

Shmanners 307: Croquet

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[theme music plays]

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

Teresa: And I'm your wife host, Teresa Mc Elroy.

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 all right!

Travis: Yeah?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Did you have a good nap?

Teresa: I did, and then I had some sugar.

Travis: [gasps]

Teresa: From our candy baskets. Easter baskets! [imitates guitar riff]

Travis: Well, not *our* candy baskets.

Teresa: [laughing]

Travis: You mean the children's candy baskets.

Teresa: Uh... yes.

Travis: Can I tell you? The Easter bunny didn't bring us baskets this year.

Teresa: [disappointedly] I know.

Travis: Only for the kids.

Teresa: Only for the children. So, we just have to steal their candy.

Travis: What a turd! Turning us into felons!

Teresa: [giggles]

Travis: Easter bunny!

Teresa: But I just had some candy, and so now I'm ready. I'm ready to talk about croquet!

Travis: How are those two things, or is it just the energy level? It sounds like—

Teresa: It's just the energy level!

Travis: So, are we going to talk about how in croquet, it's traditionally played with flamingos and hedgehogs?

Teresa: [giggles]

Travis: Get it?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: 'Cause it's from Alice.

Teresa: Yeah... no, you don't play it like that.

Travis: What!? Is croquet the one with wickets?

Teresa: [giggles] Sticky wickets?

Travis: Is it the one with sticky wickets?

Teresa: [laughs] Yes.

Travis: Or is w— wait... wickets—

Teresa: It is. It *is* the one with wickets.

Travis: Are there also wickets in, uh... cricket? I don't know anything, just know.

Teresa: No. Uh-uh. No, there aren't.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Cricket's like baseball, except you don't run around a base. You run back and forth, and back and forth, right?

Travis: You know this is nothing, but, um—

Teresa: [laughing]

Travis: ... if you think about croquet and cricket, it's not that far, spelling-wise.

Teresa: [continues laughing] Spelling-wise?

Travis: I mean, spelling is why— I'm saying you can pronounce croquet like cro-cket... and cricket?

Teresa: Yeah, okay.

Travis: That— and it would be wrong. Or you could say, like, cri-quet.

Teresa: Cri-quet.

Travis: You know? Anyways, hey!

Teresa: [giggles]

Travis: Let's focus up, Teresa. You're too silly.

Teresa: Have you ever played cricket?

Travis: Croquet?

Teresa: [through laughter] Croquet? Oh, no! [bursts out laughing loudly] Whoops!

Travis: [sighs] Focus up, honey! No. I— wait, have I? Yeah! Yeah!

Teresa: Yeah?

Travis: I have.

Teresa: We had a set when I was a kid. We had a set at home. Well, you know what? There used to be a time when you would give children wooden mallets... and *that* was my childhood. [soft laugh]

Travis: You're not supposed to give kids wooden mallets anymore?

Teresa: [through laughter] No.

Travis: I have to go. I'll be right back.

Teresa: [laughing]

Travis: Bebe! Put it down! Um, no, I've definitely played because, uh, you know? You go to functions, and there's things, it's like when—

Teresa: Most certainly.

Travis: We need stuff for the kids to do while the parents barbeque, or hang out, or whatever.

Teresa: Nowadays, it is bean bag toss.

Travis: Oh, yeah. Everybody's cornholing left and right.

Teresa: Yeah. [soft laugh] But it used to—

Travis: Or it's also called Baggos.

Teresa: [giggling] Oh, yes.

Travis: Are you giggling at cornholing?

Teresa: [through laugh] Yes.

Travis: Grow up! Come on, this is a show for adults!

Teresa: I think we also, um, used to play badminton. Which is another lawn game, right?

Travis: Yeah. Lawn darts was a thing when I was a little kid.

Teresa: We didn't play lawn darts.

Travis: Oh, really? When I was a little kid that was one. Uh, ladder ball is one of my favorites.

Teresa: Oh, yeah. That's another outdoor game.

Travis: I don't know. Is that as commonly known? Ladder ball?

Teresa: I don't know. I'm not sure.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: But croquet is *very* commonly known. It's actually very old.

Travis: I'm not surprised by that. Big wooden mallet. Hit through some metal U's, upside down. I get it.

Teresa: Yeah. Totally. Um, so we don't exactly know— spoiler. We don't exactly know where it came from.

