and were saying that they could reconnect them, that they could help them, that they could make people, you know, give people closure and let their spirits move on or whatever it is that they're doing.

Travis: One of my favorite kind of— about spiritualism, interesting, I think very ironic facts, is so, two of really big figures in spiritualism, but on opposite sides of it, were Houdini and Arthur Conan Doyle.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: And Houdini, who was this, like, you know, fantastic figure who performed acts of magic...

Teresa: Quote, "magic."

Travis: ... was a— was a very, like— was a debunker and skeptic of it.

Teresa: Right. I think it's because he kind of knew how the sausage was made already, right?

Travis: Well, I'll tell you why. But the other side of that then, is Sir Arthur Conan Doyle who wrote books about this incredibly logical, like, thinker who, you know, would— would think through problems and didn't believe the unexplained answers, and he was like, "Yeah. Ghosts are real. Got it."

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: And it was— Houdini's deal was after his mother died, who he was very, very close to, he would go to seances wanting— like, believing it, right? But then realizing that they were using the tricks that he used.

Misdirection, you know, lighting effects, mirrors, all that stuff. And he was like, "Oh, this is all magic tricks, except the difference is you're tricking people out of money by convincing them it's— you know, like, that they're talking to a dead loved one, where I am entertaining people for an hour with no promise of, like, any of that."

Teresa: Right.

Travis: And he had actually been a medium at one point as part of, like, the performance, right? That that was part of his shtick. So, like, he knew all of this, so when he went to who were purporting themselves as legitimate psychics and he was like, "Wait a minute, you're doing the same thing I was doing."

Teresa: Right. And I think that you also hit on the head the part where there were a lot of new technologies happening all at once at this point, with the Industrial Revolution.

Travis: Phonographs, recordings, all of that stuff especially.

Teresa: Exactly. Uh, incandescent light, the telephone, photography especially.

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: Lots of these inventions were kind of, like, blurring what was real and what was— what was not in people's minds, because all this stuff was totally brand new. Nobody knew how it worked. So, I mean, if—

Travis: It was basically like magic, you know what I mean?

Teresa: Yeah. If I told you this— this is the voice of someone who's dead and I played it on the phonograph, you'd be like, "Whoa! Where is that coming from?!"

Travis: The— here's the irony— or maybe not. But, like, that was one of the original intentions for the phonograph, was to, like, record, so, like, you could listen to people's voices after they died.

Teresa: Right, but it's not their— it's—

Travis: Well, so then people would call and complain— like, or contact them and complain and be like, "I can't hear the loved one's voice." And like, 'Well, you have to record it before they died!'"

Teresa: [laughs] That's it. You're not communicating with them now, because they're dead.

Travis: Right.

Teresa: Right. So, between 1860 and 1890 the US issued 500,000 invention patents.

Travis: That's a lot.

Teresa: Many of them were used for manufacturing and investigating of the paranormal.

Travis: Hmm.

Teresa: Um, so, you know, like you mentioned, people would definitely use all of these tricks, um, and photography, like I said, is a very important one, because people didn't understand. So, they were capturing visible light, and then you could turn the light off, but then you could see the light in the picture. And people didn't understand how that worked, right? So—

Travis: Well, and not only— yeah, there's also stuff with, like, double exposures and, like— yeah.

Teresa: Right, right. Um, so these spirit photographs that were often used as, like, quote, "concrete evidence," were people using, like, double exposure, or taking advantage of people who just didn't understand the science.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Um, and so—

Travis: Which is so interesting, because today, like, if you show— if you ever watch, like, police procedurals or any kind of, like, thing like that, immediate reaction now if you show someone any kind of photo is, "We could photoshop that."

Teresa: Right.

Travis: Like, we have swung 1000% the other way, away from, like, naive, unashamed belief, to, like, pure doubt.

Teresa: This also changed the way that people thought about ghosts. So, at the beginning you talked about how, like, the kind of, like, *Christmas Carol*, Dickensian, like, fully-formed person in clothes, like, moving things and doing stuff, with all of this spiritualism and, you know, the different inventions, people started talking about ghosts as kind of energies or, uh, vibrations, or, you know, like the— "Feel the chill in the

air? That's a spirit. Feel the, uh, the hair standing up on the back of your neck? That's a ghost!"

