**Leave a Light On For Me**

**by Mark Nixon**

[[*MUSIC: SHADOWS AT THE DOOR THEME (SLOW PIANO NOTES) SHIFTING INTO SUSTAINED STRINGS BEHIND THE INTRODUCTION.*]]

**MARK NIXON:** Welcome to the inaugural episode of Shadows at the Door, the podcast. I’m Mark Nixon, and each episode David Ault and I will be featuring a ghost story and then discussing its themes and ideas. The stories will be both old and new: adaptations of classics both well-known and not so much, and original works for the podcast. David and I are great lovers of the M. R. James style ghost story, or “pleasing terrors” as they were also known. These were ghost stories in which atmosphere and dread were built into a horrifying conclusion. As such, we’re champions of what we call “quiet horror,” finding that this is when horror is really at its best. We hope that through this podcast you’ll be encouraged to delve more into this realm of fiction.

Now, tonight’s story is entitled “Leave a Light On For Me” and is actually one of my own. It concerns a young university professor, a lost archaeological find, and the very best of British hospitality. So, gather ‘round the fire, pour yourself some tea, and we’ll begin.

[[*MUSIC: ENDS.*]]

[Timestamp: 2:05]

**TROUGHTON (VOICE OVER):** I accept that there may be things far grander and more incomprehensible than I can possibly imagine. Indeed, whenever I have gazed up at the Milky Way there has always been a feeling in my chest of something greater than my mortal life. Equally, however, when I gaze into the dark of an empty hallway or across a field in the dead of night, [BEAT.] I sense something looking back.

The very idea of the supernatural is nonsensical. It’s devoid of sensible meaning. [STAMMERS A BIT.] And yet complex, seemingly impossible things are, by their very nature, difficult to explain. I, myself, struggle to explain [EXASPERATED SIGH.] what I have witnessed...

Perhaps I should elaborate. The matter began, as far as I’m concerned, quite mundanely. [[*MUSIC: QUIETLY BEGINS IN THE BACKGROUND.*]] I had just finished interviewing that year’s applications to Warwick and found myself in the midst of an academic wanderlust. It had been some years since my last publication and, despite my short time lecturing at Warwick, I feared I was beginning to stagnate.

As luck would have it, or indeed something quite opposite to luck, an email presented itself to me having been forwarded from colleague to colleague over the course of some weeks. There was, it seemed, a potentially significant discovery in Northumberland and the finder, a local priest, was keen to pass the relic on for study.

Two days later, I found myself on a train heading north. It was November, but I remember as I reached Northumberland the sun was still visible well into the evening. With rolling hills as far as the eye could see, the sun lingered and illuminated my journey for as long as it could. Eventually the land was plunged into darkness, and with Uber seemingly unheard of this far north, I was forced to take a bus to my hotel in the coastal town of Anworth.

Granted I arrived late in the evening, but the town initially struck me as unremarkable, offering little but a selection of shops surrounded by a stream and headed off with an ageing mediaeval castle. I soon learnt that Anworth was, to many, a place to retire, while for others it was simply a place to forget.

Opposite the castle stood my destination, the Cherry Tree Hotel. Three stars on Tripadvisor, mind you, but it was quite literally the only hotel within walking distance. The red brickwork that peeked under the crawling ivy betrayed the building’s age, and inside, the 1970s were still very much present despite what contemporary fashions would impose upon it.

As I awaited service, I saw that merely eight of the twenty rooms were booked, including my own. And, oh yes, upon closer inspection, I saw that they’d somehow managed to misspell “Troughton.”

[SFX: SOUNDS OF A BUSY HOTEL DINING ROOM. UNINTELLIGIBLE CONVERSATION IN THE BACKGROUND. A FORK SCRATCHES ACROSS A PLATE.]

**TROUGHTON (VO):** The next morning I succumbed to hunger, and perhaps an element of laziness, and attended the hotel’s restaurant for breakfast. The numbers present did not match those in the guestbook, so I was left to assume that the Cherry Tree was the social hub of the local community.

