

## Shmanners 435: Mari Lwyd

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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:** You know... [singing] It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas.

**Teresa:** Crimbus.

**Travis:** [singing] Crimbus.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** [singing] Candlesnights.

**Teresa:** It snowed last night! And I was so happy to—

**Travis:** I mean, snow came down.

**Teresa:** Well, there's about a half an inch of snow.

**Travis:** I don't feel like the snow committed.

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Travis:** 'Cause it's that kind where it's like, it's on the grass. Like, a quarter of an inch on the grass.

**Teresa:** Yeah, but not on the road.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** But the girls were really excited this morning.

**Travis:** Yeah, they're really excited, but it's that kind of childhood excitement about snow that has nothing to do with how much there is.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** Or, like, how usable it is. So they're like, "[British accent] I want to make snow angels, papa! Papa, I want to have a snowball fight and build a snowman!" And I'm like, "Guys. There's, like, a teaspoon of snow on the ground."

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** "And you still have school today, so... please don't make a snow angel right now. I have to get you to school."

**Teresa:** Yeah. That's alright, though.

**Travis:** And so I broke their spirits. I was like, "No!"

**Teresa:** "No!"

**Travis:** No. I was like, "Yeah, maybe. Who knows?" But that classic parent word. "Maybe. Yeah, we'll see! We'll see!" Which means, "I don't think that's gonna work out, but I don't wanna say no."

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** So what are we talking about? Are we talking about snow?

**Teresa:** No, we are not.

**Travis:** Oh.

**Teresa:** Um, but in the past, we have done some Christmas time area... like, adjacent, uh, traditions?

**Travis:** What was that series of words?

**Teresa:** Well, you'll understand.

**Travis:** Holiday—holiday traditions?

**Teresa:** Sure.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** So, this one isn't really—okay. You will understand as I elucidate exactly what's going on here. And here is one that I had personally not heard of.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Because living in the United States, this takes place in Wales.

**Travis:** Ah, the Welsh.

**Teresa:** The Welsh, yes.

**Travis:** I assume you mean, and not, like... the large sea mammal.

**Teresa:** Correct.

**Travis:** Okay. Tell me about the Welsh tradition.

**Teresa:** First of all, first of all, we would definitely like to give a shoutout to Dr. Emily Zarka's PBS YouTube series, Monstrum. If you would like to learn more about this and, you know, other cool stuff like Krampus.

**Travis:** Okay. Is this about monsters?

**Teresa:** A little bit.

**Travis:** [gasps loudly] I'm in!

**Teresa:** So do you see why it was so kind of, like, amorphous, what I was talking about?

**Travis:** What about holiday lore?

**Teresa:** Oh, that's a good one.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** I like that. I like that. Okay. So, this... this tradition is called Mari Lwyd.

**Travis:** But it's not a person. 'Cause when I first saw the episode topic...

**Teresa:** No, it's not a person.

**Travis:** [simultaneously] ... I thought it was a person.

**Teresa:** It's not a person.

**Travis:** Is it M-E-R-R-Y? Or M—

**Teresa:** It's M-A-R-I L-W-Y-D.

**Travis:** Okay. Okay.

**Teresa:** Mari Lwyd. There it is.

**Travis:** L—spell the last word again.

**Teresa:** L-W-Y-D.

**Travis:** Okay. That classic—I think that's a Welsh thing, right?

**Teresa:** Classic Welsh.

**Travis:** L-W, yeah.

**Teresa:** It is a wassailing style folk custom from southern Wales.

**Travis:** Okay. So wassailing is almost like caroling and drinking, it's carousing?

**Teresa:** Yes. And, um, I don't know if we've talked about this before. But part of wassailing is normally that you bring the wassail with you. You don't—

**Travis:** "[singing] Here we go a wassailing," right.

**Teresa:** You don't demand it from the people you're visiting.

**Travis:** Not like figgy pudding.

**Teresa:** Exactly.

**Travis:** You demand figgy—you won't leave until you get some.

**Teresa:** [laughs] And here's what happens during this custom. A horse's skull—

**Travis:** What?

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Is decor—

**Travis:** Wait. I'm in. Okay.

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Travis:** I just had to shift gears. Not what I was expecting.

