

Shmanners 390: Ceremonial Swords

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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: Now, why is it I was making eye contact with you and I said my name, and then when you did your half of the intro, you closed your eyes like Catherine O'Hara doing a bit?

Teresa: [laughs] I don't know.

Travis: You were just like, I can't—

Teresa: Sometimes it's just too much.

Travis: Me?

Teresa: I mean, all of it.

Travis: Maybe you're not enough.

Teresa: Everything.

Travis: Arms crossed. I narrated that because people at home can't see what I did.

Teresa: No, I'm just right.

Travis: Oh!

Teresa: If you need— If I'm too much, go find less is what they say on the internet.

Travis: But you said I'm too much.

Teresa: No, I didn't say that.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: I said it's all too much.

Travis: Okay, that's fair.

Teresa: That's different.

Travis: So, this was my idea for an episode.

Teresa: It sure was.

Travis: This week, I'm very excited.

Teresa: Thank Travis for Travis.

Travis: Indeed. What up, Trav Nation?

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: And I'm very excited to—

Teresa: I don't really know that joke, but I appreciate it.

Travis: It's not a joke, babe. I'm an influencer, and that's what I call my following Trav Nation.

Teresa: I thought they were pickles.

Travis: That— No, sorry, that's on Twitch.

Teresa: Oh, okay.

Travis: Pickles are a subset of Trav Nation.

Teresa: I see.

Travis: Right? Okay.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: Yeah, they're maybe the inner circle of Trav Nation.

Teresa: Are they the Trav stans?

Travis: Mm... I don't know if I wanna call them that. I don't know if they'd be offended by that or honored. [Twitch.tv/TheTravisMcElroy](https://www.twitch.tv/TheTravisMcElroy) and...

Teresa: [laughs] Be chill, pickles.

Travis: Be chill, pickles. And I... Uh, the thought occurred to me, because we've done a bunch—Some of my favorite episodes that we've done have been, like, the history of accessories, right?

Teresa: Oh, yeah.

Travis: We've done watches and handkerchiefs and stuff like that.

Teresa: You loved shoes, that was a good one too.

Travis: I love shoes, I love shoes. And then I thought—

Teresa: [imitating Kelly Sullivan] Oh my God, shoes.

Travis: A weird crossover accessory between, like, functional item and accessory is a sword. And so like I went to Alexx and I was, like, let's do

swords as accessories. And she said, "Great idea." And then I walked away and did no follow up.

Teresa: [laughs] Sounds about right.

Travis: And I was, like, "I hope that there's an episode's worth of information about this."

Teresa: Oh, there totally is.

Travis: Awesome. So, let's start. Swords started in the year negative 10,012.

Teresa: Um... No?

Travis: Okay, when did swords start?

Teresa: Well, okay. Let's first talk about swords as ceremonial weapons, okay?

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Before collecting for collecting sake...

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: ... you had a reason to have all these things, even if you weren't using them, right? For example, there are people in the US armed forces who have a special sword as part of their uniform, even though they don't use it in combat.

Travis: Right.

Teresa: Right? Because the thing about a sword, you gotta be real close. You really do.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: You have to be close in order to hit someone with a sword.

Travis: I mean, you could throw it. Not really balanced for that.

Teresa: They're not really balanced for that.

Travis: That's kind of a last ditch effort, if you're throwing your sword.

Teresa: Right. So swords are kind of like one of those last resorts, right?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Hopefully you've shot enough arrows, you've used your trebuchets or whatever to throw your cannonballs, shot cannonballs, whatever it is.

Travis: What have you, yes.

Teresa: You've done that first so that you don't have to fight hand to hand in the sword way, right? Even a mace is a little bit better, right? Because you could throw a mace.

Travis: Well, and also this is—

Teresa: And you just kind of have to, it's a heavy blow. It's a smash.

Travis: You just do a Hulk smash. This is also interesting. God, this is not important, but whenever I talk to people about, like, what do you think is the ideal zombie apocalypse, like, zombie fighting weapon? Bladed weapons tend to stick, especially if you're slashing, right?

