

Shmanners 341: Victorian Garden Hermits

Published January 27, 2023

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[theme music plays]

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

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

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

Teresa: It's extraordinary etiquette...

Travis: For ordinary occasions, baby! Heyyy.

Teresa: Heyyy.

Travis: How are you?

Teresa: I mean, we usually say hello.

Travis: Oh yeah. Hello, my dove.

Teresa: Hello, dear.

Travis: Okay. I was just trying to bring a different...

Teresa: I know you were.

Travis: ... kind of flavor. Energy. It is a Monday Morning. We don't normally record on Monday mornings, and...

Teresa: That's true. All true.

Travis: Just bringing that Monday morning heat. You know, everybody comes back to work fully recharged.

Teresa: [laughs] Ready for the day.

Travis: They've got all the energy and they're like "Yeah, let's do this!" You know when—it's been a while since I worked an office job, but what I remember is people would come running into the office like it was the announcer announcing the starting lineup for your Chicago Bulls. And we would all come in, and would rip through the paper banner, and the announcer would announce each one of us as we came in totally pumped, totally psyched to make all the sales... and stuff. I don't think I ever worked a sales job in an office, now that I think about it. Wait, is this all a dream?

Teresa: I think so. You know what? I was actually kind of hoping for a snow day, and I don't exactly know why, because I don't get the day off when there's a snow day. Like, I mean if—

Travis: Oh, we like having our kids home.

Teresa: It would be—I mean—[sighs] we like—

Travis: Sometimes. Yeah. I like the idea of hanging out with my kids.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: In practice? Hit or miss.

Teresa: [laughs] I've just had a whole weekend of hanging out with my kids and I needed a little break, but still. The anticipation of maybe getting a snow day. I mean, 'cause we had six to eight inches yesterday.

Travis: I think that it is a—

Teresa: This is severely dating this podcast. Let's continue.

Travis: I'm just saying that I think that that is—you're from—basically once you start school to, like, graduating whatever your highest level of education is, it's ingrained in you of like, "Oh, it's snowing! Oh, fingers crossed! Oh!"

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: And even as an adult you're like, "This doesn't benefit me at all, but... "

Teresa: [laughs] Unless there's, like, a snow emergency and everything's closed. Like, I do remember I went to, I mean, a heavily commuter college, right? And so there were a couple of years where we even got snow days off of college.

Travis: Yeah. It happened. It happened in Oklahoma, too.

Teresa: [crosstalk]

Travis: 'Cause we would have wind issues.

Teresa: Oh yeah.

Travis: The wind in Oklahoma occasionally would come sweeping down the plains.

Teresa: Can you believe it?

Travis: And it would cause serious damage. Big issues. It's not funny.

Teresa: And then when I worked at a community center they had to close whenever there was a level three. And I think that they even closed yesterday in a level two. I don't know. Anyway.

Travis: One time when I was working at Best Buy there was a snow emergency and I didn't know it until I showed up to work.

Teresa: Ahh!

Travis: And the manager was there. And the manager was like, "What are you doing here?"

And I was like, "What do you mean?"

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: And she was like, "Nobody was supposed to be here."

Teresa: [simultaneously] "My regularly scheduled shift."

Travis: And I was like, "Okay, I'll head home."

And then she said, "Well, the roads aren't safe, so just go ahead and work."

And I was like, "Oh, no!"

Teresa: Nooo, you did such a bad job.

Travis: It was the worst. Okay.

Teresa: Okay. Alright. We're gonna talk about... a very interesting cultural phenomenon.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Like we do.

Travis: I think I have, like, a loose idea of this thing.

Teresa: It is... Victorian garden hermits.

Travis: Okay. You throwing in the word there clicked it over to a different thing than I knew of, because I was thinking of when you just said Victorian hermits, where I was just like oh, is this like... you know, Emerson?

Teresa: No.

Travis: Like, going and living by the lake all by him—but this is like when you had a fancy estate, you would more or less hire a hermit to live... on your grounds.

Teresa: Well, they don't get paid. But you do—you do furnish the apartment, and you feed them.

Travis: You would have a live-in—or a live-out—hermit.

Teresa: Yeah. Yeah.