**Teresa:** Is decorated and mounted on a pole, and is carried by someone hiding under a sheet.

**Travis:** Okay?

**Teresa:** The horse—

**Travis:** Wha—huh?

**Teresa:** Okay, okay.

**Travis:** I'm spooked! See, okay. Earlier today...

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** So, Dot loves Nightmare Before Christmas.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** Earlier today, 'cause we got, like, a Jack and Sally dancing inflatable this year to put up. And Bebe was like, "But that's Halloween." And me and Dot were trying to explain to her, "No, Nightmare Before Christmas is a Christmas movie primarily. The focus is on them shifting from Halloween to Christmas."

And she basically was like, "It's just it feels too spooky for Christmas." And I don't know how to break to her—

**Teresa:** [simultaneously] Christmas is spooky.

**Travis:** —in general, um, most of our Christmas stuff is spooky. Including one that she loves, which is A Christmas Carol. It's full of ghosts, baby!

**Teresa:** Totes spooky. Um, okay. So what you do is...

**Travis:** So anyways, you're pretending to be a horse ghost.

**Teresa:** Sort of. The horse skull and its posse, right? 'Cause you—you're under the sheet.

**Travis:** Where's a horse skull gonna go without its gang, without its boys?

**Teresa:** Yeah. You need somebody at least to lead the horse skull.

**Travis:** Horse skulls are for the boys, you know?

**Teresa:** And then, like, three other people. So, okay.

**Travis:** One of 'em's gonna be your driver. One's gonna be your manager. One's—no, I'm thinking of Entourage, sorry. I was thinking of the show Entourage.

**Teresa:** You parade throughout town, stopping at everyone's house, where the group and the horse request entry through song. And the family in each house must then kind of, like, rap battle the horse. And if they lose...

**Travis:** What?

**Teresa:** ... every one of the—all the people, the spooky horse included, get to come in and drink and eat of their foods and—and libations.

**Travis:** What?

**Teresa:** Yeah. Yeah. Okay.

**Travis:** Do you think that there was ever horses who pretend to be someone under a sheet with a fake horse head 'cause they're like, "I wanna find out what this is all about. They keep using Jerry's skull for this so I'd love to see what it's all about."

**Teresa:** I mean, maybe. Let's go into some history for this. Like I said—

**Travis:** When you say "rap battle," if I could jump back.

**Teresa:** Rap battle.

**Travis:** They just kind of sing back and forth, right? They're not, like, freestyling at each other?

**Teresa:** No, they're freestyling at each other.

**Travis:** Okay. Okay.

**Teresa:** There are some songs that people know, but like, the people in the house are basically making up... we'll go into it.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Okay. So. The wassailing we talked about, right? But like, it can also refer to visiting an orchard and reciting, like, songs and incantations to bless the trees for next year's harvest, but we're not really talking about that part.

**Travis:** That's some solstice stuff, and I'm here for it.

**Teresa:** Yeah. Wassailing in the British Isles dates all the way back to the Middle Ages, and the custom involves performative bartering, okay? So the singers offer the homeowners a drink from their wassail bowl, in exchange for a gift of some sort.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Right? Um, and so—

**Travis:** So the difference here between, like... I was talking about it earlier, but what is that song where like, "[singing] Now bring us some figgy—" What is—how does that start?



**Teresa:** Um... "[singing] We wish you a merry Christmas, we wish you a merry Christmas."

**Travis:** There it is. So that song... it used to be like you would show up and, like, sing carols, and kind of not leave until they give you something. And it was not uncommon, especially if the people were a little drunk and rowdy, that if you're like, "I don't have anything."

You would just, like, push your way in and be like, "I'm gonna take that vase. Kay, bye!"

**Teresa:** Yes. That is—that is oftentimes what happens. Like, has happened. But traditionally—

**Travis:** This is much more of an exchange.

**Teresa:** Traditionally it's an exchange, right? But Mari Lwyd—Lwyd. There it is. Um, is a little different, because, um—so, the well-dressed kind of leader, right?

**Travis:** The horse.

**Teresa:** No.

**Travis:** No.

**Teresa:** He's leading the horse.

**Travis:** Of course.

**Teresa:** Because the horse can't really see.

**Travis:** Of course.

**Teresa:** Right? The person under there. Um, the idea is that the horse sings to the people in each house about why they should let the merry band of misfits inside. Um, and if the house is in the game, they sing back reasons that the revelers can't come inside. So the banter continues until the

homeowners run out of excuses and then are forced to open up their doors to the merriment that ensues, right? So everybody comes in and, like, eats and drinks and has kind of a little, like, party with the horse. And the horse is kind of encouraged—

**Travis:** [snorts] Okay. I want you to think about the sentence you just said.

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Travis:** "A little party with the horse."