Travis: I invented it.

Teresa: [giggles]

Travis: If no one else is claiming it. I'm taking it.

Teresa: It's been around for hundreds of years. But, like I said, it was just kind of like, passed down. People knew about it.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: It's gone from many different names. But the oldest document to mention the word, croquet, was a set of rules written by a man named Isaac Spratt in November of 1856.

Travis: That's a good old 1856 name.

Teresa: Sure is.

Travis: "My name is Spratt, and I'm the croquet man!"

Teresa: Um, he was a British toymaker who wrote pamphlets detailing how to play all sorts of classic games, particularly croquet and badminton.

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: Um, and he was actually quite influential in the popularity of both games. I mean, that makes sense. If you're a toymaker and you want people to play with your toys, you had better explain the rules, right?

Travis: That's true. That is true.

Teresa: Um, and so, croquet's actual origins are not so cut and dry. So, um, it's been known as "Ground billiards?"

Travis: That's not as catchy.

Teresa: It's not. It's a— ground billiards is a classification of games. You know, golf is considered a ground billiard game.

Travis: Obviously, yeah. Totally.

Teresa: I mean, you take a stick, and you hit a ball.

Travis: I mean, but yeah, that's true of baseball too. You're saying you got to hit on the ground.

Teresa: I would say— I would say that baseball might be a ground billiards game.

Travis: No, that's an air billiards.

Teresa: Air billiards. [chuckles]

Travis: And then, polo— water polo is water billiards. But it's the fire nation you have to watch out for. [laughs softly]

Teresa: Well, even hockey?

Travis: I didn't get anything on the "fire nation" reference?

Teresa: Oh, sorry. I wasn't listening. Try again.

Travis: [sighs deeply, then speaks softly] It's the fire nation you go to watch out for.

Teresa: [pause] But what are we watching out for?

Travis: 'Cause I was saying, "You got *air* billiards, and *ground* billiards, and *water* billiards, and it's the fire..."

Teresa: Oh! Sorry.

Travis: Ohh, no! It's not worth it!

Teresa: [giggling] So, then field hockey and hockey—

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: ... are also considered ground billiards?

Travis: Hockey is ice billiards. Don't try to trick me.

Teresa: Ice is on the ground.

Travis: Not all the time. Sometimes it's on a lake.

Teresa: But it is a firm surface when it's ice.

Travis: But that doesn't make it ground.

Teresa: It is on the ground. What would you call it?

Travis: Ice!

Teresa: [laughs lightly] You would say it was on the water?

Travis: If I said ice hockey, then ground hockey, I think you would think I was talking about two different things.

Teresa: No, I wouldn't 'cause ice is firm. It's firm.

Travis: Oh, this is going to be the first time ever we're going to put a poll up?

Teresa: [giggling]

Travis: We're going to put a poll up to talk about this. If I say, "Hockey, is it ice, ground, or water?" This is important to me all of the sudden.

Teresa: Anyway, basically, if you hand a European a ball and a stick, they're going to be happy *all* afternoon, okay?

Travis: That's true.

Teresa: All the different ways that you can play with it.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: In the book, *Queen of Games, History of Croquet*, author Nicky Smith, presents two possible theories. First theory, is that croquet was introduced in Britain from France during the reign of Charles the Second.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Back then it was called "pall mall".

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: If you have been watching *Bridgerton*.

Travis: I haven't.

Teresa: You haven't. I mean, neither have I, but I do—

Travis: If I had been, oh boy.

Teresa: But I do have social media, and so I have seen epcerpt— excerpts of the cast of *Bridgerton* playing pall mall.

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: And it looks super fun.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: I mean, it basically is “no rules croquet.”

Travis: Oh, like Calvin Ball?

Teresa: Uh, n—

Travis: That’s really what Calvin Ball— well, Calvin Ball, you make up the rules as you go, but—

Teresa: I mean, you still want to score points, and the way that you score points is going through the wickets. But—

Travis: Okay. So, there’s, like, that one rule.

Teresa: There’s that one rule.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Which is kind of like, uh, so— think of pall mall like playing pool, actually, on the ground, right?

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Um, where croquet has a specific number of wickets, and specific places that you have to hit in a specific order.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: So, it is written that pall mall— Uh, *it is written*. [laughing]

Travis: It is then *so*, mote it be.