Travis: Is this why... oh, what's the hermitage? Who had that? Was that Andrew Jackson?

Teresa: Maybe?

Travis: I don't have my phone on me, I can't Google it!

Teresa: Oh no!

Travis: Okay. I paused. I got my phone.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: I'm gonna look up why... anyways, don't worry about it.

Teresa: I'm gonna continue talking about garden hermits. Also known as ornamental hermits were, like you said, people who were hired by rich landowners to live in the estate. It's kind of like the ultimate cottage core accessory [laughs] at the time.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Does that make sense?

Travis: Wow, okay. Now, listen. Listen. There is a... underlying problem here.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Obviously classism.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Uh, and... quite literal objectification of a human being.

Teresa: Indeed.

Travis: Where you're like—it's like having a garden gnome, but it's a living human person going around! So there is obviously a lot of problematic stuff going on here that is somebody today was like, "Well, here's what I'm gonna do," I'd be like "No! Why would you do that! No!" Right? It's like if somebody was like, "Well, it's like I have a guest house and they're gonna live in it. [wheezes] But instead, they're a decoration."

No! But the idea of it at the time was not seen that way, correct?

Teresa: No, it was not. I would say that this is in modern terms—I would like to think of it more as like a... uh, like a historical reenactor would be, like—like we used to have—in my hometown we had a heritage days festival, right? Because we had several log cabins throughout the Dayton area all kind of, like—they were trucked in and put in the same little, um—little park.

Travis: Yes, I have been there.

Teresa: Yes. And as a Girl Scout, we often volunteered to put on historical dress and stay in a specific, like, area, right? And do chores, do historical chores. So, like, there—we would have to, like—I had to peel apples, and I had to make, like, corn husk dolls and, like, talk to people about what I was doing. And, I mean, I wasn't—I was a Girl Scout so I wasn't like a professional, like, historical reenactor. But, like—

Travis: But someday your dreams would come true. Wait, so—

Teresa: It feels to be a little bit like that. Because this is kind of what these hermits were expected to do.

Travis: Were they actors? Or I mean—

Teresa: No, they were people.

Travis: No, I understand that. What I mean is like, were they playing the role of this hermit...

Teresa: A little bit.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: A little bit.

Travis: Because my assumption was that they were unhoused people, and it was a very classist, like, taking advantage of thing. But if—

Teresa: I mean, it didn't have to be. Some people kind of, like, would use—like, you know how, um... would use, like, your youngest brother or whatever, who's never going to inherit the estate, right? Instead of kind of like just letting him loose in the world, you say, "Hey. I have this hermitage on the estate. How about you go and live there? You can do what you like. Read books. I'll feed you. And just kind of, like, stay out of trouble."

Travis: Oh, okay. Okay.

Teresa: Yeah. So it—it certainly could have been an unhoused person where they were like, "I have the job for you. Come with me!" Right? Like that. But it also could have been just a—like a guest house almost.

Travis: Okay. So how did this—and by the way, I looked it up. Andrew Jackson's place is called the Hermitage. Not based off of this, but just like a place to be away from everybody.

Teresa: Yeah. It's a secluded residence within the estate.

Travis: Yeah. I guess that that's the thing. Is, like, I guess when you say hermitage, my mind goes to, like, a hut. Right? Somewhere that's not very nice.

Teresa: [simultaneously] It could be, but it doesn't have to be.

Travis: But it could be—as you were saying, it could be like a guest house.

Teresa: Exactly, exactly. So if you were, like, well-to-do in the 1800's, you were gonna try and, like, flex a little bit.

Travis: Sure, yeah.

Teresa: So you have a bunch of land, you have these beautiful—some of them might be ornamental gardens. Some of them might just be, like, wooded areas. You know, they have—

Travis: But they weren't, like, functional, like, vegetable gardens or whatever, right?

Teresa: Some places would have that, absolutely.

Travis: But that's not what you would have in your, like, "[posh voice] Go out—step out on the veranda and look upon my tomatoes," right?

Teresa: Well, that would be kind of like behind the house, near the servants' areas.

Travis: Right. 'cause otherwise you're having flowers, and mazes, and hedgerows.

