

Shmanners 379: LARPing

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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! Hello, my dove.

Teresa: Hello, dear.

Travis: How are you?

Teresa: I am... fine, I think. Fine. We have a sort of cold going through our home.

Travis: Well, the weather? The weather, she's a-changin', here in Ohio. And, uh, whenever the weather changes I can never tell if it's, like, a cold, or if it's just like my sinuses draining down my gullet. I'm not sure what it is.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Wildly unpleasant.

Teresa: I don't think that there's a more unpleasant word for throat than gullet.

Travis: Yeah. I was trying to highlight the unpleasantness of the feeling.

Teresa: Yeah. You did a great job.

Travis: I didn't want to make it sound pleasant. That would be misleading. I've never lied to you, or the audience, or anybody.

Teresa: But I think that I am okay. I'm gonna be alright. What about you?

Travis: Hey, that's—I love your brave optimism.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: How am I? Oh, the best... I'll ever be.

Teresa: Okay. Alright.

Travis: It's only downhill from here.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: So... this week, we're talking about LARPing.

Teresa: We are.

Travis: For those who don't know, that's live action role-play.

Teresa: Well, okay. Let's just say first of all that you and I used to get paid to do this kind of thing.

Travis: Uh, I disagree.

Teresa: It's a little bit like acting.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: When you're not given the circumstances, when you're just said, like, "Okay, well, you're a circus performer now. Act the way a circus performer acts."

Travis: Now, listen. So, I will go with you a little bit on this one, because it is acting, right? There is acting to it.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: We did not get paid to do this. This is a different thing. I would say this is a different thing altogether.

Teresa: Is it like when I play pretend with Dottie and Bebe?

Travis: No, baby. That's playing pretend. Why are you minimi—I'm not gonna sit here and let you minimize LARPing.

Teresa: I'm just saying it's a very accessible activity.

Travis: This is true.

Teresa: I'm not trying to minimize it.

Travis: That is very true.

Teresa: I'm trying to say that this is the name of the thing, but we all do it all the time.

Travis: So—and I am not the one who has researched, so I would say that, like, to me when I think of live action role-play., one, I do tend to immediately think of, like, a battle or, like, that there's, um, something to, like, uh, "Yeah, we have these swords and shields or whatever the deal is, and we're, like, in character at the camp, and there's gonna be, like, a battle at some point."

Teresa: Yes, that is, I would say, at the very—at one end of the scale of LARPing. But it doesn't have to be like that. And I think that is why you and I maybe have a different idea in our heads about what it is, right? Because it doesn't have to be that complicated.

Travis: Would you say that, like, war reenactors are LARPers?

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Yeah, okay. Alright. Alright.

Teresa: Absolutely.

Travis: I'm picking up what you're putting down.

Teresa: Um, I would also say that if you go to, like, a historical village and there are people there working and doing things that they would have done in a, you know, in that historical town, they're LARPing too.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: And I would say that when we get together for a princess party and we all wear our princess party and we all wear our princess outfits, we're LARPing then as well.

Travis: Now, do you—are you starting to find that you've said the word "LARP" so many times that it starts to sound...

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: ... completely bizarre?

Teresa: No.

Travis: Oh, that's how I feel. I'm thinking about it too much.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: So LARPing started back in the Middle Ages.

Teresa: Well, first of all, let's say that this topic was suggested by a listener, and we actually want to get that out there, Mel G.

Travis: Thank you, Mel G.

Teresa: Wrote in and suggested we cover it. And if you'd like to be cool like Mel, you can always email us topics to shmannerscast@gmail.com, because Alexx does read every one of your emails, and we appreciate them a lot.

Travis: But let's be honest. No one's ever going to be as cool as Mel. It's impossible!

Teresa: [laughs quietly] But you could try.

Travis: Yeah, you could try!

Teresa: By submitting a topic.

Travis: We all could try.

Teresa: You already said what the acronym is for.

Travis: Live action role-play.