Teresa: The rules published in Thomas Blount’s *Glossographia*—

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: ... in 1656, "is a game wherein, a round ball with a mallet struck through a high arch of iron standing at either end of an alley. Which he can then do in the"—

Travis: Come on! [laughs] There are so many words in there that don't need to be there. "Hit ball through hoop."

Teresa: "Which he can do with the fewest blows, or the number agreed on wins."

Travis: Was he getting paid by the letter?

Teresa: I don't know.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: The original version of that game was French and was called "Jeu de mail". And then was borrowed the Italian word "Palam agio".

Travis: [hesitantly] Jeu de mail? Wait, is that—

Teresa: Yeah, jeu de mail.

Travis: But that's not like something juice, right? That's a different "jus", right?

Teresa: [laughs lightly] Yes.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: And... where was I? And the Italian, palam agio, which translates to ball mallet.

Travis: Well, there you go, huh?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: That's what it says on the tin.

Teresa: So, the second theory is that the game was introduced from France to Scotland under Mary Queen of Scots, who lived in France until she ascended the throne. And then it made its way to south England where it became known as pall mall.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: We talked about this— have we talked about why a mall is called a mall? Like, the national mall?

Travis: Oh, no. I thought you— it's hard. Homophones and homonyms are hard. `Cause you said mall, and I heard M-A-U-L. Maul.

Teresa: Oh! No.

Travis: Like the weapon. But you said—

Teresa: M-A- all.

Travis: A mall. A maul.

Teresa: [stresses enunciation] P-a-ll m-a-ll.

Travis: Why's it called a mall?

Teresa: [laughs] Um, so, probably, um, it was because the parks, right? That are in places like the National Mall.

Travis: Uh-huh.

Teresa: Um, it was all about, like, being *seen* on the lawn.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: And that's where the courtiers would go to play. Um, and even Charles the Second, kind of, um... commandeered that the Mall of St. James' Park and just said, "This is mine now,—"

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: "... so I can play croquet."

Travis: Cool.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: And it's where you go to see them *all*. Or—

Teresa: Oh! [laughs loudly]

Travis: No. I don't know. That's nothing, but wouldn't it be cool if that was the reason?

Teresa: That would be cool.

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: Okay. So, that was the first theory. Sorry. The second theory, about how croquet became so popular, says that the rules of the modern game of croquet arrived from Ireland.

Travis: Uh-huh.

Teresa: Sometime in the 1850s.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Back then a similar game to croquet was being played on the beaches in Brittany, a region of France. Uh, that would have made sense that the French game made it all the way to the Irish Isles.

Travis: Got it.

Teresa: Kind of like, across the way.

Travis: Leapfrogged. Yes.

Teresa: Yeah, right.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: And so, these beach games were, kind of, a mixture between croquet and bocce ball? You ever played bocce ball?

Travis: Yeah. Okay, I noticed that. I was just thinking about bocce ball. Yeah.

Teresa: Which feels more, to me, like a billiard game.

Travis: I was— Oh, my goodness! I was thinking the exact same thing. Get out of my brain.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: When I was like that's so much more, uh, beach billiards.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Let's call it what it is.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Not ground billiards, 'cause it's on the beach.

Teresa: Oh, but is not the beach the ground?

Travis: Oh, my goodness.

Teresa: [giggling]

Travis: Oh, my goodness. It's sand!

Teresa: Um, and the multi-ball yard game—

Travis: Are you messing with me now?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: I'm over here— I'm angry over here.

Teresa: [laughing]

Travis: Words mean things! Sand—

Teresa: I'm gonna say, "If you can walk on it, it's the ground."

Travis: Oh, my God!

Teresa: [laughing continues]

Travis: You know that's not true! 'Cause you can, like, walk on a bridge! Would you call a bridge the ground? [pause] Now you're gonna say yes to spite me.

Teresa: [laughing]

Travis: I see— I see that churlish look upon your face.

Teresa: While I'm walking on it. Yeah, sure.

Travis: You've decided that whatever I say now— oh, my god! I'm incensed!

Teresa: Um—

Travis: My brain! Flames!

Teresa: It was referred to as cluiche by the Irish.

Travis: I like that better.

Teresa: Which sounds a lot like croquet!

Travis: I like that better!