Teresa: Yes, certainly, yes, yes. And that was close—

Travis: And weird sundials and sculptures of... babies in diapers with bows.

Teresa: So that would be close to the main house, right? But you had all of this land that could be used for, like, hunting I suppose. But also you wanted to kind of, like, encourage people to go horseback riding through it or, like, walks in the woods and things like that, right? And one of the ways—

Travis: I think we need to do—we need to do a whole episode on, like, what an estate actually looks like. Because I think... people probably got the start of the feeling of it from, like, *Downton Abbey* and stuff. But when I, like, surface level think of an estate, I'm like "It's a big house with land." But there's so much more to it than that.

Teresa: Absolutely.

Travis: Where you're, like, managing the entire surrounding area, and the people who live on it and, like, all of this stuff.

Teresa: I mean, you definitely had, like, a groundskeeper, and usually a gamekeeper if it was big enough. But you would build, like, grottoes and different buildings and [crosstalk] things and like—

Travis: [simultaneously] Just like a Playboy mansion.

Teresa: [laughs quietly] I guess. I guess so.

Travis: It's an estate. I mean, it is.

Teresa: It is.

Travis: If you think about it.

Teresa: It is. Um, and so you might have some, like, folksy buildings. I mean, we hear about—you've heard about Marie Antoinette's, uh...

Travis: The little toy farm, basically.

Teresa: Little toy farm.

Travis: I say "toy" but I mean, miniature that you could live in.

Teresa: It was full size.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: In the way of like, it was the idealized kind of, like, pastoral—you had, like, a little hen house, and stable.

Travis: it's like if you went to a petting zoo.

Teresa: Yeah!

Travis: Kind of thing. And they had, like, the little buildings and, like, "[goofy voice?] That's the barn that the sheep—" but it's all, like, half scale, you know what I mean? That kind of deal. It wasn't full size.

Teresa: No.

Travis: No.

Teresa: I mean it wasn't industrial size.

Travis: But it's so wild, man. There—once again, we talk about all the time, but *Supersizers Go*, they do an episode of it. And just to picture, like, all of the frippery and finery and stuff that they were dripping in, and then sitting there surrounded by sheep and cows and having the fanciest tea next to, like, a hay bale.

Teresa: I know. That's so funny.

Travis: And, like, I don't think that... I don't think that they were going for the irony of the juxtaposition, but it is. So it's so—

Teresa: No, they were going for the novelty.

Travis: Right. But you look at it and you're just like, "Wow! That's the most out-of-touch thing I've ever seen."

Teresa: So landowners would hire people to live in these buildings and kind of add to the ambience. Ambiance, excuse me. And—

Travis: "[exaggerated southern accent] Ambiance." That's how I say it.

Teresa: And, um, so, you know. Everyone—

Travis: I think it's pronounced ambulance. [laughs quietly]

Teresa: Everyone wanted to have their own hermit to show that they could afford, you know, supporting another person.

Travis: But somebody had to get the first hermit, right?

Teresa: Somebody did.

Travis: Somebody had to do this for the first time, and then somebody was like, "Well. I've gotta get myself a hermit."

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: Hermit the Frog.

Teresa: So there's a professor, Gordon Campbell, who's a professor of Renaissance studies at the University of Leicester. Or is it Lister?

Travis: I honestly don't know.

Teresa: It looks like Worcestershire, but that's not it. [laughs]

Travis: No. Well, you see honey, because [crosstalk]—

Teresa: I think it's Lister.

Travis: Because England is such an old country, they have all these extra letters lying around.

Teresa: They do, they just put 'em anywhere.

Travis: So they gotta put it into all the names of places. 'Cause they're just left over from a different time.

Teresa: And his book is *The Hermit In the Garden: From Imperial Rome to Ornamental Gnome*.

Travis: Oh, I get it.

Teresa: Yeah. And so this was a trendy practice in England at this time, but it goes all the way back to Rome. Roman Emperor Hadrian had a villa,

complete with a small lake and a structure that was just big enough for one person to comfortably live in. And this was one of the things where, like, you could—it was a big flex, wasn't it? You could support someone who was just kind of there to putter around, right?