Or even stabbing. But when you do that, the body tends to constrict around it, right? And then you have to, like, it's hard to undo, right? So it's not really a thing you can do and fight, like, 10 people. So whenever you see in, like, movies or whatever, somebody doing that, there's a lot of slashes and not, like, stab or hack, right? It's like slash-slash-slash-slash.

Teresa: What's the one weapon that is like the stick with the balls on it, that like, with the chain and the balls.

Travis: The flail?

Teresa: Maybe that.

Travis: A flail, yeah, where's the chain attached to a ball, yeah.

Teresa: I feel like that would be a good one for zombies.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Because you can use a kind of, like, just blunt force, but it's also got spikes on it.

Travis: I would say, here's what I would do.

Teresa: Oh, okay, what is it?

Travis: I would take a baseball bat, right?

Teresa: Uh-huh.

Travis: But put it on, like, a table saw or chop saw and square off the end...

Teresa: Oh!

Travis: So that way it's balanced for swinging because it's a baseball bat, but it has corners which makes smashing zombie heads that much easier.

Teresa: Interesting. Okay. So...

Travis: I mean, besides the crossbow.

Teresa: Ah, duh.

Travis: 'Cause you can do it from a long ways away, aim for the brain, and recover your ammunition.

Teresa: Exactly. Right, but, like, that's another thing that you would want to do first, right?

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: Before you had to resort to these kind of weapons.

Travis: Yeah. Gun is too loud, it's gonna draw the attention of other zombies, and you need a constant supply of ammunition.

Teresa: Yeah, also the sword came first, obvs.

Travis: Sure. I always think of swords as making sense when we were back, back, back, back, when it was, like, single shot. Like...

Teresa: Sure.

Travis: ... when you think about, like, pirates, right? Where you would either have, like, 12 guns all down your body and, like, bandoliers and stuff.

Or it's, like, you fire a shot, and if you didn't get them, right, by the time you reloaded another one, they would have shot you or attacked you. So you're hoping, like, okay, they missed, while they're reloading, I'm gonna get them with the sword.

Teresa: Sure. So ceremonial weapons can be used for combat, but they're not made with that in mind, so they're not usually balanced in the way of, like, think like a fencing sword would be, right?

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: And they are often, you know, they have more artistic details.

Travis: Yeah, filigree and whatnot.

Teresa: Exactly, and I mean, some, like, high-end swords made for kings or whatever, even if they were gonna use them, they would have, like, jewels

and precious metals and stuff, but most people who were gonna use a sword didn't wanna use the pretty one.

Travis: Yeah, especially if there are jewels on the handle, cut your hand all up.

Teresa: Absolutely. There are even, like, decorative guns, mid-20th century rifles like the M14 and the Russian SKS are fitted with polished wood and chrome plating and other decorations because they're used for honor units like honor guards and celebratory fire, like the 21 gun salute or whatever.

Travis: Gotcha.

Teresa: Right? So here are some other examples of ceremonial weapons that you may have seen, listeners. Halberds and swords carried by the Swiss Guard at the Vatican.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: Right? Ceremonial maces carried by the sergeant at arms in parliaments across the globe.

Travis: They used ma— They carried ceremonial maces in parliament?

Teresa: Yeah, I have a great story about that later.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: And the West Point cadets have swords that are issued to cadet offices for— Officers, sorry, for formal functions and drills and parades and graduation ceremonies and all that kind of stuff.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: So ceremonial weapons have probably existed as long as regular weapons, right? Because if you're good at it, you wanna have one that you can show people.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: You can be, like, yeah, look at me, I'm so good at this. You don't wanna use the one that you use in battle.

Travis: Right, because it's got gunk on it.

Teresa: It's got gunk on it. The sword probably descends from stone daggers. right? And the first of these have been unearthed and credited to the Neolithic era, which is about 8,000 BCE to 2,000 BCE. And these were made of sharpened pieces of flint or bone. And, you know, the idea is sharp things, stabby-stabby, right?

Travis: You know, and they're so— Like, obsidian is, like, it holds a— Like, can be really sharp, right?

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: And I've heard people talk about, like, obsidian, like, scalpels and stuff...

Teresa: Wow.

Travis: ... because it cuts so cleanly and so sharply.