Teresa: I like it. And there are accounts of that game being played in the courts of Henry the Second and Louis the Fourteenth.

Travis: Hey, that was good. You did a good job.

Teresa: And so, you know, this is here, um, at the Bishops Palace Garden in Galway, in the genteel suburb of Kingston, was where it was officially spelled as croquet. The way that we spell it now.

Travis: So that we can have a place to use some of those pesky vowels when we play Scrabble.

Teresa: [giggles] Those extra letters.

Travis: Yeah. Hey, I can't wait for what that analyzation was about to explain to me—

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: But first, how about a thank you note for our sponsors?

[theme music plays]

Travis: Hey, Teresa.

Teresa: Hey, what?

Travis: What's *your* story worth?

Teresa: Ah, about a million bucks!

Travis: I'll take it. Now, I don't know if anyone else has experienced this yet, but I have. My— my grandmother who I have known all my life—

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: ... quite literally. Um, only recently, like, two years ago, I remember talking to her and she was, like, "Oh, yeah. This and this—" and started telling this story about this time she lived in Las Vegas that I had *never* heard before. I was like, "I have known you for 85 years."

Teresa: Is this Nonni?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Our Nonni?

Travis: Yeah. And I was like, "How am I just now hearing this?"

Teresa: How am *I* just now hearing this?

Travis: Right? This is what I'm saying! And so, with Storyworth, right? They will email your relative, whoever they might be, or w— whatever, and a thought-provoking question of your choice from a vast pool of possible questions.

Each unique prompt asks questions you've never thought of like, "What's some of the best advice your mother gave you?" or "If you were to do it all over again, what would you do differently?" Something like that, right?

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: And then they answer that, and after one year, Storyworth compiles all of those questions and stories, including photos, into a beautiful keepsake book the whole family can share for generations.

Teresa: Aw, it's nice to have something more than a cookbook, you know?

Travis: Isn't that? That's so amazing to me because, you know, we've got kids.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: And the idea of, like, I want them to understand these things or know these things and not just names on a page, but, like, stories and pictures and, like, have references for them. It's very important. So, give all the moms in your life, or whoever you want, a meaningful gift you'll both cherish for years. Storyworth.

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Teresa: *Shmanners* is also sponsored in part this week by... quip.

Travis: Quip.

Teresa: The other day you and I had a, like, quip-off at each other. We were actually brushing our teeth at the same time. Do you remember this?

Travis: Yeah, you thought it was a quip-off? I thought it was like a meet-quip.

Teresa: [laughing]

Travis: You know? I was, like, look at— we're doing it together!

Teresa: Look at that. And I commented on your new toothbrush because before you had a black toothbrush.

Travis: I still have that one. That's my travel toothbrush.

Teresa: That's your travel toothbrush, but now you have a rose-gold one like me!

Travis: Correct. 'Cause I think I might have stolen it from you when it came. It's not important. Don't worry about it!

Teresa: [laughing]

Travis: Yeah, we have matching toothbrushes! Ahh!

Teresa: I still have mine. I still have mine.

Travis: Oh, okay.

Teresa: These wonderful electric toothbrushes have timed sonic vibrations. They have a lightweight design. Bebe likes hers. She has a pink one.

Travis: That's right, even Bebe has one!

Teresa: And they have no wires or bulky charger to weigh you down. They have a multi-use travel cover—

Travis: That's right.

Teresa: ... that we love to take with us. Um, and you know they're stylish. They're affordable. The electric brushes start just at 25 dollars.

Travis: What a steal.

Teresa: And you can also get your toothpaste. You can get your brush heads. You can get— ah, they make the— these little floss clamshell things.

Travis: Which are really cool. They also make, like, gum and the toothpaste is my favorite. It's my favorite toothpaste.

Teresa: So, if you go to getquip.com/shmanners right now, you'll get your first refill, right? So, that's your brush heads and stuff, right?

Travis: Uh-huh.

Teresa: First refill free!

Travis: [gasps]

Teresa: So, 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.

Travis: We also want you to think about QuakerMaid Voodoo Dolls and Catnip Toys. Are you thinking about it now?

Teresa: I am.

Travis: Okay. You are? [pause] Okay. Keep your frenemies close and your voodoos closer, cause voodoo's better [through laughter] than prison.