Travis: I mean, even today, right? Imagine if one of your friends was like, "Yes, we just bought a house. And it had a separate guest house in the back." Like, without having to know anything else about the property you're like, "Oh, okay!"

Teresa: "Oh, huh!"

Travis: "Alright."

Teresa: And so we've found these ruins of this early hermitage in the 16th century. And so Pope Pious IV decided he was cool enough to build one himself. And, I mean, at this point the popes were, like, rolling in cash, right? Because—

Travis: Unlike now, where they're so poor.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: So, so poor.

Teresa: So he take the early Roman inspiration and build a small cottage. A little villa in Vatican City with access to woods nearby. And so originally, at this point, they were supposed to be religious devotees, right? So someone who would come to, like, quietly reflect on their faith and get away from everything.

Travis: So, like, no partying.

Teresa: No partying. It was like the cloister without the actual cloister, right? So it was just one person.

Travis: It gave you a place to study where you didn't have to worry about paying, you know, rent and mortgage or whatever. You could just be there and chill out, away from the temptations and distractions of the world.

Teresa: This is why in lots of places, um, I read about one in York where the hermitage is attached to a church, right? And it's like a one room kind of stick-on to a church, and it will have, like, a table and chairs and bed. And some of them even have, like, peepholes into the church, so they can listen and see the services going on.

Travis: Hmm, sneaky! Sneaky worship!

Teresa: It's not really hidden. But, like—

Travis: A sneaky worship!

Teresa: Everybody knows you're there. But, like, there's a guy—

Travis: "[creepy voice?] Hi, everybody! It's me! I'm praying in here! Don't look at me! Hee hee hee!"

Teresa: In the clip that I saw, there was a guy in the 70's who had been there since, like... for, like, 30 years.

Travis: [simultaneously] 200 year—oh, okay.

Teresa: Had been there, just lived in the one room. And he had, like, an outhouse across the parking lot or whatever.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Interesting.

Travis: I have so many more questions. But first... how about a thank you note to our sponsors?

[theme music plays]

Travis: This week we are sponsored by Zola. As fun to use as it is to say. You know, Teresa, I would marry you all over again.

Teresa: Aww, yeah?

Travis: Yeah, but I don't think I'm allowed to without going through a divorce first, and that seems like so much work.

Teresa: We could have a vow renewal.

Travis: Yeah, but that's not the same. Do you still get as many presents for that?

Teresa: I don't know.

Travis: Well, if people don't bring a present, they don't get in. That's my new rule.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: You know when people are like, "No presents necessary." Mine's gonna be like, "Presents 100% necessary."

Teresa: It's your ticket in.

Travis: It's how you get in, baby! And in fact, even if you weren't invited, show up with a present? Come on in!

Teresa: [laughs loudly]

Travis: You know what I mean? But here's the thing. That's overly complicated. What I have just built in, and a wild precedent to set. But with Zola you can make your special day easy as pie. Pie is very difficult. I don't know why—I wouldn't want to make it. Anyways...

Teresa: [wheeze-laughs]

Travis: Yeah. It's getting away from me don't worry about it.

Teresa: [through laughter] It is.

Travis: Zola's free planning tools—

Teresa: [through laughter] It's rolling away from you.

Travis: Yes. But with Zola's free planning tools, your special day won't get away from you. They're there for you on your special day. And they show you where to start, they help planning every step of the way. They also have venues and vendors, save-the-dates and invites, free wedding websites, and an amazing registry, all designed by wedding experts for couples like you.

Teresa: It's a one-stop shop.

Travis: There you go. The Zola community is your place to share, celebrate, and vent. Everybody needs that. With other engaged couples who know exactly what you're going through. And if you need expert help, there's Team Z, which is Zola's wedding advisors, ready to answer your questions.

So, let me tell you right there. All of this is worth it. As someone who went through—we did not at the time use Zola. We had to plan everything ourselves. And... I would say about half of the time, we defaulted to, like, "I don't know, man! That one." [laughs]

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: And that's—[wheezes] that maybe wasn't the best way.

Teresa: Well, but there were also things where, like, "I don't wanna plan that. Let's just not do it." [laughs]

Travis: Yeah. "It's fine. We'll just—everybody go to McDonald's before you come. Don't come hungry."