That kind of stuff. Because there were less and less, like, con— not— I don't wanna say "concrete," but, like, the definition of spiritualism and ghosts and all that stuff was constantly expanding.

Travis: Well, that's the thing, right? Like you mentioned, the Dickensian, you know, the *Christmas Carol*, right? When you only have what is written in a shared document like a book for reference, everybody has the same reference material, right? But if you're having these one-on-one or, like, you know, parties at your house where a psychic comes, whatever, you experience at that party then becomes your thought process. So now everyone has quote, unquote, "personal accounts" of it. And that's gonna muddy the waters.

Teresa: And so, um, like everything, the culture had— the pendulum of the culture had completely swung to "Ghosts are everywhere, everything, everything is haunted."

Back through to the Great Awakening, it is called, in the United States in 1920's. And this is basically, like I said, the opposite of the spiritualism movement.

Travis: "This is bunk! Hokum, I tell you! Balderdash!"

Teresa: Especially within the context of evangelical Protestant faiths, right?

Travis: Yeah, mm-hmm, yeah.

Teresa: Um, a lot of the mediums are then exposed as fakes and things, and by the time we get to World War II, people are more interested in UFOs and stuff.

Travis: Yeah, absolutely.

Teresa: Instead of spiritualism.

Travis: Well, sci fi started to take over from fantasy, didn't it?

Teresa: Right. And especially sci fi in the movies.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Which was probably the number one contributor for the decline of the seance specifically, because now that you can go and laugh at

Charlie Chaplin, right? There's no need to have a party in your dark house. You can go to a movie and laugh instead.

Travis: That was what so much of that stuff was. It was the entertainment factor. This is— okay. Here is the thing I will say. Just—and I think we've probably said it before when we've talked about any kind of spiritualism stuff.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: But I have no problem with somebody doing an event, be it a seance, be it a ghost hunt, be it whatever, for entertainment, even charging for that entertainment, right? Because yeah, you're getting fun out of it, right? This is great. I'll put it this way. If we change these terms to, like, gambling, right? I have no problem with people playing in a poker tournament for money.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: I have a problem with someone then cheating at that tournament to take everybody's money.

Teresa: Ah.

Travis: And so, it is these people who say, like, "I can help you find your lost child," or "I can help you communicate, you know, with somebody, to give you a conclusive answer about this thing."

I do think that there is something psychological, right, definitely that can be, uh, I don't know. As long as it's... there can be, I guess, a healthy relief from, like, feeling like you've spoken to someone or whatever. I don't know, I'm not a psychologist.

Teresa: Sure, but are you helping people or are you swindling people?

Travis: Right. I think when you are making any kind of false promise and you, you know, can't deliver on that, that's where I start to have issues with it. Um, I mean, and that's Houdini's deal, right?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Doing magic tricks is fine. Trying to convince people you're actually magic? Boo!

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: So, we'll be right back after a thank you note from our sponsors.

[theme music plays]

Travis: This week we want to write a thank you note to Quip. Quip? Oh! Quip, we love you here in this house, and in many McElroy houses. In fact, I'm going to say all of the McElroys who are related to me love Quip, because good health starts with good habits, and Quip makes it easy by delivering all the oral care essentials you need to care for your mouth. Their brushes deliver sensitive sonic vibrations, so it's an effective clean that's gentle on gums, which I appreciate. And they even have kids' electric toothbrushes, which are just like the original, but with sized down features like a small brush head for small mouths and rubber grip handle for greater control.

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And if you go to getquip.com/shmanners right now, you'll get your first refill free. That's your first refill free at getquip.com/shmanners, spelled G-E-T-Q-U-I-P.com/shmanners. Quip: the good habits company.

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[music plays]

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[lion roar]

[music and ad end]

Travis: Okay. So, here's why I wanted to say the difference between a paranormal investigation and ghost hunt.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: One, you're not gonna kill the ghost. Listen, good luck, you know? But—

Teresa: You're not gonna catch it?