Teresa: So what we tend to point to is the Bronze Age. That is when we start really manipulating materials, and the designs for these daggers and swords and maces, other combat weapons, become more ornate and decorative, because we have bronze and silver and gold and other precious metals that we're manipulating. And we don't really get to swords until the gladiators.

Travis: Well, and that makes a lot of sense too, because I've done some blacksmithing, and the thing is about a sword...

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: ... and most metal, right? Most metal doesn't hold an edge very well, right? Like you couldn't just like pick up a hunk of aluminum, right, and, like, make a sword out of it. You couldn't, like— It has to be, especially now, right, a certain kind of metal to do it.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: But more than that, right, if you're gonna make a weapon for somebody and you're talking about a weapon that is going to be lethal at, let's say, two to three feet, right, like a sword, and it's like, okay, I can make one of those or I can make, like, three daggers.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: You're gonna make three daggers.

Teresa: Well, I mean, not just for— Because. swords have been used in combat, especially by the Roman soldiers for the entire time, right? I'm talking about, like, ceremonial swords.

Travis: Oh yeah, okay.

Teresa: Because, like we said, if you were a Roman soldier, you would use the sword last because you would be using arrows and spears and slingshots and catapults and you know, all that kind of stuff first, but they did use the swords. They especially use the swords at the Coliseum.

Travis: Because they're showier.

Teresa: Actually, you're right.

Travis: Because it's not int— If you were, like, here's the battle, they shot each other with an arrow, done.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: What's that? That's nothing.

Teresa: And this is where the idea of swordplay really starts to do it, right? Because there's not a lot of artistry to just getting at somebody. but if you wanna make a show out of it, like a gladiator would, this is where you start to develop all of the parries and the blocks and the business like that, that you see on TV and movies.

Travis: Well, it's also, it's a lot easier to hurt someone with a sword when neither of you know what you're doing.

Teresa: [laughs] I guess that's true.

Travis: You know what I mean? Like it's the difference between, like, a bar fight and, like, going to see, like, a judo tournament or something, you know what I mean?

Where it's just, like, yeah, man, a bar fight, everybody's kind of drunk, swinging wildly, no one knows what they're doing. It's gonna be done pretty fast and mostly just be chaos and then they're on the ground kind of punching each other.

And it's the same as, like, yeah, man, give me a sword and another dude who doesn't know what they're doing, we run into each other, something's gonna happen pretty quick, right? But as you learn—

Teresa: Well, I mean, that's kind of like the lance, right? Like, just a shorter lance?

Travis: Yeah, but what I wanna be careful about is getting into, like, there's not a lot of artistry in specific, any kind of, like, battle form, cause we're gonna get, like, ren faire people who are like, "Uh, actually..." And it's like, yeah, no, I'm just saying, you don't know what you're doing, run at each other with the sword, it's done.

Teresa: So, the ceremonial part was, because these gladiators made such a great show out of the swordplay, now... Their freedom was often granted with a ceremonial sword, right? It was kind of like the, hey, you did such a great job. Here's one that's really pretty that you can show everyone and let them know that this is your kind of, like, claim to fame, right?

Travis: Right.

Teresa: It was a wooden sword known as a rudis. Having a rudis bestowed upon you was a symbol that you could end your life as a gladiator and start life as a free man. Though some would refuse the rudis, deciding to stay on and continue fighting for glory.

Travis: Isn't that— That sounds— I was about to say, in like gladiator movies and stuff, there's always, like, that, "Oh, that guy? He could have been freed a while ago, but he loves killing."

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: It's like, "Oh, okay, cool." They're usually portrayed as the bad guy. They're usually the one to beat. Very rarely is it, like, "This is our hero. He just loves killing dudes."

Teresa: Mm-hmm. And this kind of ceremonial, like bestowing for rank, right, or to show some sort of like triumph over something is not...

Travis: Employee of the month.

Teresa: [laughs] Sure, it's not just for European, like, antiquities. This also was in Japan, right? High ranking nobles used to wear ceremonial swords as their formal court dress. It was a sign to everyone in the room that you had great status, right?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Because these things were only permitted to be worn by these type of people, right?