Teresa: That's not what happened.

Travis: That's not what happened. So from just engaged to the only thing left to do is say "I do," Zola is here for all the days along the way. Just go to Zola, Z-O-L-A, zola.com/shmanners. That's zola.com/shmanners.

We also want to tell you about *Baddy Breakdowns*. It's a podcast. Have you ever heard of those before? So it's like—it's like internet radio?

Teresa: [simultaneously] I have. I have heard of those.

Travis: You know about this? Okay.

Teresa: [simultaneously] Yeah. On demand.

Travis: Do you like video games? Do you like hanging out and having fun with two baddies? [pause] Yes.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Right? To both of those. I enjoy that. Then check out the new podcast *Baddy Breakdowns*. Join Bridget and Maddie as they break down games like the hit dating game *Dream Daddy*, the new shooter *High on Life*, *Doki Doki Literature Club*, and more! So make sure you check that out. It's *Baddy Breakdowns*, spells just like it sounds. B-A-D-D-Y. Breakdowns, all one word. Find it in your podcatcher. New episodes every other Sunday, so make sure you check that out.

[music plays]

Speaker 1: Hey. Let us guess. You love books, but wish you had more time to read.

Speaker 2: Or maybe you used to read a lot, but life has gotten in the way. Kids, grad school, you name it.

Speaker 1: Maybe you don't know where to start, and bookish social media is overwhelming. How do people on TikTok read so many books?

Speaker 2: Oh my god, I don't know! And maybe you've been reading the same book for six months, and now it's permanently attached to your bedside table.

Speaker 1: Maybe you don't even know what you like to read anymore.

Speaker 2: We're *Reading Glasses*, and don't worry. We got you.

Speaker 1: We'll get you back into reading, and help you enjoy books again.

Speaker 2: *Reading Glasses*: every week on Maximum Fun.

[music and ad end]

[music plays]

Tom: Which animal has the most bones?

Caroline: Why isn't Pluto a planet?

Emma: Why are bees electrically charged?

Tom: Let's find out together! On our show, *Let's Learn Everything*, where we learn anything and everything interesting.

Caroline: My name's Caroline, and I studied biodiversity and conservation.

Tom: My name's Tom, and I studied computer science and cognitive [indistinct mumbling].

Caroline: Hmm, did you?

[both laugh]

Emma: And my name's Emma, and I studied stem cells and regenerative medicine.

Tom: On our show, we do as much research as you would for a class, but we don't get in trouble for making each other laugh.

Emma: And we get to say f—[censor bleep]!"

[all laugh]

Tom: Maybe—maybe not in the trailer. [wheezes]

Caroline: Subscribe to *Let's Learn Everything*, every other Thursday on Maximum Fun.

[music and ad end]

Travis: Okay. So, the question that keeps popping up in my mind...

Teresa: Sure.

Travis: Did they also have any, like, specific duties? Like, you're there, you get this thing. Also... clean up... you know, the yard, or walk the dogs, or make sure nobody breaks into the house.

Teresa: Um, it depends. It was more about kind of like, uh, a living tableau, right?

Travis: Oh, okay.

Teresa: So whatever kind of made sense for the person to be doing, they could do. Like walking dogs, ehh, I mean, but if they had dogs you could walk those dogs. You weren't really supposed to, like, go into town to break the magic of the thing, right?

Travis: So this would be like if you let a poet use your hermitage, right?

Teresa: Right.

Travis: So they could write. You would want them to be sitting outside, lounging, writing.

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: So that as your guests walk by there, they'll be like, "Oh! How splendid. Look at it. The artist in nature. Creating—" like if it was a painter you would want them painting, right?

Teresa: Right, right.

Travis: So you want these people... it's like "Hey, here's a free place to live, and I need you to be visible." Like a blacksmith at a Renaissance fair, right? Like, you can sell your stuff here, but we also want you to be actively blacksmithing so people can watch you blacksmith.

Teresa: Sure, yeah, yeah.

Travis: Okay. Okay.