Travis: [unintelligible] I guess you could hunt it and catch it, yeah, I suppose.

Teresa: Catch and release.

Travis: Sure. But the thing is—

Teresa: [simultaneously] Like fish. [laughs]

Travis: —I think that... the TV shows— I think this happens with a lot of, like, hobbies or things, whatever— however you want to phrase it. Hobbies sounds a little reductive. But for people is, like, they make a reality TV show out of it, and they only highlight the interesting parts, so they ramp up the drama, or they change this aspect, or whatever.

And you're like, "That's not really what it's like!" And then everyone starts copying that. You know, I've been doing blacksmithing—

Teresa: It's— it's like when *Whose Line is it Anyway?* went on TV, and then everyone was like, "I love improv!"

Travis: Yeah. And it's like, no, you—

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: —you actually don't. Um, but it's like, you know, I've been doing blacksmithing, and blacksmiths, a lot of them kind of... not turn their nose up at *Forged in Fire*, but they're like, "That's not what it is really like."

Teresa: 'Cause it's a TV show.

Travis: It's a competition, right? And so I think that that's it, is there's a lot of, like, ghost hunt shows where it's like, they're not... doing any kind of— they're not trying to be scientific about it at all. They're just going, "Is anybody there? Oh my God, you hear that?" [laughs]

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: It's like, "No. I didn't hear that. You have a sound edi—" anyways.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: But I think that there is something to... like, scientists still study paranormal claims, right? Like, it— it's not like at some point all of the scientific community, respected or otherwise, said, like, "Okay! We can check ghosts off the list." Right?

There are still, like, very, very, very respected, highly credited scientists who are like, "You know, we're still trying to figure stuff out. We don't know."

That's why I like paranormal investigation. 'Cause you're going in going, "I dunno. Let's see if we can prove anything. No? Okay."

Teresa: You know, uh, at Duke University, they actually ran one of the first paranormal research centers in the world. Uh, it was established in 1935 by J.B. Rhine and William McDougall. Um, and they are the original ghostbusters.

Travis: Yep.

Teresa: Uh—

Travis: [briefly hums the *Ghostbusters* theme song]

Teresa: [laughs] A lot of different groups at Stanford, at UCLA, lots of different places, had paranormal programs, right? Um, and much like in *Ghostbusters*, when Duke shut down the program, J.B. Rhine literally moved his office and labs across the street and continued his work off campus.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: And so—

Travis: At this point I think there's only two, like, paranormal studies programs in universities, and— at least in the western world— uh, Edinburgh, and American University, I think it's called?

Teresa: Oh.

Travis: I heard it on *Stuff You Should Know* today. Thanks, *Stuff You Should Know*.

Teresa: Um, you also might know some paranormal investigators, Ed and Lorraine Warren. They were the main characters in *The Conjuring* horror movie universe business.

Travis: Do you think another reason that there has been a huge— I— no, I'm just going to posit it and say it. Huge resurgence in, like, ghost hunting, paranormal investigation, is *Blair Witch Project*?

Teresa: Uh-huh.

Travis: That kind of found footage, and then you started seeing movies like *Paranormal Activity*, which then, like, became TV shows that were basically trying to replicate the movie, but claiming to be real, all that stuff. I'm just gonna say. I'm not asking the question.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: I'm gonna make it a downward inflected statement.

Teresa: Um, and so, you know, there's a ton of real-life people and researchers who have inspired all of those different things. Like— like, you know, ghost hunting, and things like that.

So, the real boom in a lot of those TV shows especially happened in the 80's with the spontaneous psychophysical incident data electronic recorder, referred to as SPIDER.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Um, it is a device that is like a— sort of a camera? I mean, it measures everything, it seems. It's triggered by various, like, sensory changes, and it automatically photographs or records whatever causes the fluctuation. Um, it's a very interesting idea, right? To use these type of, like, readers and stuff to measure, you know, air pressure and temperature and, you know, uh, microwaves and all this kind of stuff.