Teresa: And it's a game where the participants physically portray their characters through costumes, props, scenography, specific scenarios, to create an immersive experience. Some refer to it as a live action role-playing game. Others use it as a verb, so you could go to a LARP, and you can also go LARP-ing.

Travis: Well, sure. Same with dance.

Teresa: Sure.

Travis: You could go to a dance, or you could do a dance. You could go dancing.

Teresa: Indeed. Um, so... LARPing specifically has appeared in lots of television and movies, like *Degrassi*, and *Role Models*.

Travis: That's one of my favorites.

Teresa: And, uh—I haven't heard of this one, but *Knights of Badassdom*.

Travis: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Teresa: I didn't know that—

Travis: It was also in, uh, Supernatural.

Teresa: Right, yeah. So, like—but it's usually the butt of a joke. It has a reputation in the media as being a kind of geeky hobby for fantasy nerds. But also... it's a really great kind of storytelling outlet.

Travis: Sure!

Teresa: You may not be able to write fantasy, but you could play one, right?

Travis: Yeah. And I would argue... listen. I would argue that on some level, there's plenty of this that people would do and say like, "But that's cool, right? When I do it's cool."

Like paintball isn't that far off, right?

Teresa: I agree.

Travis: Of like, "We're doing this battle recreation," or like laser tag or something like that. Where it's just like, "Oh yeah, we're using fake nonlethal weapons to, like, recreate a battle, and that makes us feel real cool." Right?

Teresa: Yeah. Especially I would say that if you designate a team captain, if you give anybody a nickname about what it is they're supposed to be doing, right? Um, if you get together beforehand and discuss strategy, right?

Travis: Some might say, like sports.

Teresa: A little bit. Um, so Chelsea Russel, who is a longtime LARPer, was interviewed by Insider in 2018. They explained, "LARP is generally a role-playing and interactive experience, kind of like Dungeons & Dragons, or a video game come to life. You're creating a character, props, costumes, giving

a background, creating circumstances, and acting out a story with other participants."

Travis: Which I would say is inherently what separates it from just, like, dressing up or cosplay or anything like that, right? It's not just "And I came to this event dressed like a knight." It's like, there's a character and a story and it's immersive.

Teresa: Sure. Sure. But I would argue when Dot tells me who I am and what I'm doing and what I'm supposed to say, uh, maybe it's not like an organized LARP, but it is exercising the same muscles. [laughs quietly]

Travis: I guess the thing that strikes me is I don't know how protective of it people who do it a lot feel, right? Because I know that there's a thing in, like, if you're a professional actor who does it a lot, right? And someone's like, "It's just like you're just memorizing lines and getting up there and saying—" or whatever. And, like, people get really, like, "No, that's not it," right? There's gotta be layers to LARPing where it's like, "Yeah, you guys—that's cute. This is—[gruff voice] You're not really LARPing unless you're staying intense and doing this kind of thing."

Teresa: Okay. Um, but I would also argue that the line gets blurred, because what about actors at Renaissance Fairs?

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: Who live the entire week, maybe, at the fair, in the tent? Would you consider that a LARP or is it a paid actor? I don't know. I don't know where the line really is.

Travis: My gut tells me—and I'm open to feedback—my gut tells me it has to do with, like, do you stay in character with each other? Or are you just performing when there's a patron or a customer or whatever?

Teresa: Hm.

Travis: Right? Because I think that that's a lot of it of, like, when you're LARPing you're not really performing for the audience. It's about how you interact with each other. That's my guess.

Teresa: I see.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: And I suppose that if you were an actor at a Renaissance Fair, you could continue to perform for the others.

Travis: Sure!

Teresa: Let's do some history.

Travis: Okay, I'd love that.

Teresa: Um, so...

Travis: I—this—I—before you even say another word... this is gonna be one of those ones where it's not like, "The first LARP ever was on this day," right? This is like... I know just off the top of my head about a time when I think it was Marie Antoinette had, like, a tiny farm built.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Is that on your list?

Teresa: It's not on my list, but I would say that yes, that was a LARP.