Teresa: Yeah, a lot like that. A lot like that. Um, and so there would be... uh, this time period was heavily inspired by classical influences of Greco-Roman culture and things like that, so there would be fountains, and temples, and circular walking paths, and long carriage drives, and they would all kind of, like... you know, like, um... it's like when you... [laughs] when you ride the train at an amusement park and they have little, like... like, maybe an Old West village set up and there's, like, cardboard cutouts and stuff.

Travis: Oh, sure. "This is what the fort would've looked like." Look at them! It's—or as they do on the Jungle Cruise. "Look at this rhino trying to kill this man. Ha, ha, ha. Take pictures."

Teresa: And that's what you were supposed to do, right? So this was a way to kind of, like... [sighs heavily] show off—show off your vibe, and entertain people.

Travis: I mean, listen. I don't know if this is a universal experience, but it is my experience. Whenever I go on a walk through the woods or a walk somewhere, you're hoping to find something weird or cool or whatever, right?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: It's like, anybody who goes... well, once again, don't know if this is universal. But when I go to a city I've never been to before, I look it up on Atlas Obscura to see if there's, like, weird stuff to check out. So the idea of, like, "Come walk with me through my estate. Oh, what's that over there? That's the temple." Right? Then there's stuff to see, right?

Teresa: And these people were often encouraged not to just dress like normal people, right? They were encouraged to dress as druids, because that was—

Travis: 'Scuse?

Teresa: —hip.

Travis: 'Scu—so—wait. Everybody? No matter what—

Teresa: No, no, no. No, no, no.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: The hermits.

Travis: The hermits. No, I get that. But I just like the idea of like, oh, but a druid—but I'm a musician. Like, yeah man, that's cool, play Dave Matthews. But I need you to dress like a druid, please.

Teresa: Right, yeah. So like long, flowing robes.

Travis: Big beards.

Teresa: Big beards. Like, sticks and leaves in your hair. Right?

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Some went so far as to really embody the role by not bathing, or trimming their nails, or wearing shoes.

Travis: Now, some of those might be like, "Ah, an excuse to do a thing I already want to do."

Teresa: [laughs] Maybe? Maybe.

Travis: See, I would've gone full blown, like, stag skull mask, you know? With the antlers and stuff. If somebody wants to come watch me do my thing, then they're gonna have to deal with the full Travis.

Teresa: Okay!

Travis: You know what I mean? Like, "Oh yeah? But you're gonna be real creeped out while I sit here and record a podcast." 'Cause that's would I would be—I mean, let's be honest. I don't have any other... marketable skills. Maybe big bread?

Teresa: Maybe. I mean, that was one of the things that they were encouraged to do. Maybe, uh, dispense sage advice, right? And like you said earlier, recite poems, or write poems if they're a poet. Play music, if that's what they can do. Um, and, you know, just kind of be, like, authentically old-timey, of a time that didn't really exist.

Travis: But authen—yeah. Authentic, right? Of just like, "Just like it was the—in their day."

"What day?"

"Don't worry about it."

Teresa: No, don't worry about the date. Don't worry about it.

Travis: Man. The more we talk about it in a different time, I would've loved to be a hermit.

Teresa: You would have loved to be.

Travis: I would've loved this. Are you kidding me? "Oh, I hear somebody coming. Let me put on my weird stuff and the sticks in my hair. Oogie boogie boogie!" Anyways.

Teresa: It's an ultimate—it's like the ultimate—

Travis: [simultaneously] "I'll do a poem on you."

Teresa: —live-in performance, right?

Travis: Yeah!

Teresa: And it's kind of like—when I was researching and looking at this, it's kind of like, um, the blind old man in *Young Frankenstein*.

Travis: Ohh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Teresa: Right?

Travis: I was gonna make espresso.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Gene Hackman.

Teresa: Yeah. It's kind of like him.

Travis: I just think—because here's the thing. Let's be real, people. This wasn't a 24/7 job, right? It's like, "Oh, the—the owner of the estate has people coming over today. I'll do it then." Otherwise, you're just hanging out!

Teresa: Sure, but I mean, you weren't really supposed to, like, go anywhere or, like, invite people back or, like, have any kind of relationships. You were fully committed to the role.