But I think that for my money, everything that humans have done to affect the world affects all— like, a ton of stuff all the time, right? So, like, they ask you, uh, you know, is someone using a microwave in here, because that disturbs the air, right?

Travis: Right.

Teresa: Is someone— you know, is your cell phone looking for WiFi? That disturbs the machines. Like, all this kind of stuff. There are lots of everyday things that do things that these devices measure, but we don't notice.

Travis: Well, and I think that's the difference between what I think of as, you know, paranormal investigator hucksters, and people who are trying to understand things. Is, like... [sighs] a lot of— and I don't wanna draw a line here, because once again, I'm not an expert. But I think it's people who are going and saying, like, "Okay, I have found a logical explanation for this. I have found the reason for this. I am looking for things I cannot explain, so then I can study."

Instead of, like, "The needle's moving. We got a ghost." Right? It's like, "Well, no, hold on! There's a bunch of steps betwixt those two points."

Teresa: So, there are a couple of things that people at home can do. There is a very interesting thing called a Boo Buddy, um, which is basically a little teddy bear that has an EMF detector that registers things like temperature and motion and electromagnetic energy and things. Um, it seemed that it was invented by a guy named Shawn Porter, um, who

thought that the ability to leave the bear in the room would call out more, like, youthful spirits that would interact with the toy.

Travis: Yeah, sure.

Teresa: Very interesting.

Travis: That child energy, as we talked about in *My Brother, My Brother, and Me* TV show.

Teresa: [laughs] Um—

Travis: Have you ever done a ghost hunt?

Teresa: No, I haven't. Um, I do not—

Travis: I can't believe we've been together almost a third of my life and I've never made you do it.

Teresa: I don't enjoy the feeling of being scared, which is why I don't watch horror movies, and I also don't watch, like, suspense thrillers and things like that. I don't enjoy that feeling, and so...

Travis: But— yeah, but this is the thing, right? This is what I'm saying. I think that there's two different ways to approach this, right? 'Cause some people wanna do the, like, "Oh, this place is so haunted. I'm scared!" Right?

Versus, like, "I like exploring." I've done— there used to be this place, I think it's torn down now, in Point Pleasant, West Virginia, home of the Mothman, uh, where it was called Lakin State Hospital for— and then it was a very offensive, outdated term. But let's say, uh, for young children of color, and it, uh— it was, like, you know, one of those places where the stories were, like, children kept in boxes in the basement and that, like, kind of thing.

Teresa: [horrified] Oh!

Travis: Yeah. Rough, right? And it was shut down a long, long time ago. And we would go explore that. In retrospect— and we'll get to this in a moment— very unsafe for real world reasons.

Teresa: Very unsafe!

Travis: But, like, I never was, like, scared doing it. And this was back when I used to be scared of everything. You know, 1920.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: I literally was, like, scared of everything until, like, five years ago when Bebe was born, in which I became scared of only one thing: Bebe.

And, uh— but this is... it was one of those things where it was never for me, like, "I wanna go and get scared." It was like, "Let's go explore this place and keep our eyes open" kind of thing.

Teresa: You know, I remember, um, there was a stop on my bus route growing up that was directly across from an old farmhouse, um, that was way, way, way back from the road, but it was surrounded by the corn fields. Um, and at one point, somebody told me, "Hey, you know that house is haunted?"

And... like, the stories that kind of, like, swirled around it made it so that I didn't even look at it when I rode my bike past. Because the whole thing was like, "The house is full of, like, dishes and clothes and, like, the people, they just got up and left and they didn't take anything and, like..."

Travis: I mean, that might be true for various reasons, you know?

Teresa: It's possible. I mean—

Travis: Maybe there was, like, a big spider and they were like, "We gotta get out of here!"

Teresa: [laughs] But for me—

Travis: "Leave it all. Who knows what the spider touched?"

Teresa: For me it was like avoid, avoid. [laughs] And that's kind of, like, how I do with that stuff. But, um, there are definitely, if you are gonna play the game, if you're gonna go, there are definitely some etiquette tips that you need to follow.