Travis: Right? Had a tiny farm, like, built on the castle grounds and then they would dress up in, admittedly, very fancy versions of, like, what they thought of as "farm clothes" and pretend to be farmers. And it's like, yeah, that's a very, um, uh, maybe insulting version of LARPing of like, "Look at us! We're workers! Doot doot doo."

Teresa: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Travis: But, like, that—that's a LARP. I mean, they were pretending in character with costumes and sets and props.

Teresa: We are gonna start at the 1970's, because this is when it kind of enters the culture as something that is a definable live action role playing game.

Travis: This is when it solidifies.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Because there was a lot of fantasy in the media. There was a big surge at the time, right?

Travis: A little bit of that there Satanic Panic.

Teresa: Sure. Dungeons & Dragons came out in 1974. The Princess Bride was published in 1973. The Neverending Story was published in 1979, and Stephen King was—

Travis: Who?

Teresa: Stephen King [laughs] was writing—

Travis: I think I've heard of him.

Teresa: —more horror tomes than anyone could keep up with. Uh, such as Carrie, Salem's Lot, The Stand, The Shining, and all this, like, kind of iconic fantasy media was very much available, right? And this is when people started to decide that they were going to take place in the fantasy fun themselves.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: And this is the thing, right? I'm certain, like you said, people were always doing this.

Travis: Yeah. But I—I—

Teresa: Because it's fun. [laughs]

Travis: But I do think that there is a difference between—I see what you're saying, right? About the solidification of being able to say, like, "We are LARPing," versus like, "Hey. This weekend, do you want to get together, like, in the woods and, like, we'll make a camp and, like, pretend to be—" right? Where it's like, "Oh yeah, cool." Versus...

Teresa: There were Civil War reenactments going on a long time before this, right?

Travis: Yeah. And I guarantee—man. There's all kinds of, like, stories about, you know, when you, uh—I think bull fighters there was a thing of, like, recreating, like, knight stuff. And people have been jousting for years. And we've been talking about Ren Fairs, right?

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: Way back before this.

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: And so I think that there is a difference. I mean, when you can put a name to it, right?

Teresa: So another touchstone for this would've been the Lord of the Rings books being published in the 50's. And you mentioned the 60's being the Renaissance Festival kind of, like, coming together. And so, you know, most LARP historians, um, maybe LARP—LARPstorians?

Travis: LARP... LARPsperts.

Teresa: Uh, scribes, maybe. [laughs] Agree—

Travis: Let's go with scribes [crosstalk].

Teresa: Agree that the firstLARPs were started in the 70's, but they were most definitely inspired by older practices, right?

Travis: And I would also guess probably took a lot of inspiration and energy from, like, 60's counterculture.

Teresa: Sure.

Travis: Of, like, let's go out in the woods and the fields and, like, have events, and dance like fairies, and do this kind of stuff. Where it was like, "Hey, you know what? If we're gonna go out in the fields and the forests and dance around and stuff, well, maybe we could also pretend there's, like, magic and, like, warriors and knights. Can we play too?"

Teresa: Lizzy Stark, author of the book *Leaving Mundania: Inside the Transformative World of Live Action Role-Playing Games*, makes the argument that LARPing was around long before tabletop games ever graced the extra folding card table in your mom's basement.

Uh, they use the book to trace LARPing all the way back to the European Enlightenment.

Travis: Yeah! Right?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: This is the thing. I think as long as people have been learning about history, right? They like recreating it. Right? People have always loved, like, "Oh, and we'll recreate the gladiatorial games. Oh, we'll recreate this big war. Oh, we'll recreate—" I mean, even then, right? Back in Roman times they would recreate battles in the, like—in the Coliseum. Now, granted—

Teresa: Not only for entertainment, but also for military training purposes. War games have always been a big thing.

Travis: So this thing of like, "Oh, let's recreate this battle. Let's recreate this interaction."

There have been—and take for this what you will, but there have been, uh, pageants and stuff about the birth of Jesus and the crucifixion of Jesus for centuries.