Travis: Right. Wait, if you think about it, right, if you're allowed into the court of, like, a royal or a noble or whatever, and you're allowed to wear a weapon in there, it implies a great degree of trust, right?

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Especially when we're talking about places where there were, like, when you were still, like, battling for who got to be the leader of the country and, like, you had dynasties taking over and you had, you know, people being overthrown all around the world at this point, where, you know, might made right, and that was kind of the political system...

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: ... and you said, "I trust this guy enough to stand next to me, the king, and he's allowed to have a sword.? Right? Like, that's a huge, huge badge of honor.

Teresa: Pretty cool. Another example is the Luba people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. They used weapons to symbolize someone's rank in society and ceremonial axes were very in vogue.

They were allowed to be carried among people, but only allowed to be owned by kings and titled members of court and things like that. And so these incredibly beautiful ornate sculptures of iron and wood, it looks really cool. Sometimes the blade kind of like emerges from the mouth of a woman, right? Or is on—

Travis: You mean— Sorry. Hmm, you mean in the style of the axe?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Not like a lady in the lake kind of thing, where she's like, "Where did you get this axe?"

Teresa: No. No, no, no. No, the carving, the carving looks like that.

Travis: Oh, okay, that makes a lot more sense than what I pictured.

Teresa: If you were important enough in Luba culture, you were expected to wear these axes to signify your rank at public events. Pretty cool.

Travis: And listen, once again, this might go without saying, but from doing blacksmithing and stuff, and just, I like watching people make stuff like this. It's art, man.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: And I'm not just talking about like, "Oh, the way they hammered it into the shape." I mean, like, understanding the way that metal moves when you hit it and the way that it cools and the way, all of that, there is science to it for sure. But man, it's art.

The same as, like, wood carvings or sculpting or anything like that. And the fact that people use metal, you know, they'd say, "Okay, well, I did that kind of sculpting and stuff and made a sword with it or made an axe with it or made a hammer with it," or whatever I don't think changes the fact that being able to shape metal in that way is art.

Teresa: Mm-hmm, agreed.

Travis: You know what, speaking of art, how about a word from some other Max Fun shows?

Teresa: All right.

[theme music plays]

[ad break]

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[ad break ends]

Travis: Back in Huntington, I'm gonna interrupt you one more time...

Teresa: Oh, okay.

Travis: ... and then never again.

Teresa: Nope. [laughs]

Travis: But back in Huntington, at the Huntington Museum of Art, they have a, or they did, I don't know if they still do, but like a, uh, arms and armory room, and it was always my favorite place to go, because one, it was, like, here's a room full of, like, the swords through the ages, but—

Or guns through the ages, but, like, the swords and stuff was always, to me, the coolest. Do they have that here in Cincinnati too?

Teresa: They had one in Louisville, do you remember that?

Travis: Yeah, they had the Arms and Armory Museum for sure.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: But I always love watching and seeing, like, this isn't just, like, the everyday story. This was the sword where it was, like, somebody poured way too much time and money into this. It's impractical, but look how cool it is.

Teresa: You know, maybe they have something like that at the Taft Museum of Art or at a different place other than the Children's Museum at Museum Center.

Travis: Yeah, they definitely don't have it there. I think they have it at the Museum of Art.

Teresa: I haven't gone to anything other than children's museums for several years now, so I don't remember.

Travis: I'll tell you what, if they don't have a "Look at these swords but don't touch room" in children's museums, they're missing out...

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: ... because that would be Bebe and Dot's favorite— Bebe one day, I'll never forget, we were watching something, and it was like a real life thing and they had a sword, and she was like, "Wait, are swords real?" And I was like, "Wait, what do you mean?"

She was like, "Well, they're not just like in stories and stuff?" And I was like, "Yeah, bud. Swords are a real thing." She was like, "So I could actually be a warrior princess?" Now at that point, things started to get a little murkier, but I was, like, "Yeah, sure, why not? Yeah, you got it, bud."

Teresa: Okay, so dress swords, as they came to be called, were often awarded by monarchies and rulers and popes and even private organizations to be ceremonial and commemorative objects worn for parades and formal events or given to important figures and their achievements of, like, usually war, right?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: And they started to become an important part of military honors in the 18th and 19th centuries in Europe and America. In fact, there are some very famous presentation swords bestowed to powerful military leaders during the War of 1812 and World War I that are quite prominent in United States history. So.