Indeed, when I eventually found a vacant table, I couldn’t help but tune into the conversations around me. And it soon became apparent that everyone knew everybody. I seemed to draw a few looks and offered a polite smile here and there. I wasn’t the only passing visitor, but I *was* the only one eating alone. Or perhaps it was the tweed that drew their gaze.

Before long, I accidentally met the eyes of the hotel manager who promptly came striding over, armed with a jug of luminous orange juice.

**HOTEL MANAGER:** Morning, squire!

**TROUGHTON:** Ah, uh, good morning.

**HOTEL MANAGER:** And a fine one it is. Freshen your juice?

**TROUGHTON:** Ah, no, I’m– [SOUND OF JUICE BEING POURED.] okay. Ah. [SOUNDS OF POURING STOP.] Thanks.

**HOTEL MANAGER:** Something wrong with your breakfast?

**TROUGHTON:** I’m sorry?

**HOTEL MANAGER:** Your breakfast. You’ve been shuffling that sausage around for five minutes now.

**TROUGHTON:** Oh. [CHUCKLE.] Oh, it’s-it’s-it’s fine, thank you. I-it’s just not what I’m used to.

**HOTEL MANAGER:** What, they don’t do a full English in, um, Coventry, was it?

**TROUGHTON:** Yes. But no, I-I normally have something a lot lighter back home.

**HOTEL MANAGER:** Uh-huh. Any nice plans for today, then? Stroll on the beach? No, wait, let me guess; *you’re here* for the castle.

**TROUGHTON:** Sadly, no. As a matter of fact, I am to meet a Father Gorman a little later. I’ll be–

**HOTEL MANAGER:** [INTERRUPTING] Father Gorman?

**TROUGHTON:** Yes, Father Simon Gorman. He does live in Anworth, doesn’t he?

**HOTEL MANAGER:** Oh, yeah, he certainly does. He doesn’t show his face a lot these days, though. Hasn’t been so much as a Sunday service in weeks.

**TROUGHTON:** Mm. Curious. He seemed rather eager to speak to someone from the University.

**HOTEL MANAGER:** [DRAMATIC EXHALE.] The young fool reckons he’s found old Edgar’s lantern, doesn’t he.

**TROUGHTON:** I…beg your pardon?

**HOTEL MANAGER:** Come on, why else would you be meeting him?

**TROUGHTON:** Augh. [FIRM.] I’ve been invited to inspect and collect an object of potential academic interest. I know little more than that and honestly, I don’t care to speculate further.

**HOTEL MANAGER:** Of course, Doctor. I meant nothing by it.

**TROUGHTON:** [SIGHS, CORRECTING.] Professor. And, please excuse me, I must gather my things. Lovely breakfast. Really was.

[SFX: DINING ROOM SOUNDS END]

**TROUGHTON (VO):** Less than twelve hours in Anworth and I was already at the centre of local gossip.

[SFX: LOUD, DULL FOOTSTEPS CLIMBING STAIRS.]

The manager had been strongly in favour of this room. [A KEY UNLOCKS A DOOR WHICH IS THEN OPENED AND CLOSED.] Although lacking a sea view as I had requested, it did overlook the castle, [A CLOCK TICKS IN THE BACKGROUND OF THE HOTEL ROOM.] which currently blocked the low winter sun from blinding me entirely. Nothing else in the room was remarkable save for a rather tall cupboard and an armchair by the foot of the bed. The cleaner had apparently already been in while I was attending to breakfast, as my satchel hung neatly on the bedpost ready for collection. [TROUGHTON SITS ON THE BED, WHICH HAS QUIETLY CREAKING SPRINGS.] Poking out from it, however, was something new. [BAG RUSTLES.] Placed rather conspicuously was an old, tattered book, cloth-bound but with half the spine missing and the rest withered down to mere threads. I had to open the thing to discover the title. [A PAGE TURNS.]