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** Skull. The horse skull with the sheet draped—

**Teresa:** Skull, yes.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** The horse-ly dressed person.

**Travis:** Uh-huh.

**Teresa:** Uh, is kind of encouraged to, like, playfully chase children around and, like, snap its jaws and things like that.

**Travis:** I love this so much. This is what we don't have enough of these days.

**Teresa:** Oh yeah?

**Travis:** Christmas now I think in the US is too, uh... like... what is it? Sanitized. Right?

**Teresa:** Hmm. Santa... tized.

**Travis:** Ahh, Santa-tized. Where all of it is so, like, Rockwellian and, like, "Oh, oh, it's so beautiful, and... ohh, the candy canes aglow." And we don't have enough, like, ghosts and horse skulls and, like...

**Teresa:** Well, did you know—

**Travis:** ... rowdiness.

**Teresa:** —that this is one of the reasons that "Happy Christmas" was so popular for such a long time, especially in the UK? Because the idea of a merry Christmas implied, like, debauchery, right?

**Travis:** Yeah. And we've talked about it before, but there was a war on Christmas in America back in, like, I think the 17 and 1800's, where they basically, like... Puritanical society was like, "Listen. This is getting too debaucherous. This is getting too rowdy."

**Teresa:** Too much fun. We can't have this much fun.

**Travis:** And so it was the Christian church that outlawed Christmas, and made it illegal to celebrate because they believed it led to wickedness. Which is part of the reason that now, here in the US, our American holiday traditions are so, like, family friendly and child based and everything. Uh, because the war on Christmas was committed by the church.

**Teresa:** So, um, Mari Lwyd is probably a pagan tradition. Okay? And I'll get to that.

**Travis:** [loudly] Uh, uh, yeah!

**Teresa:** No, no, listen. No, listen.

**Travis:** Uh-huh?

**Teresa:** The origins are murky.

**Travis:** Okay. But you can see why.

**Teresa:** Yes, of course. Because Christmas itself, the date is very close to the solstice, and Saturnalia, and mistletoe has been brought in to, like, Christmas celebrations, but originally it was for fertility.

**Travis:** Like 90% of Christmas is pagan.

**Teresa:** And lights were to light the dark winter night, and Odin is one of the inspirations for Santa Claus. So it—we assume that Mari Lwyd is part of another kind of, like, pagan tradition in the great Christmas rebrand.

**Travis:** Well, and that's the thing, right? You mentioned Krampus.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** That's another thing that we don't really have in the US. But this counterpart to Santa that's, like, the mischief-maker version of Santa, where you know, some places it's Krampus or something like that where it's like, Santa rewards the good kids. Ahh, but be careful! Because Krampus will come get you. Right? And this idea of like, here's a mischief-maker coming to your door with a horse skull on his head, chases children around, snaps at them, right? It does seem like it's like, "And this is the mischief side of Christmas. And, like, will chase the kids and stuff. And you don't want the horse head to get you."

**Teresa:** Um, so there is a Welsh poet and scholar who wrote... I'm gonna try really hard. Iorwyth... Iorwyth... Peate. I'm gonna call him Peate. That's their last name.

Um, this scholar believed that the tradition was rooted in fear, just like you said, right? Because winter's a hard time, cold, sickness, death. And, like, you know, a horse skull showing up at your door is a stark reminder.

**Travis:** With a sheet underneath, very ghostly, yeah.

**Teresa:** Yeah. And the term "Mari" was a spin, at the time, for mare, right? Which is horse, right? So lots of people agree with this scholar. Um, and another folklorist, Ellen Ettlinger, believes that while it does, yes, have all the

markings of a pagan celebration, the tradition might actually be a little closer to, um, the autumn festival, Sam—um—

**Travis:** Samhain.

**Teresa:** Samhain, instead of the Yule festival.

**Travis:** Sure. Here's all what I'm saying. Here's all I'm gonna say. Even if this tradition started not as a pagan tradition, right? I'm gonna say that this is like Big K Cola. This is RC Co—where you're like, "Hey, listen. I know this isn't Pepsi or Coke. But... but it wouldn't exist if those other things hadn't existed first."