Travis: And safety tips.

Teresa: Yeah, a lot of them are safety related. Hey, don't trespass, you guys. Um, there's plenty of things that are billed and, like, secured as haunted things.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: That you can go and do without getting either in trouble for private property trespassing or, uh, hurting yourself, someplace that's unsafe.

Travis: One of the main reasons you shouldn't trespass is, one, uh, it's possible the buildings are closed because they are structurally unsound.

Teresa: Indeed.

Travis: And two, you don't know, uh, who might be in there as a real human being that's staying in there that maybe doesn't want to be bothered.

Teresa: Sure.

Travis: Always a possibility that they don't want you there and they might get angry at you if you are there.

Teresa: Mm-hmm. Uh, and never go alone.

Travis: Or just youths doing drugs. Can you imagine?

Teresa: [holding back laughter] Can you imagine.

Travis: Coming upon some youths? Oh.

Teresa: Uh, never go alone, for spiritual safety and general safety, right? Um, you wanna make sure that people know where you're going to be.

Travis: Yeah, that one's very important.

Teresa: Um, so, like, you know— and tell someone when you plan to be back. Right?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Because we wanna— we wanna keep— we wanna play the game and stay safe. Um—

Travis: Just like camping.

Teresa: Just like camping! And there are also lots of places that are perfectly creepy during the day. There are normal visiting hours for every cemetery, right? So, um, you don't need— you don't need it to be dark in order to visit those places. Um, do be quiet while you're doing it. Nobody wants, like, kind of, like, crazy wild party time while we're, quote, "looking for spirits," right? So if you— if you're gonna play the game, you gotta play by the rules. One of the rules is, be quiet. Um—

Travis: If you're gonna go, too, just as a rule along those same lines, be the same energy level as everyone else.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: You know what I mean?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Like, if you go with four friends and all your four friends want to be bought into it, don't be the one who's like, "This is dumb!" Right? Like, if you're gonna go—

Teresa: Right, 'cause that's no fun!

Travis: Yeah. If you're gonna go, just buy into it. Like, you don't have to believe it to buy into it and have fun. You know what I mean?

Teresa: Exactly. Uh, one of the etiquette—

Travis: That's like going to a renaissance festival, you know what I mean?

Teresa: [laughs] Yeah.

Travis: You don't wanna be like, "Look at these dorks!" Be like— nah, man, you're here too. Let's do the— if you're gonna do it, do it.

Teresa: [laughs] Um, another etiquette for the people who, let's say, take a lot of stock in this, right?

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: Um, is that you are free to talk to the ghosts, but you need to set a boundary, right? That's part of, like, the spiritual, um, like, ebb and flow, and give and take, and you don't just, like, invite a spirit in to use you as a vessel or whatever it is, because that, in some people's minds, is very dangerous. So that's another rule of the game.

Travis: Very much think of it, as you mentioned before, like improv, right?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: You don't wanna be the "I've got a gun" improv-er. Right?

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Or, like, "Oh no, I've got superpowers all of a sudden." Like, wait, what's happening? Right? If you're going to be playing the game, improv it like it's really happening, right?

Teresa: Exactly. You can say prayers for protection if that's what you wanna do. Um, you can carry something to, quote, "ward off" evil spirits or whatever. All of these are pieces of the puzzle that show that you are being a team player.

Travis: Also, very, very practical sense, um, if you're going somewhere that is either outside, or dirty, or has broken stuff or whatever, make sure you wear, like, closed-toed shoes, comfortable shoes to walk in, maybe long pants so you don't get, like, scratches on your legs or anything like that. Bring a flashlight, or even better, a headlamp. You know, one of those that, like—

Teresa: Ooh! That's a great idea.

Travis: —goes— goes on and has the little flashlight on the front so you have your hands free. Um, there are a lot of devices that you can buy online, and a lot of them are really expensive and don't do anything. Um, so I would say, like, if this is just, like, "I'm gonna go explore," don't spend, like, \$2000 buying equipment off Amazon or something. If you wanna buy, like, an EMF meter for, like, 50 bucks or something, go for it. But don't— don't buy a bunch of equipment thinking this will enhance the experience. It's definitely fun, but, like, you can walk around with your phone camera on and... feel like you're doing something.