[[*MUSIC: LONG, LOW SUSTAINED NOTES BEGIN IN THE BACKGROUND, BUILDING A GROWING UNEASE.*]]

**TROUGHTON:** [READING ALOUD.] “On Ghosts and Ghouls of the Northeast” [LAUGH.] Good Lord, what rubbish. [A PAGE TURNS. TROUGHTON GROANS.] “The Poppy Girl,” “Jimmy Allen,” “A Grey Lady.” Ugh, how original. [INHALE.] Um, unh! [SURPRISED.] “Old Edgar’s Lantern.”

**TROUGHTON (VO):** Surely this was no coincidence. With some condescension I disregarded the book, keen to meet with the priest without all this nonsense to cloud my mind. I did half look for the manager on my way out, for the book could have easily been mistaken for my own by the cleaner. But I was convinced that there was no literature in the room when I checked in.

[[*MUSIC: TRAILS OFF INTO A SINGLE, LOW PIANO NOTE THAT IS ALMOST LOST INTO THE BACKGROUND NOISE.*]]

[SFX: THE DOOR TO THE HOTEL OPENS AND CLOSES. SEAGULLS, WAVES, AND OCCASIONAL TRAFFIC MAKE UP THE HUMDRUM OF A COASTAL TOWN, PROMPTING A DEEP, SATISFIED SIGH FROM TROUGHTON. FOOTSTEPS OF HARD SOLED SHOES ON THE PAVEMENT CAN BE HEARD.]

**TROUGHTON (VO):** At night I had failed to spot the daffodils that surrounded the base of the castle. Same of the hanging flower baskets from the lampposts. Most shops had a bowl of water on the step for passing dogs, and I confess to feeling somewhat charmed by the place.

And although I couldn’t see the ocean for the buildings, I could certainly smell the salt in the air and could feel my lungs cleanse of city smog. Despite my slow amble, I still had half an hour or so before my appointment, but decided to head to the church, nonetheless.

[SFX: A GATE IS PULLED OPEN OVER GRAVEL. THE TOWN AMBIENCE QUIETENS.]

**TROUGHTON (VO):** I pushed the wooden gate against the gravel and [FOOTSTEPS RESUME ON GRAVEL.] walked up the path to the church door. Surrounded by tombstones, I noted the salty air has long since eroded the majority of decoration and text of each stone. In fact, those most exposed were completely eroded so the patterns on them strongly resembled the acoustic foam you see in recording studios. [FOOTSTEPS STOP.]

Arriving at the wooden door, I knocked just in case Father Gorman [SEVERAL KNOCKS ON A THICK WOODEN DOOR.] was as early as I. [AFTER A PAUSE.] Nothing. Perhaps it was the gaze of passing villagers that spurred me, for I was keen to get inside the church, and so I tried the door. [DOOR OPENS.] To my surprise, it was unlocked and revealed a dark and empty church hall within.

**TROUGHTON:** [VOICE ECHOES AS IF IN A LARGE, EMPTY SPACE.] Hello? Hello? [HARD SOLED FOOTSTEPS ON A HARD FLOOR ECHO.]

**TROUGHTON (VO):** As I entered, the cold swept over me like a blanket in the breeze. In the thin beams of light that pierced the old stained-glass window, I saw dust dance in the new draft. The church pews were also rather caked in the stuff, leaving me certain that nobody had set foot in here for some time.

Behind the somewhat humble altar across the hall, I spotted a door locked with a padlock. At that moment, I saw a shadow behind me in the reflections of my spectacles and I quickly turned around to spot the figure of a man in the doorway.