**Teresa:** Right. And horse iconography is rampant throughout the British Isles, right? So you've got a bunch of different kind of, like, horse deities.

**Travis:** Oh yeah.

**Teresa:** Right?

**Travis:** Like the kelpie. Are you talking about, like, the mytholo—

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Yeah. Uh, Rhiannon in Wales, Eponia in Gaul, Macha in Ireland. Or Macha in Ireland. So, like, there's lots of these kind of, like, horses depicted. But Mari Lwyd is not really, like... like, categorized with them? Um, but what it could be categorized with is hobby horses.

**Travis:** Okay. I wanna hear more about this. But first, how about a word from another Max Fun show?

[theme music plays]

[music plays]

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**Riley:** Uh, celebrities!

**Speaker 3:** Games!

**Speaker 4:** Oh, sound rounds.

**Riley:** I—improvised speeches.

**Speaker 3:** Puns disguised as trivia.

**Speaker 4:** Um, a very niche Flash Gordon clip.

**Riley:** Um, Ch—Chappell Roan!

**Dave:** Ah, no! Riley, I'm sorry. She will not return our phone calls. I am afraid you're out.

[buzzer]

**Riley:** [wistfully] A girl can dream.

**Dave:** Oh, but dreaming will not earn a girl any points. Troubled Waters! Listen on Maximum Fun, or wherever you get your podcasts.

[music and ad end]

[music plays]

**Rachel:** [sarcastic] I'm Yucky Jessica.

**Griffin:** [sarcastic] I'm Chuck Crudsworth.

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**Rachel:** I hate this little hippo!

[music and ad end]

**Travis:** Okay, tell me about hobby hor—hobby horses is like, you know, a horse on a stick and you ride it around, right?

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** In the 16th and 17th century, there's a lot of evidence that hobby horses were used for celebrations throughout the UK.

**Travis:** Sure. Which makes sense, because if you think about it...

**Teresa:** Totally.

**Travis:** That tracks from, like, military parades, right? Where it's like, oh, we're celebrating victory, or remembering this victory, or whatever. And you would have these big processions of horses. So then kids especially during a time—and listen, I'll just say it—toxic, where you were like, "Boys! The best thing you can do is be like your dad. And your dad served in the military. So don't you wanna go serve in the military and do damage?"

Not that it's terrible to serve in the military, but you know what I'm saying.

**Teresa:** Right.

**Travis:** And so this thing of like, any toy for boys for a long time was like, military based.

**Teresa:** Absolutely. And so... Mari Lwyd is likely a Welsh take on the kind of already established UK tradition also known as hooden horse characters. Uh, so like, it's just kind of like... we took this thing, and we made it more goth.

**Travis:** Yeahhh.

**Teresa:** Right?

**Travis:** Love that.

**Teresa:** [laughs] Um, and this makes a lot of sense. Like I said, mare for Mari, and then...

**Travis:** Nightmare. That's probably not connected, but it's there. It's right there.



**Teresa:** Well, Lwyd is grey in Welsh. So grey mare. Maybe?

**Travis:** Old grey mare, she ain't what she used to be. She's a skull now. She's a ghost.

**Teresa:** So in the 1800's—

**Travis:** And let's hear it for feminism, right? It's a mare.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Huh? Girls can be scary horses too. That's all I'm saying.

**Teresa:** Yes. Yes they can.

**Travis:** If any girls are listening, you could grow up to be scary horse skull ghost too. Nothing's—break through that glass ceiling.

**Teresa:** We have definitive evidence in the 1800's that Mari Lwyd was admonished for being an immoral practice, right?

**Travis:** Ugh.

**Teresa:** That's where we have, like, actual evidence. Um, but then we get into the 20th century. Local Christian clergymen in Wales thought that it was too weird and scary.

**Travis:** Of course.

**Teresa:** To be part of Christmas, even if it was, like, more Yuletide, right? Um, and then that's where we start to see the kind of like, "Oh no, it's about Mary. The mother of Jesus."