Teresa: Right. So we—I think that the line that we've been discussing, this kind of blurriness between performance and live action role-play., has always kind of been there, right? This kind of grey area of, you know, we are—we're all acting in this, but are we acting with each other, living in the space, are we doing it just for kind of—for an audience to watch? Like, all of these things I think are—it's a very nuanced kind of practice.

Um, and so I would argue that in order to make LARPing accessible, you can pare it down to its very small elements of, "I wear a cape and I get together with my friends and we make a stew in the woods, and we all [crosstalk]."

Travis: It also doesn't have to be the woods. You can have—just do it in your kitchen.

Teresa: Just do it in your kitchen.

Travis: If you would rather make a stew in your kitchen, I understand.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: That's where I'd rather make a stew.

Teresa: But we're all playing the game together.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: Right? Um, so the activity, the sanctioned "Let's throw a LARP" activity, gained international popularity during the 1980's, and diversified into a wide variety of styles to accommodate any player, right? There's a—it could be game centric, right? Where I would argue that a war game is pretty much like, we face off against each other. That's a game, right?

Travis: Some kind of—yes. There's some gamification to it.

Teresa: Right. Um, or it could be more about exploring the dramatic or the artistic expression of the players.

Travis: Like, I know people in LA that do, like, vampire balls, right? Where it's like they go in character as a vampire and have, like, vampire parties.

Teresa: Yep, totally.

Travis: Like, okay, cool, that's a LARP.

Teresa: And so the more people who become interested in playing, the more extravagant and large scale the LARP could be, right? Um, and so in the 1990's, LARPing began to attract critics, because they always do.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: Right? And this was when it became kind of the punch line, right? Synonymous with being nerdy or geeky or uncool.

Travis: You know—[sighs] you know why? You know why, Teresa?

Teresa: Why—because people don't like other people to enjoy things?

Travis: Exactly! This is a thing that I have been telling... you know, younger kids that are, like, friends' kids or stuff like that. When they're like, "I'm getting bullied in school.

And it's like, there is a type of person who is so worried about standing out and being in any way quote-unquote "weird," right? That they shave off and knock off any kind of interesting aspects of themselves.

Teresa: Totally.

Travis: To try to fit in and be quote-unquote "normal," right? And then they see other people who aren't worried about that and are just liking things and enjoying things and sticking with the things that they like doing, whether they're quote-unquote "normal" or not, and that scares those people, right?

And they're like, "Well, I feel bad about myself. Why don't you feel bad about yourself? I need to make you feel bad." Right? And so then they are trying to make you feel embarrassed that there are things that you take enjoyment out of, that you're enthusiastic about, instead of just trying to blend in and hide. And that's so weird. Like, this isn't hurting you at all. The only reason you care is because you're jealous that I'm comfortable expressing myself. It's dumb.

Teresa: So, um, most of the time, people who LARP together meet in a designated spot like—

Travis: Well, I would love to talk more about this.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: I would love to.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: I would love to? But first, how about a word from some other Max Fun shows?

[theme music plays]

[music plays]

Bikram: Hi, I'm Bikram Chatterji, the CEO of Maximum Fun. And I'm here with my fellow worker-owner...

Marissa: Marissa Flaxbart, producer. This week for Co-optober we'll be highlighting other co-ops who work in the arts.

Bikram: The past few years have been challenging for all kinds of creative industries. We at Max Fun believe that co-ops are better suited to meet these challenges, and there are a lot of other companies who feel the same way.

Marissa: So all this week on our social media and website, we'll be sharing interviews with some of our fellow co-ops.

Bikram: And head to our YouTube channel Friday, October 20th, where I'll be talking with worker-owners from Defector and Stocksy about their co-ops, and why the model works for them.

Marissa: And next week is volunteer week. Learn how you can participate in that and get details on exclusive merch, our live streams, and other Co-optober happenings at Maximumfun.org/cooptober.

Bikram: That's C-O-O-P-T-O-B-E-R.

[music and ad end]

[school bell rings]

Ella: Alright, class. Tomorrow's exam will cover the science of cosmic rays, the morals of art forgery, and whether or not fish can drown. Any questions? Yes, you in the back.