**TROUGHTON:** [CAUGHT OFF GUARD.] Oh, uh, Father Gorman, is it, uh, pleased to meet you.

**GORMAN:** [STITLED.] Yes, that’s me. You must be Professor Troughton.

**TROUGHTON:** Ah, that I am. Please, you must forgive me for intruding.

**GORMAN:** Think nothing of it.

**TROUGHTON (VO):** As we shook hands, Gorman offered me a smile that was completely lacking in warmth. Were it not for lips curling on his unshaven face, I would declare the man completely without expression.

**TROUGHTON:** Shall we get to the task at hand?

**GORMAN:** [CONFUSED.] Oh, yes, yes of course. [AN INSIDE DOOR IS OPENED.] This way please.

[SFX: HARD SOLED FOOTSTEPS RESUME.]

**TROUGHTON:** So, is the church closed these days?

**GORMAN:** Hmm? Oh, yes, more or less. [FOOTSTEPS STOP.] I..I haven’t been really feeling up to it lately.

**TROUGHTON:** I’m sorry to hear that.

**GORMAN:** Oh, it’s…it’s nothing, really, I’ll-I’ll live. [GORMAN HANDLES A PADLOCK AND UNLOCKS IT.] After you. [A DOOR OPENS.]

**TROUGHTON:** Your office is looking a little bare, Father. Why all the empty bookshelves?

**GORMAN:** I, uh, I prefer to work from home these days. I had someone bring most of me things.

**TROUGHTON:** I suppose helping your parish doesn’t require you to be rooted to the church.

**GORMAN:** No.

**TROUGHTON:** [FEELING AWKWARD.] Well. At least it’s certainly warmer in here.

**TROUGHTON (VO):** The priest sat behind a desk facing slightly away from me and toward a crucifix hanging above the door. He locked his hands together as if to keep them occupied, but a bouncing leg betrayed his otherwise stoic disposition. I couldn’t help but notice a large chest on the other side of the room. It looked new and it, too, was sealed with a padlock.

**TROUGHTON:** Is that…?

**GORMAN:** Yes, that’s it.

**TROUGHTON:** [WITH A BREATHY EXHALE.] I suppose one can’t be too careful, huh. [CHASTISING, HALF SERIOUS.] Especially when one leaves the church doors unlocked.

**GORMAN:** Yes, it…it must’ve slipped my mind. But, Anworth is quiet, y’know? Few troublemakers, as it were.

**TROUGHTON (VO):** He produced a single key from inside his pocket. I took it and immediately squatted by the chest. I was keen to assess the item and take my leave if truth be told. I admit to feeling uncomfortable this far north, but Gorman’s behaviour combined with my own impatience was beginning to make me downright irritable.

I donned a pair of vinyl gloves and got to the task at hand. [TROUGHTON UNLOCKS AND OPENS THE CHEST, WHICH HAS SLIGHTLY CREAKING HINGES.] Inside lay a single item, somewhat large and bound in a thick fabric which turned out to be an old picnic blanket. Hardly the proper protection for a supposed antique. I bit my tongue and decided not to chastise the man who was shifting uncomfortably behind me. [CLOTH IS HEARD MOVING AS TROUGHTON UNWRAPS THE LANTERN.] Inside, of course, was the lantern. I immediately recognized it as originating in the late 14th century, and while I have seen a fair few before, this one was rather unique. [TROUGHTON MOVES A METAL PIECE OF THE LANTERN.]

**TROUGHTON:** [WHISPERED.] Fascinating!

**TROUGHTON (VO):** Typical for the era, it was thin and rather lengthy. Carved into the brass, however, was an unusual collection of chevron stripes.

**TROUGHTON:** Well, it’s older than you think, Father. [IN LECTURE MODE.] Easily early 15th century, perhaps even the 14th. Quite a remarkable design, actually. You say that workmen came across this in the foundations of the church? [PAUSE.] Father Gorman?

**GORMAN:** [STARTLED.] Oh! Uh, sorry, yes. Un-under the foundations. [STAMMERS SOME MORE.] They found it while we attempted to strengthen the dilapidated wall at the east side. [TROUGHTON MOVES ANOTHER PIECE OF THE LANTERN AND GORMAN BECOMES MORE AGITATED.] Must you do that here?