Travis: You know what I think of when I think of a ceremonial sword? Like the first thing that comes to mind? Can you guess?

Teresa: What?

Travis: A knighting ceremony.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: You know, where it's, like, "Here's a sword." Like the— Queen Elizabeth never wielded a sword. That wasn't, like, her fighting sword. She wasn't, like, "Get me down my fighting sword." Like, that's a ceremonial sword that they use for that. You know?

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: And now— I don't know, maybe Charles. I don't think Charles was ever... [inaudible].

Teresa: I don't know.

Travis: Maybe he has, I don't know.

Teresa: I don't know.

Travis: I don't know his life. I literally know almost nothing about his life.

Teresa: So here's an interesting thing that I was very amused to read about. If you were to think about a sword...

Travis: Wait, give me a second.

Teresa: [laughs] Okay, okay.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Obviously these dress swords, ceremonial swords or whatever, not used in combat, but the swords that are, like, on display for these things are impossible to use in combat because they're not balanced and they are extra heavy from all of the business on it.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Right? And I hadn't thought about that. I guess I thought about, like, okay, well, this fun sword is, like, maybe it's, like, shorter, right? Because you need to be able to carry it around. But in fact, the opposite is true. A lot of the, like, ceremonial swords are larger and longer and thicker and, like...

Travis: [crosstalk]

Teresa: ... showier. Showier and super heavy. And I hadn't thought about it that way.

Travis: And when you say balanced, what, for anyone who doesn't know, what that means is you want it to be so that when you swing the sword, right, the— What is it?

The pivot point, like the foot, you know, when it swings, it feels like an even thing. Just like if you swing your arm, right, up and down, it's very well balanced, it feels right. So you want it to be that when you swing a sword, it's not, like, top heavy that pulls down, right?

Teresa: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Travis: And you don't want it to be so bottom heavy that it feels, like, nothing when you're slicing your— You want it to feel just like waving your arm up and down and then you know it's well balanced.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: And if it's too heavy, right, you get, like, one swing in and you're, like, "I'm not doing that anymore." That's why there's, um, when— Sometimes you'll hear swords described as, like, hand, hand and a half, two handers. I've even seen three handed broadswords where basically the hilt is long enough that you could hold it with three hands. And at that point—

Teresa: But who's got three hands?

Travis: Right. So at that point, most of the time, you would see they would have a very thick glove. And a lot of the times the blades weren't even sharp. They would hold the hilt in one hand and the blade in the other and use it more like a bow-staff, almost. And if they were going to swing it, this was like a big overhand— I get one chop and then if I miss, it's stuck in the ground, right?

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: And it was as much for blocking as it was for swinging and everything like that.

Teresa: Let's do some etiquette tips to keep in mind...

Travis: Don't poke people.

Teresa: ... if you come across ceremonial weapons.

Travis: Don't poke people.

Teresa: No touchy-touchy.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: That's right.

Travis: Yeah, okay.

Teresa: So the whole point of ceremonial weapons is they can only be carried by the people who were designated to carry them. That's kind of, like, the whole, like, proper etiquette of it. You know, unless the person who owns it has given you explicit permission to touch it or take it down from its place or whatever it is, right? You really shouldn't. Um... That's a faux-pas.

Travis: You know, Dad just inherited— Dad just inherited a ceremonial sword.

Teresa: Oh, cool.

Travis: Yeah, Carol's aunt passed. And her husband, who I don't know if it was Carol's uncle or like step-uncle or something, but he had been in the Masons. And so he had, like, a very fancy sword that now dad has, which apparently dad describes as "Sharp as heck."

Teresa: Oh, yeah.

Travis: He doesn't say heck, but yeah.

Teresa: Oh yeah. That is the next rule, right? All standard weapons safety rules apply. So those rules are every gun is always loaded. Every knife is always sharpened. Everything— Every staff or mace or scepter is capable of intense damage. Just because it's pretty, doesn't mean it can't seriously hurt you.