Speaker 2: Uh, what is this?

Caroline: It's the podcast Let's Learn Everything!

Tom: Where we learn about science and a bit of everything else. My name's Tom. I studied cognitive and computer science, but I'll also be your teacher for intermediate emojis.

Caroline: My name's Caroline, and I did my Masters in biodiversity conservation, and I'll be teaching you intro to things the British Museum stole.

Ella: My name's Ella. I did a PHD in stem cell biology, so obviously I'll be teaching you the history of fan fiction.

Tom: Class meets every other Thursday on Maximum Fun.

Speaker 2: So do I still get credit for this?

Together: [laugh] No!

Ella: Obviously not.

Caroline: No.

Tom: It's a podcast.

[all laugh]

[ad ends]

Travis: Okay. LARPers. They've met in a designated spot. I assume at a designated time as well.

Teresa: Indeed.

Travis: It's not just like, "Here's the spot. And I guess once we're all there, eventually it will begin. When the moon... is at its highest crest above the mount, then shall't we meet, and have stew."

Teresa: Sure. Characters will usually have some sort of basic plot instigator, like maybe everybody has to solve a murder, or fight in a mock battle, right? Whatever that scenario—

Travis: [crosstalk] I love this. We did this! It's the, uh—when they did the, um, murder mystery thing that I was in.

Teresa: At Rave—

Travis: Well, yes, that one—

Teresa: Or the one that we were in at Ravenswood Castle.

Travis: Yes, that one too. But the one that I was in with Alex Boniello and Andrew Barth Feldman, uh, the whodunit one where it's just like, "Okay,

great. Here's your character. Here's, like, a goal you're trying to achieve, and we're trying to solve this murder mystery."

And man, if you can't have fun doing that, you need to relax. You need to look in your heart, and see what parts of yourself you've locked away. 'Cause this idea of, like—I don't know about you. But for me, like, showing up and being like, "And also there's a diamond heist going on." Like, I'm so—I'm vibrating thinking about it.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: I'm so excited about this.

Teresa: So then people play and interact with each other based on their scales and the character traits that they've created. Um, and it's important to not give, like, your whole—your whole bag away, right? Because you've spent a lot of time on your backstory, but when you meet someone in R-L, right? Uh, you don't—

Travis: I think you either have to say IRL—

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: —or in real life.

Teresa: In real life.

Travis: I don't think you can say in R-L.

Teresa: [laughs] When you met somebody in real life—

Travis: I-real-life.

Teresa: You don't often go into, you know, when you were born and what your parents said to you and, you know, your shaping kind of characteristics. Although, maybe you do.

Travis: I mean, I do.

Teresa: So then it could be a fully, like, realized professional gathering, right? With, um, event arrangers or game masters. Or it could be just you and your friends, right? Agreeing on rules and solving squabbles together as they arise. Could be—you could rent out a castle for a regency themed ball, or even—

Travis: Yes, yes!

Teresa: —like, dress up as Jedis and... play with your lightsabers at the park.

Travis: It's all I want to do. Foul Play, by the way. It was gonna bother me if I didn't look it up.

Teresa: Ah.

Travis: The murder mystery that I did with Andrew Barth Feldman and Alex Boniello is called Foul Play. Look it up, it's really fun. But yes, this, like—

Teresa: Speaking of looking up—

Travis: Oh, okay.

Teresa: —um—

Travis: I was gonna be so excited. By the way, I'd love to go to a regency ball.

Teresa: I would too.

Travis: I would love to go to a Victorian dinner party. Um, Teresa and I like going to historical villages and exploring them, I like going to historical—ugh, I love it so much! I wish I was a time traveler.

Teresa: So, basically all you have to do is Google your city or town and, you know, LARPing event, right? And you could have, at your fingertips, any number of things to do. First of all, here in Cincinnati...

Travis: Oh, I was about to ask!

Teresa: ... there is a Shire of the Seven Hills.

Travis: Get out of town.