Teresa: [giggling]

Travis: This is a jumbotron and that's one of the best, like, things I've ever heard. Um, and I'm looking at these things right now. They are very cute in a very weird way. But in a very cute way, I would say.

Teresa: Aw, yeah!

Travis: [simultaneously] Yeah.

Teresa: That one's reminiscent, I think, of a sock monkey.

Travis: Indeed! Ah, so, just google QuakerMaid. That's Q-U-A-K-E-R-M-A-I-D Voodoo Dolls and Cat Toys. You'll find it. And then you can order online because, as they have said here, "Voodoo is better than prison."

Teresa: Oh! Yeah. No, that's right.

[music plays]

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Speaker Two: Monday, April 25th.

Speaker One: We'll have exclusive Max Fun Drive gifts, awesome episodes, bonus content, and you know what else? You'll just have to tune in.

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Speaker Two: Don't miss it.

[music fades away]

[new upbeat music starts playing]

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[music and ad ends]

Travis: Okay. So—

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Oh, I did it again! You just inhaled.

Teresa: I just inhaled and you— you stifled me.

Travis: No, don't say that! [gasps] I was trying to propel you forward! Go on.

Teresa: Okay. Okay. Well, so, we have hit the 1860s and everybody loved croquet.

Travis: Croquet. It's blown up. It's all over. There's croquet over there. *You* get croquet. *You* get croquet. *You* get croquet!

Teresa: The Earl of Essex loved to throw very lavish croquet parties and, I mean, that makes— uh, I mean, that makes a ton of sense. What better way to show off your beautifully manicured English garden and lawn than croquet?

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: Um, by 1867, 65,000 copies of regulations and laws of croquet had been printed and distributed. And the pastime spread *all* through the anglophone countries. So, we've got Australia, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa, and the US, all digging croquet.

Travis: I just want to say I'm glad we started using the word "Rules" instead of the laws of croquet.

Teresa: [giggling]

Travis: 'Cause that feels like a much more severe thing, doesn't it?.

Teresa: It does. It does.

Travis: "Excuse me, did you just tap that ball? You have broken the laws of croquet! [chuckles] To croquet prison with you."

Teresa: Indeed. Um, one of the things I really love about croquet— I mean, not today. I mean, I like croquet but, like, historically, this was a game that ladies and their gentlemen could play together.

Travis: Oh, excellent.

Teresa: Instead of a segregated game, which happened a lot—

Travis: Oh, yeah.

Teresa: ... throughout thing— and, I mean, when I say segregated, I mean that the boys would play, and the— the dainty ladies had to sit on the side and sip tea and gossip. Right?

Travis: Indeed. Yes.

Teresa: Um, but croquet, it was acceptable for everyone to play together. Um, and it, you know, it's different from dancing, which was another thing that people were allowed to do together. So, it's just another thing that you can do with your friends.

Travis: We should, I think, this— I feel like I end up making this interjection more often than not when we speak about, uh, these more classical historical topics, but it should be noted here, inherently classist!

Teresa: Of course.

Travis: This idea of, like, one, the leisure time. That's right there.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Of, like, "We're going to have time to go stand around in a field and knock balls around." To have the lush gardens—

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: ... and lawns to be able to play this. Um, all that stuff. Inherently classist. And I'm just gonna throw it out, just based on gut, uh, probably racist. I'm not sure how, but there was probably a lot of, like, "Only whites allowed to play" kind of deal. Just wherever. This is what I'm betting, just my gut.

Teresa: Well, I mean, as in general, historically that seems to be a rule.

Travis: Yeah. Racism, very prevalent.

Teresa: Um, so, croquet developed a nemesis at this point, which we've already talked about. Go check out the "Tennis" episode.

Travis: Oh, okay.

Teresa: Croquet's nemesis became lawn tennis in the late 1870s. Um, I mean, when I say lawn tennis, I also mean badminton. Um, and so—

Travis: I noticed you didn't say ground tennis 'cause that would be confusing, wouldn't it?

Teresa: [brief chuckle] Ohh! Mmm.

Travis: Huffa, huffa, huffa, huffa, huffa.

Teresa: I got— I'm under your skin now.

Travis: Huffa, huffa, huffa, huffa.

Teresa: Um, and we talked about Wimbledon. The All England Club at Wimbledon was a croquet club before it became a tennis club.