**TROUGHTON:** [INCREDULOUS.] Excuse me?

**GORMAN:** The lantern. [GETTING MORE FRANTIC.] You’ve seen it now. I-I thought you’d take it away to Coventry?

**TROUGHTON:** [CONDESCENDING.] You’ll forgive a man’s professional curiosity, surely? I can’t make my preliminary observations so quickly, now can I? [BEAT.] Did you reach any theories yourself?

**GORMAN:** [DISMISSIVE.] I’m not one for such things.

**TROUGHTON:** Nonsense. Your email implied some amateur research. [PAUSE.]

**GORMAN:** Hmph.

**TROUGHTON (VO):** I was able to open the latch without risk of damage, only to find a [OUTRAGED] fresh wick within, clearly burned at the edge. A philistine had actually lighted the damn thing! [SOMEWHAT HORRIFIED AND GETTING MORE AND MORE ANGRY.] Whenever I venture outside the realm of academia it is not simply enough to get on and do my job. I find I have to devote a significant proportion of my time teaching people to respect history and the relics we come across. Surely even a religious man would know better than to light a flame inside an ancient lantern!

**TROUGHTON:** [OUTRAGED.] Nevertheless, you knew enough to rethread the wick!

**GORMAN:** I-i-it’s as you implied, Professor. Curiosity, i-it gets the better of all of us.

**TROUGHTON:** I-[EXASPERATED SIGH.] I suppose you did the right thing contacting someone anyway. [RESIGNED SIGH.] How did it look, then, in all its glory?

[SFX: A CHAIR IS PUSHED BACK ACROSS THE WOODEN FLOOR AS GORMAN STANDS.]

**GORMAN:** I-I’m sorry, Professor. [INHALES. CONTINUES WITH STRAINED PAUSES BETWEEN WORDS.] I’m afraid we may have to stop for the day. I-I’m afraid I’m suddenly feeling unwell.

**TROUGHTON:** Hmm. I suppose you do look pale. You can leave me here; I’ll be some time yet.

**TROUGHTON (VO):** There were some protests, but I was able to convince Gorman to allow me to stay for the remainder of the day. He charged me with the keys and I made sure [[*MUSIC: QUIET PIANO BEGINS IN THE BACKGROUND.*]] to lock the church doors after he left, lest I be disturbed.

Now left to my own devices, I spent the next few hours meticulously cleaning the lantern, removing rust and debris and so forth. I documented my progress and would have sent photographs back to my colleagues were it not for the lack of a decent phone signal.

Still, I had quite the prize to return with. The mere existence of the lantern was not remarkable in itself; however, the geometric patterns *were* completely fascinating.

It was coming to half five and the short day had long since gone. The lantern now looked pristine, and it suddenly dawned on me exactly how long I’d been attending to it. I’d gathered as much information as I could without proper resources and now, even my own stomach was conspiring against me.

Still, there was one aspect I hadn’t fully investigated. I was compelled to see the lantern in use, to see how the warped chevron patterns would cast. It was an almost primal instinct, or perhaps even a childish one, but I soon found myself [TROUGHTON RIFLES THROUGH GORMAN'S DESK.] searching the drawers of the desk until I found a box of matches.

[SFX: TROUGHTON OPENS THE METAL HINGE OF THE LANTERN. HE STRIKES A MATCH.]

I stood back and surveyed the room around me. The flame burned with an intensity I hadn’t expected. The light somehow overcame the confines of the casing and filled every corner of the room. The walls bathed in light and I dare say it was now brighter than it had been with the main light on.

My awe was short lived, however. [[*MUSIC: GIVES WAY TO A DEEP RUMBLE.*]] I felt a sudden draft at the back of my neck and the flame began to flicker. [[*MUSIC: MORE LAYERS ARE ADDED TO THE DRONE, EVOKING NATURE.*]] Suddenly, I could smell the sea. The draft became an outright gust, causing the flame to dance within its casing.