Travis: Hey, same rule. Even if you have a sword and you're, like, "This sword is dull as heck." One of the things about swords, back in the day especially, they didn't always so much worry about, like, if they were sharp enough, right?

Because you're swinging a big hunk of metal that is all of that weight focused at a very small point with the blade, super easy to break bone. And even a dull blade swung hard enough, will split skin, will break bone, is bad, right? Think about it like if you swung a lead pipe at someone, lead pipe ain't sharp and you'll do serious damage to them.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: So even if you're like, "Oh, this sword isn't sharp, I can play fight with somebody with it," do not do that. Do not do that. Don't do that.

Teresa: Don't do it. Similarly to the idea of touching someone else's sword, you don't wanna unsheathe it for them. It is proper etiquette to allow the person who owns the sword to unsheathe it and then allow you to examine it, right? You don't do that yourself. That's just kind of, like, the order of things. And of course, never hand someone a sword with a tip or blade pointed at them, just like scissors.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: And never unsheath someone's scissors for them.

Teresa: Never, never.

Travis: Have you ever seen when people have katanas and they do that move where they're done and they're gonna put it back in the thing and they kinda, like, draw it across their arm and then put it in? Do you think that's just to clean gunk off of it before you put it away?

Teresa: Maybe?

Travis: Or is that, like, a, say, you aim better? For the hole in the thing. 'Cause it's not a cool look if you're a warrior and you go to sheath your sword and you miss. And you have to, ugh. And you have to, like, look down at the scabbard and be like, "Give me a second."

Teresa: I don't know if I've ever seen that move in real life.

Travis: Well, how often do you see people sheathing a sword in real life, babe?

Teresa: I've only ever seen it— I don't, I don't. I rely on TV and movies, which means that they lie a lot. So I don't know what's real and what's fake.

Travis: There's also always a move. I need to look at the way katana scabbards and stuff—They're probably not called scabbards.

But anyways how they work because you always see that thing where they like flick it with their thumb like they're unlocking it or something, where it's, like, [imitates click of sword in scabbard] and it's, like, up like an inch and they're ready to drop? I don't know if that's—

Teresa: I don't know.

Travis: I always see it in, like, anime. I don't know if it's a thing in real life. Okay. Anyways—

Teresa: Sounds like you should do some research.

Travis: Eh. I'll stop thinking about it five seconds once we're done, after we're recording.

Teresa: If you have a military saber, it's inappropriate to bear it unless you are dressed in full uniform and it is referred to as a saber, not a sword or a blade or whatever, it's a saber.

Travis: That's a great note by the way, if you're ever bored or interested or whatever, man, look at different styles of swords from across the world, because there are some wicked cool ones, there are some very interesting ones. And I always love, I love learning about how the different, shapes of the swords and styles of swords evolved from, usually like farming tools...

Teresa: Oh, cool.

Travis: ... or, like, emblems they were using in the area, where it's, like, oh, well, you're using a scythe, right? And so then that evolved into kind of a curved sword, right?

And like these kinds of things where you see, like, the evolution of it, and very rarely was it like, somebody going out of nowhere, like, "I'm gonna design a weird sword." It's usually like, "Is this shorter, is it wider, is it curved?" I always loved that.

Teresa: Speaking of West Point sabers, it's worn on the left side and the blade must be pointed straight down unless drawn. Uh, it is—

Travis: I guess that's true whether you're left-handed or right-handed, right?

Teresa: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

Travis: That must be weird, though. If you—

Teresa: I don't know.

Travis: I guess they're not drawing them for show. You just got practice with your right hand for it, I guess.

Teresa: Yeah. And you should also not try to buy a West Point saber if you aren't in the military because it's inappropriate unless you're a current cadet or an alumnus.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Okay, so here is a very interesting story about the House of Commons Mace.

Travis: Okay, please.

Teresa: It is a silver gilt ornamental club that is about five feet tall, and it's used to symbolize a meeting of the British Parliament. Without it presiding over the House of Commons, the British government is not able to meet or pass laws.

And the only time that is allowed to be absent is if the monarch is present. Okay? And it should only be carried to the chamber by the sergeant at arms. And the only time a person who should be touching it isn't the sergeant at arms is when you're saving it, right? If it needs to be...

Travis: Like if it's falling over?