Travis: Oh, right. Yeah, yeah.

Teresa: Yeah! And so, that happened with a lot of clubs. They started out with croquet then very, um— tennis, kind of, seemed like, snuck in there. And it's like, "Oh, let's play this game instead."

Travis: Well... listen, it's not surprising. Because when it comes right down to it, no matter how much you enjoy playing one or the other, I think it is undeniable which one is more exciting to watch. Right?

Teresa: Yes. But—

Travis: Like—

Teresa: ... more people can play croquet at a time.

Travis: But that's the point. But this is what I'm saying.

Teresa: So it makes a great party game.

Travis: It makes a great party game. But the idea of, like, having organized as, like, a sport to watch, it was never going to take off that way, right? Never!

Teresa: I suppose not. I suppose not. I mean, I've— if you haven't watched it, you should watch the clip. The pall mall from *Bridgerton*, like I suggested.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: It is quite fun to watch in that way. But I don't think—

Travis: But that's also, Teresa, a TV show.

Teresa: It's a TV show, so if you didn't have the— the cinematic lens—

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: ... probably wouldn't be very fun to watch. Um, okay. So, even though Wimbledon is no longer a croquet club—

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: ... there *is* a very famous croquet club at, uh, Cheltenham. Which is a small spa town about a two-hour train ride from London. And it is known as Cheltenham Spa. And it's been— I mean, it's been known for a long time, you know, for the waters, right?

Travis: Ah, yeah.

Teresa: In the 1700s, people went there to take the *waters*.

Travis: We need to go to somewhere and take some water!

Teresa: Yeah?

Travis: It won't do nothing, but I like water and I like artifice. And that's what those were.

Teresa: [giggling]

Travis: I like that idea!

Teresa: One pamphlet describes, uh, the Cheltenham waters as, "Unlike the mineral water you buy in bottles."

Travis: Uh-huh.

Teresa: "The Pittville Spa in Cheltenham has a very salty taste—"

Travis: Ooh!

Teresa: "... and not many people want more than one glass."

Travis: Okay. Is that— wait, is that—

Teresa: Well, isn't that—

Travis: ... a selling point?

Teresa: There's a health fallacy, right? That if it tastes bad it's better for you.

Travis: Oh, sure, sure. Yeah.

Teresa: And I'm certain that that plays into that.

Travis: Now you keep saying the name of this place. How is it spelled? 'Cause I'm betting it's one of those British things where there's way more consonants than you're saying.

Teresa: Yes. So, it is spelled C-H-E-L-T-E-N-H-A-M. If one were to say all of the letters, it looks like it should be Chel-ten-ham.

Travis: But it's—

Teresa: [pronounced] Chel-ten. Chel-tum!

Travis: Chel-til-tum. Ched-dle-ton. Chud-mm.

Teresa: Chel-tum. Chel—

Travis: Chel.

Teresa: ...- tum.

Travis: Che-del-tum.

Teresa: No. Take the middle out.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Chel-ten. No!

Travis: Chel-del-ten.

Teresa: [through laughter] No! Stop it! You're doing it to me!

Travis: Ah! Now I'm under your skin! Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!

Teresa: Chel.

Travis: Chel.

Teresa: [through laughter] Chel-tum.

Travis: Chel-tum.

Teresa: Chel-tun. Chel-tum!

Travis: Chel-tumm.

Teresa: Yes! The first time I said it was the best time. And now you're making me nervous.

Travis: Uh-huh. Yeah. Yeah, yeah.

Teresa: So, they have been holding a very popular, um, food and drink festival since 2008. And visitors today can enjoy the beauty of the scenery as well as horseracing, distilleries, leisurely picnics, the spa, and, of course, *croquet*.

Travis: Indeed.

Teresa: Cheltenham has ten full-sized croquet lawns.

Travis: Wow!

Teresa: Two half-sized lawns and a practice area for anyone hoping to try out the sport. They host multiple croquet championships including the World Championships in 2005. And the European Team Championship in 2009.

Here is a beautiful quote from their website. Which is Cheltenhamcroquet.org. "All variations of croquet: handicapped, advanced, golf, and short and one ball are played all year round. Lawns are available during the winter months for our hardier members. New members are also very welcome." I like it!

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Okay. So, um, if we're gonna go all *Bridgerton*. We're going to put on—

Travis: [loud inflection] Are we?