**Travis:** Who loved... horse ghosts.

**Teresa:** I... guess.

**Travis:** Or was a horse ghost? I'm not up on my Catholic... stuff.

**Teresa:** But probably—

**Travis:** She wasn't a horse ghost, right?

**Teresa:** No. Probably more just a way of saying, "Look, it has the same name, so let us do it."

**Travis:** That's one of the stupidest Christian rebrands I've ever heard.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Like, I can't even jokingly one-for-one that. You know what I mean? Oh my god. Here's the thing that kills me about that, that I touched on earlier. Is like, I think one of the things that people often forget is that having that balance of like, light and dark and, like, fear and joy, right? Especially as you're talking about, like, during the winter months when it's dark and everything, right? There are people—I'm not saying everybody. Like, I don't particularly like movies where the scariness is like, it's really tense and people could get hurt at any time. But like, this thing of like, you go to a haunted house, right? You get scared and then, oh, the—at first I'm scared, then I get the adrenaline rush, and then I get the joy of "Actually I'm okay, and everything's fine."

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Travis:** Right? So like, that playful fear, right? That like, makes you appreciate the joy in everything more.

**Teresa:** And that is definitely what I think people are going for with this. Because there are a couple other literary references. There's one in 1941, a poem by Vernon Watkins called *The Ballad of Mari Lwyd*.

And Susan Cooper's in 1971, the novel *The Silver on the Tree*, where Mari Lwyd appears as an undead unicorn and guardian—

**Travis:** What?!

**Teresa:** —the magic sword in the mythical sunken lands off the coast of Wales.

**Travis:** Yes! Yes! Thank you! Hey, take that. "I sold my watch, you sold your hair, blah, blah, blah." We got a skeletal unicorn over here! That's a way better story!

And really, I also want to point out, to jump back to the fear thing, that's what Christmas Carol is, right?

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** Of like, when he wakes up and he's so overjoyed to still be alive and have a chance to, like, change his life. That's that fear—

**Teresa:** I'm gonna read you some of these poems, and you are gonna get that kind of vibe.

**Travis:** Yes, please.

**Teresa:** Um, but first... here is a very nice, um, bridge, I guess? Bridge into your life, Travis McElroy.

**Travis:** Mine?

**Teresa:** Lady shows up in D&D.

**Travis:** Oh really?

**Teresa:** Yeah! An undead horse creature who appears on New Year's Eve and attempts to gain access into people's homes.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Yeah. It's pretty cool. It's in D&D. Look it up.

**Travis:** It's also just occurring to me, with the combination of her love of unicorns and Nightmare Before Christmas, that if Dot ever learned about the concept of a skeletal undead unicorn, I think she'd be over the moon.

**Teresa:** Might be in there. Might be in there. Um, so Christmas celebrations including Mari Lwyd continue to this day all throughout Wales and other parts of England. And like we said, the imagery is kind of scary, but delightful. And, I mean, a freestyling rap battle sounds...

**Travis:** Yeah, listen. I'm open to that.

**Teresa:** [laughs] Sounds like a great way to pass the time. Better than charades.

**Travis:** Yeah. I also... listen. I'm an elder emo, elder goth. I know this. But the idea of like, if I had the opportunity, if someone was like, "Would you like to ride—you're going into battle, facing your enemies," right? Or even just, "Riding through town, you're gonna make a grand entrance. Do you wanna do it on this regular horse, or this skeleton horse that, like, snorts out black smoke or whatever?" I'm like, "I would like that skeletal horse, please and thank you. Yes very much."

I've—man. Ever since the first time I saw Nightmare Before Christmas, and then also Corpse Bride, I'm like, "I would like a ghost dog, please. I would like a skeleton dog. Yes, please. That sounds amazing."

**Teresa:** So if you are gonna do it, here's what you need to do. You need one person who's covered in the sheet working the horse skull, right? One formally—

**Travis:** [laughs quietly] The way you phrase it. "Working the horse skull. Work it. Get out there. You gotta work it."

**Teresa:** Indeed, you do have to work it. Uh, one formally—formal, like suit, tie—dress leader of the group. Right? And then you need three other merrymakers dressed in, like, ribbons and garnishes and things that match the horse. Right?

**Travis:** To match the vibe. You gotta match that vibe.

**Teresa:** Yeah, that match the vibe. And you could even do a stock character. Punch and Judy are very popular.

**Travis:** Yeah, something from Comedia.

**Teresa:** Um, but you do have to make sure that the skull is decorated well. You can use, like, ribbons and, like, jewels, and like, people do things like bedazzling and decoupage and LEDs.