Teresa: Yeah. Uh, speaking of phones, put your phone on airplane mode so that the things that your phone does don't register on your equipment. Um, and be respectful of the area that you're in. You know, don't go breaking stuff. That's not cool.

Travis: And bring a snack and some water so you don't get cranky.

Teresa: Aww. Um, and one of the things that, uh, that the etiquette maintains is that if your body makes a noise, or if you recognize that's a train whistle from outside, uh, that you tag it for the recording, which I think is a really great idea.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: So that people don't go back and listen and hear, like, a growl and think, "Oh my gosh, what was that?" If you know that your stomach growled, you should say, "That was my stomach." [laughs quietly]

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Uh, because with all this equipment, it's gonna be, like, recording stuff, like I said, and you'll wanna listen to it later, 'cause that's part of the fun. A lot of these devices say that they'll pick it up and then, uh, you won't— you won't hear it, maybe, in the moment, but you'll hear it later. But, you know, don't— don't pretend that your— your tummy—

Travis: "Do you hear that stomach gurgle?! That was a hungry ghost?"

Teresa: —that your tummy rumbles—[laughs]

Travis: I also think if you have ignored rule number one and you have trespassed somewhere you're not supposed to be, or somewhere not completely safe to be, just go by DnD rules and don't split the party.

Teresa: Oh, that's a great idea!

Travis: Uh, especially at night. Stay together just so, like, nobody gets lost or anything like that. You don't have to go looking for anybody.

Teresa: Mm-hmm. Um, make sure that if you do need to leave the group to go to bathroom or go outside or take a break, let somebody know, right?

Travis: And go to a bathroom, you know, if you're a pace without a bathroom, outside, not just, like, in an abandoned house somewhere.

Teresa: Not cool.

Travis: Not cool!

Teresa: That goes with, like, don't destroy stuff. Right?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Yeah. Um, and I think that you do need to agree upon what the, uh, I'm gonna say what the goal is for this.

Travis: Yeah?

Teresa: Is the goal ghost hunting? Is the goal exploring? Is the goal helping spirits cross over, or whatever it is? Just so that you have a like-minded party, because, like I said, if you're playing different games, one person thinks that they can, you know, cast out the— the demons or whatever, and one person just wants to see a— like, a vase move or whatever, right?

Travis: Right.

Teresa: You wanna be playing the same game, so make sure you talk about what your, uh, your end goal is.

Travis: Okay. So, I've got some questions here.

Teresa: Great.

Travis: And I'm going to attempt to answer them... with no smirk or judgment. Let's do it.

Dukemeat asks:

"Should you banish a ghost based off of their religion? Say a Christian prayer for a Christian ghost, Hebrew prayer for a Jewish ghost?"

Okay. Um, I think that it is about, uh, as far as the understanding of that procedure and people who give stock to that, that it is about the faith and belief of the person delivering it, uh, and not about the person— the ghost hearing it.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: Um, you are using your faith to tap into whatever, so it has to do with that. Um, Brenna asks:

"If a spirit is being rude to me, am I allowed to be rude back?"

I mean, you gotta think that being a spirit trapped in a plane that it doesn't belong in and a time it doesn't belong in has gotta be pretty frustrating. So, much like I would say dealing, like, with a toddler, it's important that you don't... escalate.

Teresa: [simultaneously] Like, egg it on, yeah.

Travis: Yeah, you don't escalate, that you're there trying to resolve, and if you can't resolve, then leave.

Teresa: Um, I think that in a circumstance like that, it would be okay to communicate, "Hey, that hurt my feelings."

Travis: Yeah. They might just not be used to dealing with, uh, people.

Teresa: Yeah. Or, uh, "That was— that was uncalled for. That's rude."

Travis: Um, Nessa asks:

"What's the deal with sage?"

Uh, so yeah, burning sage is supposed to be very purifying. That sage smoke, uh, has— it can purify energies, and if nothing else, smells good.