Travis: Yeah, but if I've got my stag's head skull mask on and I'm doing sticks in my hair and not bathing, cool. Day off, clean up, I'm going into town.

Teresa: No. You don't get days off.

Travis: What?

Teresa: You could be fired for that. So you'd lose your—you'd lose your shelter.

Travis: Good luck. I have the only key.

Teresa: And your free food.

Travis: Oh.

Teresa: He's rich. He just knocks it down and builds a new one.

Travis: [gasps] What?!

Teresa: Maybe.

Travis: But I had so many good memories there!

Teresa: Well.

Travis: Of peepin' in the church.

Teresa: [laughs] You shouldn't—you shouldn't have left.

Travis: Okay! Now I'm starting to see that maybe this wouldn't be a good gig!

Teresa: Maybe not. And so there's, like... here's one. Here's an advertisement about somebody who wants a hermit.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: This was in Sir William Gell's *A Tour in the Lakes*, made in 1797.

Travis: What a long title.

Teresa: It reads: "The hermit is never to leave the place or hold conversation with anyone for seven years, during which he is neither to wash himself or cleanse himself in any way whatever, but is to let his hair and nails on both hands and feet grow as long as nature will permit them."

Travis: No thank you. But it wasn't a paid job or anything, right? It's was like you got room and board.

Teresa: I mean, it was room and board. So, like, you didn't have—you, quote, "didn't have to" do any work. You just kind of had to live there, and be part of the furniture.

Travis: Okay. On the plus side, right? If you are, say, a writer or an artist or musician, it does seem like a good deal in terms of you get the freedom to, like, just sit and do your work, right? Without having to worry about having a day job to pay for room and board.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: But... man, I don't think I could handle that restriction. Don't go anywhere or talk to anyone for seven years?! The impact that that would have on you.

Teresa: I know, right?

Travis: Oh boysie.

Teresa: And here's the thing, right? Um, paying for someone to live and eat and not really do anything gets kind of expensive.

Travis: Yeah!

Teresa: Right? Um, even if they are entertainment, if they, you know—one advertisement said that they just wanted someone to, like, sit at a desk all day and answer the door and, like, be kind of melancholy and macabre. Talk to people.

Travis: Now I could do that.

Teresa: When they come in.

Travis: Let me do that. "[gruff voice] Ohh... come in. No, don't sit there. That's where the ghost sits. [yells wordlessly] I'm just kidding. There's no ghost. Come on in."

Teresa: But you don't—what they—

Travis: I don't feel like you played along with me there.

Teresa: Sorry.

Travis: You didn't get scared by my ghost.

Teresa: I wasn't scared, sorry.

Travis: I weren't scared? But that was my best—

Teresa: No.

Travis: [sighs]

Teresa: What people quickly figured out is they could very easily replace this person with a mannequin. [wheeze-laughs]

Travis: Oh. So more and more like a train at an amusement park, huh?

Teresa: [through laughter] Yes.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Yes. They could very easily replace this person, or even—you don't even have to have a mannequin. You just have to, like, set up a kind of house, museum-style, that looks like you just missed the person, right?

Travis: Yeah!

Teresa: Where, like, you have a half—a half, like, worn-down candle, and someone's glasses are on the side table, and there's dirty dishes in the sink or whatever, right? You kind of just set it up to make it look like "Oh, they were just here! Oh, we just missed 'em. They must be off for a walk in the mist," or whatever it is, right?

Um, and so, like, it was pretty short-lived.

Travis: Yeah! Yeah! Hey, babe? I didn't think that this was still going, if you know what I mean. Like, this is a thing where it's like, "Hey. This is so trendy. Huh. Now there is just a person there we have to take care of. Uhh... you know what? I'm gonna put up a mannequin. No, better yet, a cardboard cutout. I'm gonna put a backlit cardboard cutout in front of the window shade. This is gonna be great. I'm gonna get a cardboard cutout and I'm gonna tape it onto a record player like in *Home Alone*. It's gonna be perfect."

Teresa: Perfect. Now, so a lot of these places don't really exist anymore, because they weren't really built to last. They were built kind of like—you know, like huts or cabins or really very simple dwellings. But there is a chronicle, a catalog of hermitages in Campbell's book, like I said earlier. And he lists whether they were destroyed, or never really built at all, right? So, like, you could say "On this very spot was the place where a druid lived," or whatever, right? You could have the hermitage without having a hermitage.