Teresa: ... regency regalia.

Travis: I didn't sign up for that.

Teresa: And learn how to play croquet!

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: All right. The full set is six mallets, six balls, two stakes—

Travis: Full eyes. Empty Hearts. What is it? Clear hearts—

Teresa: [laughs softly] ... nine wickets.

Travis: Dry eyes. Okay.

Teresa: So, the wi—

Travis: Wait, how many wickets?

Teresa: Nine.

Travis: Nine wickets.

Teresa: The wickets are the little— um, I have seen them both squared off and arched.

Travis: Oh, I prefer the arched. It's prettier.

Teresa: The little wire arch— arches.

Travis: Arch-en.

Teresa: [laughs] Little wire arches that you spoke into the ground. Um, but you also need the stakes, which is the beginning and the end of the croquet course.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: Um, so, normally played on a lawn that is 100 foot by 50 foot.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: You can scale it down, of course, but that would be a full-size croquet lawn. The two stakes are placed at either end. And then two wickets in a row—

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: ... are placed a— you know, a distance from it. I believe it's a mallet distance or, you know, a large step. And you get those two in a row, and then one wicket directly in the middle of the field. And then you take the remaining four and take them out to the sides to make a double diamond pattern.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Hopefully, that makes sense.

Travis: Yeah, there's something—

Teresa: To someone out there.

Travis: There is a little bit of "follow your heart" in there.

Teresa: [giggling]

Travis: But I think I understood it a little.

Teresa: Here, I have a diagram you may look at.

Travis: Oh, yeah! Okay. So, may I try a different way of explaining?

Teresa: Okay. Yes, do.

Travis: So, you have the starting stake, right? And then, two in a row. And then, you're going to put *two*, um, to the sides. And then, the next one in

the middle. And then, two more off to the sides. And then, two more in the middle.

Teresa: On opposing sides?

Travis: Yes. So, it goes, two in a row and then two, uh, far apart, and then one, and then two far apart, and then two in a row. Right?

Teresa: Right.

Travis: Cool.

Teresa: So, you play from one stake to the other, and then back again from where you started. So, the object is to get your ball that matches the color of *your* mallet through all of the wickets in the correct order.

Travis: Right.

Teresa: The first one to get back to the beginning wins.

Travis: It has a little bit of miniature golf-esque feel to it.

Teresa: A little bit, yeah. And, uh, there are certain, like, things that you can do. Every time you get your ball through a wicket you get to hit the ball again.

Travis: Right.

Teresa: So, that's called— that's a bonus. Right?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: If you hit another person's ball with your ball—

Travis: You get executed. You have broken the laws of croquet!

Teresa: No. You actually get [through chuckle] two bonuses.

Travis: Whoa! Okay.

Teresa: [soft laugh] Yeah. Um, but there are only so many bonuses you can take per turn without going through the wickets. So, if you hit someone's ball, then you get your two bonuses. Unless you go through the wicket again, you don't get any more bonuses even if you hit other people's balls.

Travis: Oh. Okay.

Teresa: There's lots of rules like that.

Travis: There's lots of laws.

Teresa: Lots of laws. Yeah. There are.

Travis: Okay. What happens if I hit the ball and it shatters into a million pieces?

Teresa: [through laughter] I think you lose.

Travis: Oh, man.

Teresa: 'Cause you want to get your ball back through all the wickets, and then to one stake, and then back through. 'Cause if you shatter your ball, then you definitely lose. You can't get through the wickets anymore. Let's see, anything else you should know? Oh, if you get your ball through the wicket, it doesn't count if it's just a little bit through the wicket.

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: It has to completely clear it.

Travis: Is that a sticky wicket? If you're inside of it?

Teresa: Oh, I don't know.

Travis: I need to look it up now.

Teresa: [laughs] Um, and there are, of course, lots of, um, house rules that you can impose on your croquet game. Some people, I am told, play a game called "Poison." Where once a person wins a game, the game turns up on its head. And instead of the object of getting through the wickets, the object is now to keep everyone else's balls [through laughter] from getting through the wickets.

Travis: Um, I have just discovered, thanks to, uh, the internet, at least according to Wikipedia, um, it comes from— or excuse me, from the Oxford Language Dictionary, it's from cricket, not from this.