Teresa: Mm-hmm. Uh, but also a foam fighting realm that meets weekly in Eden Park.

Travis: Weekly? What?!

Teresa: Yep.

Travis: What?!

Teresa: So, you know, you can—

Travis: Did I tell you the other—

Teresa: —get your PVC and duct tape out and go to town.

Travis: Bebe has talked at length over the last few months about how her dream job is warrior princess.

Teresa: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Travis: And one day we were watching something on TV, and somebody had a sword. And she goes, "Are swords real?"

And I was like, "Are sword—yeah, bud! Swords are real."

And she's like, "Like, real—like, real swords that you can fight with?"

I was like, "Yeah, man."

And she started, like, vibrating. 'Cause up till then I think she'd only thought, like, the same as, like, magic, I guess, and dragons, and swords.

Teresa: Oh, okay.

Travis: And I was like, "No, swords are real."

Which is weird 'cause I have swords in my office that she's seen.

Teresa: Well, that seems more like decoration.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: She saw someone actually using it.

Travis: Sure. And she was like, "Can I have a sword?"

And I was like, "You can. When you're older and we learn how to use it."

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: I'm not going to give my six-year-old a sword. Well—and so now maybe I'll take Bebe down to one of these fighting things and let her just get beat up by—by adults!

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: No, no, no. I'll let her watch! [crosstalk] She'd be way into it.

Teresa: Not battle, just watch. Um, so if you would like to get into LARPing, you can really decide how it is you would like to dip your toe into these experiences, okay? Um, if you would rather just have a very small kind of intimate experience, you can invite your friends over. You could go and, you know, decide to do this at the park or whatever. Or you could seek out and go to, like, a organized event in your area, right? But you really should do your research, as far as, like, if you're going to the scheduled LARPing event. You want to go find their website, and maybe some organizations have specific first timer help, which would be good for you. Or they have special instructions for weapons. Or they might even offer things that you could borrow to make your experience more immersive, right?

Travis: I would also say—and if it hasn't been clear I'm not, like, an expert at LARP. But I am a bit of an expert in participating in things at this point, I would say.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: And I would say, just like cosplay or conventions or anything like that, the most important thing is enthusiasm and interest, right?

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: So if you're like, "Oh, I want to go, but I'm worried that, like, my costume or my props aren't good enough."

Listen. There might be people there who would judge you, because those people exist everywhere. But I can also guarantee the majority of the people there will be so happy for more participants that are excited to be there, that are bringing enthusiasm. And you can always improve your stuff over time. Right? But don't wait to start participating in something you're excited about just because it's like, "Well, I haven't been able to spend, like, a thousand dollars on the perfect costume and the perfect prop."

Just start going.

Teresa: And there are lots of jumping off points, right? So you could start with maybe your favorite D&D character that you've made, or that you have seen someone else portray.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: Um, or, you know, there are lots of films and TV shows that rely on the specific periods that you can go and do.

Travis: Or like you're starting with, like—

Teresa: You could base it off somebody like that.

Travis: —cardboard armor, right? Or you're doing, like, scraps of fabric that you've made kind of look like a tunic or whatever, and eventually work your way up to, like, chain mail and leather or whatever.

Teresa: Sure.

Travis: But, like, if you're excited to go, then you're ready to go.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: And also, chances are, I guarantee if they're anything like me, they have eight times more costume pieces than they could ever wear if they've been doing it a while. And if you go and you're like, "Yeah, I just really need, like, some bracers," right? Or a pauldron. They'd be like, "Oh my god, yes. I'll sell you this half off. Here you go, please."

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: "Take it out of my hands. I have too much."

Teresa: Uh, do remember that there are different combat rules and safety calls, and even ways to break the illusion correctly if you need something like first aid, right?

Travis: Right.

Teresa: So do research those kind of things. Because, you know, we've talked about how it's about the character and interacting with each other, and so you don't want to, like, do a kind of, like, a social misstep by breaking character for something that you need out of the way that you should do it.