**Travis:** Yes, please. Yes. Yes.

**Teresa:** All of that stuff.

**Travis:** Give me a Daft Punk skull with, like, a display across it. Oh, yeah. Cyberpunk. Steampunk!

**Teresa:** Oh boy!

**Travis:** Steampunk horse skull. Yes.

**Teresa:** We're doing it.

**Travis:** I'm here for it.

**Teresa:** Um, and—

**Travis:** Do I have to use a real horse skull or can I 3D print it?

**Teresa:** I think you can 3D print it.

**Travis:** Okay, great.

**Teresa:** Uh, it takes place somewhere between Christmas Day and 12th Night. So that's, like, after Christmas.

**Travis:** Sure.

**Teresa:** Um, and then you start at dusk, and be ready to parade late into the night, because you got—

**Travis:** [simultaneously] You gotta commit.

**Teresa:** —lots of places to go. Right? And when you arrive at the house, you begin the call and response singing. Right? Carolers go first. And the songs are malleable, right? There's not—there's a couple of, like, regular ones, and then you can, like, kind of make 'em up, right? But you need to remember that you're singing to the homeowners why they should let you in. Right?

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Then you let them respond. And you make a kind of, like, rap battle game out of it.

**Travis:** Now, is this like trick or treat? Can you opt out of it's just like, my porch light's off. My door is closed. I do not want to let you guys in.

**Teresa:** I mean, I guess so. If you don't answer the door, eventually they might leave. But they might stay!

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Um—

**Travis:** That's weird. That is where it crosses over for me.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Of like, "No, guy—I really don't wanna do—I'm—not tonight, okay? I've got a cold."

**Teresa:** It should be playful, is the deal, right? Like when you go into their house, you don't actually drink everything they have, and eat everything, and mess up their house. Right? It's supposed to be silly holiday times.

**Travis:** There's always bad apples, but be cool. It's not the Purge. Come on!

**Teresa:** So, here is one of the rhymes that you may recite to try to gain entry. Listen to this.

"The Hodening Hoss, the Marbury Dun. Old bone-face the deathless am I.  
Heavy with foal 2000 years. Bridled with sorrow, saddled with fear. I canter  
through the pastures of tremble and quake. I gallop the track between sleep  
and awake. Seeking the deep of welcome and stint for my tears. Let me in!"

**Travis:** "And I'll be totally chill, I promise. I'll clean up after myself. Here's my references."

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** I love that so much.

**Teresa:** See? That's what I was talking about, right?

**Travis:** When you use a phrase like "The deathless one," I'm... 100% here for it. I would be so bad in, like, a supernatural type show where it's like, "Whatever you do, don't let the demon in."

And the demon would, like, knock on the door and I'd be like, "Yeah?" And they'd be like, "I am the 2000 year old deathless one." I'd be like, "Awesome, dude."

**Teresa:** "Come on in, dude."

**Travis:** "That's sick, man! Come here, tell me all about it. The things you've seen!"

**Teresa:** Yeah. Um, and it is—I mean, it's wonderfully goth, isn't it?

**Travis:** Yes!

**Teresa:** Really, really Christmas Carol that up, scare ya.

**Travis:** Even more so, right? This isn't like, "I'll save your soul." It's like, "I'm a old horse ghost who's seen 2000 years of torment. Please let me in to eat cookies and stuff."

**Teresa:** Um, so it—

**Travis:** "This isn't for you, at this point. I'll give you some wassail—I am trying to save nobody's soul. I just wanna eat your cookies and everything and, like, you know, hang out."

**Teresa:** But if they do come, you can be prepared. Like, excuses range all the way from like, my house is dusty, or your—

**Travis:** I'm allergic to horse ghosts.

**Teresa:** Or you're not fancy enough, you can't come in, or things like that, right?

**Travis:** Can you imagine?

**Teresa:** Um...

**Travis:** Oh. To put the work in, and then get there and you're not fancy enough as a horse ghost to come in? Oh...

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** That would really give me a long face.

[pause]

**Teresa:** Ha.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Ha.



**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** But you should be stocked.

**Travis:** If I had gently walked into that one, I think you would've laughed at it.

**Teresa:** [laughs] You should be stocked up, right? This is the time for kind of, like, the hostess with the mostest deal. Right? You need to have the cookies and the cakes and the drinks and all this kind of stuff.