Travis: Ohh. Have your hermitage and eat it too.

Teresa: Exactly. Um, and so, like, the garden hermit, though, hasn't really left us. It probably is the origination of...

Travis: Garden gnomes.

Teresa: Garden gnomes.

Travis: Yeah. And flamingos.

Teresa: Yeah, probably. Or like little fairy gardens, or whatever it is that you set up in your own yard to make it look like... somebody might be there.

Travis: Like Bigfoot!

Teresa: Sure!

Travis: I got a little Sasquatch. Oh, he keeps falling over. His arms keep breaking. I gotta get a bigger, strong Stasquatch. Skasquatch? Gotta get a Skasquatch to protect my little Skasquash.

Teresa: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. So it used to be kind of more like about how this person was really, like, communing with nature, and we just happened upon them. And now it's kind of like a little—a little scene that I've set up for me friends.

Travis: Eh.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: It doesn't seem that far off, honestly. I like a fairy garden.

Teresa: Yeah!

Travis: I'm glad that there's not a person living in it.

Teresa: Yes, exactly.

Travis: Okay, great. Hey, everybody. Thank you so much for listening. Thank you to our editor, Rachel without whom we would not be able to make this show. Thank you to our researcher, Alex, without whom I don't even know if want to make this show. And thank you to, uh, let's say the host, without whom I could not exist. Uh, Teresa.

Teresa: Oh! Well, thank—thank you.

Travis: I think I could actually exist without you. That makes it sounds like you are, like, my creator or something, and that's not how it works.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: I guess it just means, like, I wouldn't want to.

Teresa: I thought you were gonna thank the audience for listening, because why would we do it?

Travis: Well, we could make—we could make the show without 'em.

Together: But why?

Travis: Um, and also, uh, make sure you check out all the cool stuff at mcelroymerch.com. Oh! Teresa and I are gonna be on the JoCo Cruise.

Teresa: We are!

Travis: If you haven't checked that out yet, you should. It's a great lineup. Um, if you're into, you know, TTRPG stuff, Brennan Lee Mulligan, Aabria Iyengar, Erica Ishii are also going to be there. We're gonna be playing a game or two on the main stage.

Teresa: But there's also gonna be, like, music and workshops and comedy and, you know, that kind of stuff.

Travis: Yeah. We're gonna do a couple *Shmanners* things, including like a high tea with us. Or afternoon tea? One of those teas.

Teresa: Afternoon tea.

Travis: Uh, and you'll just see us around. So check that out. Also, I'm gonna be at Sketchfest performing with Jonathan Colton and friends on February 3rd, doing a couple fake TED Talks. One at 7:30, one at 10:30. Uhh... it's about *Entourage*. I'm gonna talk about—

Teresa: He's very into it. I have to hear about all the iterations of the fake TED Talk. [laughs quietly]

Travis: I have watched... in the past, younger me watched every episode of *Entourage*. And so now I'm building an in-universe timeline.

Teresa: And the movies.

Travis: And the movie. And I'm building an in-universe timeline—

Teresa: There's only one movie?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Jiminy Cricket.

Travis: I know, it feels like so much. Anyways, you can check that out. San Francisco Sketchfest, February 3rd. Um, what else, Teresa?

Teresa: We also thank Brent "brentalfloss" Black for writing our theme music, which is available as a ringtone where those are found. He wrote a musical as well.

Travis: Yeah. *Khan*.

Teresa: *Khan*. You guys should check that out. Anyway—

Travis: It's based on the—the *Star Trek: Wrath of Khan*. It's coming—it's coming soon.

Teresa: It's coming! It's coming around. Also, thank you to Bruja Betty Pinup Photography for the cover picture of our fan-run Facebook group, *Shmanners Fanners*. If you love to give and get excellent advice from other fans, join that group today. Um, also, we are always taking topic submissions, idiom submissions. If you want to just say hi to Alex, you can email us at shmannerscast@gmail.com. And she reads every one, so do say hi.

Travis: And 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]

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