Travis: I would also say when it comes to combat or anything like that, stage combat rules apply. Where what you're trying to do is make a good show, not hurt the person.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: That—have fun, right? Not be like, "And I—yeah, I'm—I hate you, and I actually got a good contact with your head," or whatever. Right? Like, play... play it safe. Hey, be safe out there. We worry about you.

Teresa: So, here's the thing. LARPers come from all different budgets and backgrounds. No one minds, as long as it's clear that you're creative with what you've got. And, you know, while you're playing, remember that we're all playing together.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Right? Don't spoil the illusion.

Travis: Enthusiasm, and interest, and support.

Teresa: Yes. But there are also, right? At larger LARPs, there are also people in specific costumes, maybe, that have markings to indicate they are managers of the game who can help you figure something out while others play. That's an acceptable way to, um, to kind of, like, call time out on your playtime and go over and figure something out.

Travis: This is also maybe the best time of the year to consider it, because if there is a costume shop, Halloween store near you—

Teresa: Oh, that's a great idea!

Travis: You're gonna find some kind of starter costume piece.

Teresa: Um, so there's an article on LARP News, and they put it very well, saying that even if you and your partners in game are playing against each other, out of game, you're playing for each other.

Travis: Right!

Teresa: Right? So don't, for one, just assume you can touch people because you're playing together. There might be times in the game where touching someone makes sense, but also there's probably a time where asking consent makes sense. [laughs]

Travis: Well, yeah, right? Okay, so this is the other thing. And we've talked about this before. I think we talked about this in the Ren Fair episode, and I know we've talked about it in the cosplay episode. Right? But, like, character choices, costumes choices, time period, setting, all of that, none of that is more important than someone's safety and comfort. Right?

So being like, "But this is what real knights would've done!" Get that out. Get that out. That's garbage. That's toxic, right? Because it's a game. It is an act. We are acting. We are doing it. And it is about making sure everyone is having a good time. If you're going to any kind of event like this and only thinking about if you're getting everything out of your experience that you want, then you're not getting the most out of it. Because the thing that you build, whether it's theater, sports, LARPing, conventions, whatever, you're building community. You're building connections with people.

And so if you're not thinking about everyone's experience, you are depriving from yourself and from others the ability to get the most out of it by building that community of trust and comfort.

Teresa: And I really hope that everyone listening has been able to think of a time in their life when they may have been accidentally LARPing, right?

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: Like that murder mystery that we went to, or—

Travis: [singing] Accidentally in LARP.

Teresa: [laughs] Or things like that. Because my point with talking about the kids and acting and all that kind of stuff is that a lot of this is a lot more accessible than you would think. You don't have to have chain mail. You don't have to be part of, you know, the—the battle of Two Towers, or whatever it is, right? You don't have to do that in order to have a great time, and be creative with what you've got.

Travis: There you go. Alright, thank you all 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, Alexx, without whom we would not be able to make this show. And thank you to you for listening. We could make this show without you, but what's the point?! You know what I mean?

Teresa: We definitely wouldn't.

Travis: We wouldn't. That'd be weird.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: That'd be weird. We'd just record it on cassette tapes and then, uh, bury it in the yard? What are we doing?

Teresa: [laughs] Play it for our children.

Travis: Yeah. Ugh, gross!

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Uh, make sure you head over to mcelroymerch.com. Check out all of the great merchandise over there. You can go to mcelroy.family and see all the McElroy shows, if you hadn't. And if you didn't know, we've got a McElroy YouTube channel. Just search McElroy Family on YouTube. You'll find a lot of great stuff there.

Uh, 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. Also, thank you to Bruja Betty Pinup Photography for the cover picture of our fan-run Facebook group, Shmanners Fanners.

Yes, that's right. [laughs]

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: If you love to give and get excellent advice from other fans, go ahead and join that group today. As always, and again, you can submit your

topic suggestions, your questions, your queries, to shmatterscast@gmail.com, and make sure you say hi to Alexx, because she reads every single one.

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 Shmatters...

Teresa: Manners, Shmatters. Get it?

[theme music plays]

[chord]

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