**Travis:** Now, you wanna be—you wanna be the hostess with the middlest.

**Teresa:** Oh, really?

**Travis:** Because if you're the mostest, now every—like, this is like giving out full size candy bars at trick or treat. Every horse ghost is coming to your house at that point.

**Teresa:** It is considered lucky, if the horse ghost visits you.

**Travis:** I'm telling you right now, if in a single night eight different groups of horse ghost people come to my house, I don't feel lucky. I feel like a stable.

**Teresa:** [laughs] That was a good one.

**Travis:** Thank you.

**Teresa:** I think that we do need to remember that these are, like, small Welsh town traditions. I don't think that eight different ones—

**Travis:** So you think there's, like, one?

**Teresa:** I think that, like, the village gets, like, one.

**Travis:** Man. That must be... can you imagine, like, a new family moves in? And then they, like, do it.

**Teresa:** And they don't know.

**Travis:** And you're like, "Guys, no! Sorry. I'm the horse ghost of this town. This is a one ghost horse town."

**Teresa:** [laughs] That's perfect.

**Travis:** Thank you. Oh my god, okay. This is one of those times where... we don't often ask for, like, direct feedback on episodes. But I sincerely want to know if anybody listening, like, participates in this tradition and, like, you have experience with it. Like, if you have done this, or like, your family did it, or you've got—if you have pictures of it, please share them. Email them to us. I would love to see it.

**Teresa:** Sounds great.

**Travis:** If you're listening to this on Friday—or Saturday, I guess—Candlenights is going to be airing for this first time this year on December 14th, that's Saturday. And you can watch it then live with a crowd watching it for the first time, but even if you're listening after this or you can't make it, it's gonna be available video-on-demand until January 4th, so make sure you check that out. And you can go to [bit.ly/candlenightstickets2024](https://bit.ly/candlenightstickets2024) to get all the information, get your tickets. It's five dollars.

**Teresa:** Five dollars for, like, an hour of merriment!

**Travis:** Hour and 45 minutes.

**Teresa:** Hour and 40—nearly two hours of mirth.

**Travis:** Yeah. It's very long. And all of the money that we get from selling tickets and merch and everything for Candlenights is gonna go to Harmony House in our hometown of Huntington, West Virginia. That helps people who are experiencing homelessness. Um, five dollars is, like, the minimum, but you can do more if you so choose. Um, we have a bunch of great guests, a bunch of segments.

So, [bit.ly/candlenightstickets2024](https://bit.ly/candlenightstickets2024). Also, speaking of available, Champions Grove 2025 packages are available now. Uh, there's only a few left, so don't wait. Go get yours. It's an event that I put on every year for the la—uh, [crosstalk].

**Teresa:** This is the second annual.

**Travis:** This is the second, second year.

**Teresa:** Second annual Champions Grove.

**Travis:** But, at Ravenwood Castle in Hocking Hills, Ohio. Get a bunch of people together, bring in some creators from the TTRPG world. I know we've announced some. Jason Charles Miller, Danielle Radford, Catie Osborn, Tybee Diskin, Paul Foxcroft, and Jasper Cartwright are gonna be there. It's gonna be so fun. Uh, you can go to [championsgrove.com](https://championsgrove.com) and get your packages.

Uh, wanna say thank you to our editor, Rachel, without whom we could not make this show.

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

**Travis:** I wanna say thank you to our researcher, Alexx, without whom we could not make this show. And thank you to you for listening. You're the horse ghost of my heart.

**Teresa:** Aww.

**Travis:** So thank you so much. 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 your topic submissions, your questions, your idioms. Um, and like Travis said, if you have participated in Mari Lwyd,

please send us pictures. Let us know. Talk to us about it. We're very interested.

**Travis:** And that's gonna do it for us, so join us again next week.

**Teresa:** Oh! I forgot.

**Travis:** Oh!

**Teresa:** Shmannerscast@gmail.com

**Travis:** There you go.

**Teresa:** Send those in.

**Travis:** Now that's gonna do it for us. Join us again next week.

**Teresa:** No RSVP required!

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

**Teresa:** [spooky voice] Manners, Shmanners! Get it?

**Travis:** Ohhh, spooky!

[theme music plays]

[chord]

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