Teresa: Oh!

Travis: And a sticky wicket is a pitch that has been drying after rain, and is difficult to bat on.

Teresa: Oh. The pitch being the field.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: So, ignore everything I've said about sticky wickets up to this point.

Teresa: [laughing] I mean, we did talk about how, um, seemingly close in cultural association cricket and croquet are.

Travis: I mean, it does have a ground billiards feel to it. It's like baseball on the ground.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: I'm— I am sorry for everyone who just got mad at me for, basically, reducing cricket to baseball on the ground.

Teresa: [giggling]

Travis: I am so sorry.

Teresa: So, if it would ever stop snowing in Ohio, maybe we can get a croquet set. [chuckles]

Travis: I'm not letting our kids play with mallets.

Teresa: [laughing loudly]

Travis: Do you remember earlier in the show? You said not to do that!

Teresa: [holding back laughter] I'm not saying the kids. I'm saying, us as adults.

Travis: So, they'd just have to watch us do it?

Teresa: No.

Travis: Watch this.

Teresa: We— we only have it during the adult times. [snickers]

Travis: So, after eight PM?

Teresa: [through laughter] Or during naptime. [continues laughing]

Travis: Ah, yeah. That's exact— hey, what are we going to do with our, if we're lucky, 70 minutes of free time? "Quick round of croquet, my love?" Quiet, quiet, quiet.

Teresa: Maybe they make mini croquet. You know how they have, like—

Travis: Just to put on the table?

Teresa: [through laughter] On the tabletop. Tabletop pool.

Travis: [imitates child] "Mommy! Daddy! What are you doing?" [normally] "Pretending like we're free!"

Teresa: [bursts out laughing loudly] Our children are wonderful.

Travis: They are.

Teresa: And I enjoy 99.9% of the time I spend with them.

Travis: That's true. That is true. Okay, so that's going to do it for us.

Teresa: [laughing]

Travis: Hey, real quick, before I forget, coming out next week is Max Fun Drive.

Teresa: Yeah!

Travis: Um, and so that is your chance to support the art and artist you love. You'll be hearing all about it, but I wanted to mention it now because our episodes coming on Friday, right? So, we won't have an episode out, until, what? Day five? Of the Max Fun Drive?

So, once all that fun starts, you can go to Maximumfun.org/join and consider becoming a supporter of *Shmanners* and any other show that you love. One more time, Maximumfun.org/join. And that starts on Monday. And make sure you're paying attention to the *Shmanners* Twitter and all that fun stuff. Uh, if you do become a new supporter, make sure you tweet at us, so we can say "Thank you."

Teresa: Absolutely. So, one of the fine ways that you can support us is by retweeting a link to our show!

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: So, that everybody can hear, and enjoy and, you know, come and be part of the Max Fun-fam.

Travis: Exactly. Uh, make sure you go over and check out our Merch store. We got a really cute *Shmanners* poster over there if you haven't seen it yet.

And 10% of all the Merch proceeds this month will go to the Transgender Law Center, which is pretty cool. That's Mcelroymerch.com to check out all the stuff we've got there. Also, my dad, Clint, has written a children's book called, *Goldies Guide to Grandchilding*. Comes out May 10th. You can preorder it now.

Teresa: That's my birthday.

Travis: I know.

Teresa: Happy birthday to *me*. Thanks, Clint.

Travis: You can preorder it now at linktr.ee/goldiesguide. That's L-I-N-K-T-R dot E-E/goldies guide, and it's Goldies with an I-E-S. What else, Teresa?

Teresa: Well, 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. That's @shmannerscast. Uh, thank you to Bruja Betty Pinup Photography for the cover picture of our our fan-run Facebook group, *Shmanners Fanners*.

If you love to give and get excellent advice from other fans, go ahead, and join that group today. Also, please continue sending in your topic suggestions, and your idiom suggestions to shmannersast@gmail.com. Alex reads every single email, and we look forward to doing another idiom show soon.

Travis: All right. Did we say, "Thank you, Alex"?

Teresa: Thank you, Alex!

Travis: Thank you, Rachel!

Teresa: Thank you, Rachel.

Travis: And thank you for listening. That's going to do it for us. Join us again next week.

Teresa: No RSVP required!

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

Teresa: Manners, *Shmanners*. Get it?

[theme music plays]

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