Teresa: No, if it needs to be rushed out of the building for some, you know, if Guy Fawkes tries to blow it up.

Travis: Okay. 'Cause I was about to say, if somebody stole it, they can't pass laws in Britain, is that what I'm to understand?

Teresa: Yep.

Travis: Or would they just make a new one?

Teresa: No.

Travis: Oh.

Teresa: They wouldn't. So—

Travis: So if somebody stole it— Hold on.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: You're telling me that if somebody stole and destroyed it, they could never pass another law in England?

Teresa: I mean, I guess not?

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Until it was recovered.

Travis: But I'm saying, I steal it. I hurl it into the sun. I'm Superman. I don't know why I'm doing that. Superman is a known keeper of justice. But I hurl it into the sun. It's gone. Never to be recovered. Then, they'd probably make a new one, right?

Teresa: I guess so, but here's the story, right? Okay. Lloyd Russell Moyle stormed onto the House of Commons floor in 2018. He picked it up. He is not the sergeant at arms, okay? He picked it up and went to walk out of parliament to protest Brexit. So this is, like, he made this into a show, said, "I'm doing this terrible thing as a protest. And that's what I'm going to do."

Travis: I don't know about— I don't want to assign judgment to it.

Teresa: I mean— No.

Travis: I'm doing this thing which is against the rule.

Teresa: He did it because it's so gauche, right?

Travis: Yeah, okay.

Teresa: That's the idea. That's what I mean.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: It was considered to be a horribly offensive thing to do in Britain, akin to someone, like, stepping on the Constitution, right?

Travis: Eh. Just piece of paper.

Teresa: Because of this, it made a very effective protest tool. And he wasn't the first person to ever do this. Over the 20th century, three other MPs have grabbed the mace in order to showcase their disagreement with the British government.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: One of these men was a Scottish member of the Labour Party in 1988, who was so enraged over a debate on poll taxes that he picked up the mace only to unintentionally drop it, doing 1,500 pounds of damage.

Travis: To the mace or to the floor?

Teresa: I'm not sure.

Travis: Probably both, probably a little bit of both. You know, I might argue—

Teresa: He did have to pay for that.

Travis: Sure. I might argue that there are things that governments could do that are more terrible and upsetting than a ceremonial mace or a piece of paper. There are some things that people have done that I'd rather they would have just stepped on the Constitution, you know what I mean? Or stolen a mace, you know what I mean?

Teresa: All right.

Travis: Yep.

Teresa: He wrote an article for The Guardian afterwards, Lloyd Russell Moyle.

Travis: Titled, "Sorry, it was heavy."

Teresa: No, that's not the guy that dropped it.

Travis: Oh, okay.

Teresa: This is the guy in 2018. Entitled, "I'm Glad I Grabbed the Parliamentary Mace. Here's Why." So if you would like to read about that protest, you can.

Travis: There you go. Hey, thank you for listening to us and not protesting this show?

Teresa: Mm. [laughs]

Travis: Anyways, we'd like to say a thank you to—

Teresa: We'll keep work-shopping that.

Travis: Mm. We'd like to say thank you to our editor, Rachel, without whom we could not make the show. Wanna say thank you to our researcher, Alexx, without whom we could not make the show. Wanna say thank you to you for listening. Thank you.

Teresa: Thanks, everybody.

Travis: Yeah, make sure to go check out McElroyMerch.com for all your McElroy merch needs. You can follow me on Twitch, [twitch.tv/TheTravisMcElroy](https://www.twitch.tv/TheTravisMcElroy). I'm going to be performing at San Francisco SketchFest on February 4th at 7 PM doing the Traventure Zone, where me and some comedians and RPG players are going to be playing some Dungeons and/or Dragons. You can get tickets for that on the SketchFest website. And 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.

If you love to give and get excellent advice from other fans, go ahead and join that group today. Also, we are always taking topic submissions, not just Travis's topics, everyone's topics. Please send those in. Send in idioms. Send in questions. Make sure to send those to shmannerscast@gmail.com and say hi to Alexx, A-L-E-X-X, because she reads every 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 Shmanners.

Teresa: Manners, Shmanners. Get it?

[theme music plays]

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