Oh, rubbercake asks about ghost tours.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: I think ghost tours are fun. I've been on many of those.

Teresa: You sure have!

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: That— and I think that the quality of the ghost tour is really about the people you go with.

Travis: Well, that's the thing, man. I've been on many, and some of them, sometimes, the tour guide is not a good storyteller, or very low energy, or anything like that. And it's like, you're not weaving a tapestry for me. Um, so I would say try to do some research to find one that, like, has good reviews or that someone's been on before and enjoyed.

Teresa: Enjoy the ride, though. So, like, don't try and derail any of that kind of stuff, because if you're gonna go on a ghost tour, you should, you know, like I said, enjoy the ride.

Travis: And if you're not enjoying it, just... just say, like, "Oh, I just got a call on my phone, I gotta go."

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Right? Don't, like, make it your mission to entertain yourself at their expense.

Um, let's see. Um... GoatDragon asks:

"If you're someone who doesn't believe in ghosts, but you want to go along because you think it'll be fun, how do you do that without offending the ones who believe in the ghosts?"

I think that there is, uh— you don't have to be completely bought in to be... so, skepticism, what we think of as skepticism now is not the original, like, intention of skepticism. Of this, like, "I am interested in this, I want to investigate this. I'm looking for, you know, whatever."

And not like, "I doubt it!" Right? So, you can go in and be like, "I'm excited to see... anything. Let's see if it happens." Right? Like, "I don't

know!" Right? I don't think you have to be completely bought in to be in the same energy space as somebody else. You know what I mean?

Teresa: Sure, yeah, yeah.

Travis: [crosstalk] the same emotional thought space. You just have to make sure you're all, like, on the same goal. Like you said, what's the end goal, right?

Teresa: Yeah. And if nothing else, if you can't say something nice, don't say anything at all. Just walk around with 'em.

Travis: Yeah. And just in general, just don't refer to anything as, like, "This is dumb!" Or, like, "Ugh, you guys are so silly."

Teresa: I mean, you wouldn't— if you were, say, into the— like, a card game like Magic Quest or something, right?

Travis: Magic the Gathering. Magic Quest is the thing at, uh...

Teresa: Great Wolf Lodge.

Travis: Great Wolf Lodge.

Teresa: Any— any— even that!

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: If you're into Magic Quest—

Travis: And why wouldn't you be? It's amazing.

Teresa: —and someone came over and said, "Why are you doing this? This is a dumb game." You would be upset, right?

Travis: Right.

Teresa: So—

Travis: If somebody did that about anything— "Pottery? Dumb!"
[laughs]

Teresa: "Yeah, that's so dumb!" Don't— don't—

Travis: "What, are you cooking? Gross!"

Teresa: —do that to anybody else.

Travis: Yeah. Okay, so that's gonna do it for us. Thank you so much! Uh, if you enjoyed this episode and you wanna share it with anybody, let us know. Um, if you have ideas for topics, you can let us know that, too. Oh! Teresa and I have a Great British Bake-Off watch-along podcast called *Bake On*, which you can find just about anywhere. I think it is wonderfully pleasant.

Teresa: Aww.

Travis: Um, thank you to everybody who checked out last week's episode of us and *Tights and Fights* talking about pro wrestling etiquette. Go check out all the other amazing shows on Maximumfun.org. Let's see. 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. Thank you to Kayla M. Wasil for our Twitter thumbnail art, @shmannerstcast is where we got these excellent questions for this episode. And thank you to Bruja Betty Pinup Photography for the cover picture of our fan-run Facebook group, *Shmanners* Fanners. Go ahead and join that group if you love to give and get excellent advice from other fans! We are always taking topics. We are always taking idioms. We are always taking hellos to our researcher Alex. Thank you, Alex!

Travis: Thank you, Alex!

Teresa: For all the research for this episode. And you can, uh, send those to shmannerstcast@gmail.com.

Travis: And thank you as well to our editor, Rachel who helps us make the show. Uh, and thank you to you, for listening! Uh, 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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