[SFX: STRONG WIND BEGINS TO BLOW OVER THE DRONING RUMBLE.]

**TROUGHTON:** What on earth?

[SFX: THE WIND CONTINUES TO BLOW, NOW WITH THE ADDITION OF THUNDER. A SHIP STRUGGLES AGAINST THE STORM, ITS BELL GETTING LOUDER AND LOUDER AS IT APPROACHES.]

**OLD EDGAR:** [ECHOING IN THE STORM.] Look out! Look out, man! For God's sake, look out!

[SFX: A DEEP ROAR PRECEDES THE SHIP CRASHING INTO THE ROCKS. METAL TEARS, THE BELL DULLY CLANKS AGAINST SOMETHING, THEN EVERYTHING IS SUDDENLY SILENT. THE SPRAY OF WATER LASTS A MOMENT LONGER, THEN THERE ARE THREE SECONDS OF SILENCE.]

**TROUGHTON (VO):** The lantern suddenly extinguished. And then there was silence. It was so absolute and so terrible I could not dare to move. It were as if a single movement might bring the dreadful sounds back. For the longest of moments, all I could hear was my own heartbeat. [DEEP INHALE.] And then, I heard someone outside. [UNEVEN FOOTSTEPS ON GRAVEL BEGIN.] In the churchyard. [THE FOOTSTEPS CONTINUE MOVING AROUND THE CHURCH.]

The presence of another abruptly brought me back to reality. Gone was my irrational fear [FOOTSTEPS STOP.] and returned was my confidence and rationality. [TROUGHTON'S VOICE GAINS CONFIDENCE.] No townsperson had any business lurking around the church at this time of night. Children, no doubt. [HARD SOLED FOOTSTEPS ON A HARD FLOOR ECHO.] I stepped out of the office and into the hall, listening.

[SFX: THE FOOTSTEPS ON GRAVEL APPROACH THE CHURCH AGAIN.]

[[*MUSIC: HIGH PITCHED STRINGS FADE IN AND OUT.*]]

[SFX: SOMEONE TRIES THE DOORS OF THE CHURCH A COUPLE OF TIMES, ONLY TO FIND THEM LOCKED. THEY BANG ON THE DOOR SEVERAL TIMES.]

**TROUGHTON:** [ANNOYED, WITH ECHO.] I’m sorry, the church is closed! [UNDER HIS BREATH.] No idea why you’re calling at this hour, anyway.

[SFX: THE FOOTSTEPS ON GRAVEL START MOVING AWAY FROM THE CHURCH.]

**TROUGHTON (VO):** As I took the position of authority, a great peace fell upon me. [FOOTSTEPS ON GRAVEL END.] I was myself once again, and more importantly, I felt in control. And so I put the strange events behind me. My rational mind quickly explained them away as a mix of hunger, fatigue, and the infectious nervousness of Gorman. I was a scholar. [FIRM.] I did not entertain such nonsense. I did not believe in the supernatural. [[*MUSIC: HIGH PITCHED STRINGS END.*]]

[SFX: TROUGHTON CLOSES THE OUTSIDE DOOR AND LOCKS IT. HIS REGULAR FOOTSTEPS BEGIN ON THE GRAVEL. WIND BLOWS GENTLY THROUGH THE TREES.]

I ensured everything was locked and felt the reassuring weight as my now-full satchel patted against my leg. By this point, I was positively famished, [TROUGHTON'S FOOTSTEPS CHANGE FROM GRAVEL TO PAVEMENT.] although the food at the hotel left something to be desired. The only alternative was evidently [FOLK MUSIC AND MERRIMENT FROM WITHIN THE PUB BECOME LOUDER AS TROUGHTON APPROACHES.] the Anworth Arms, but alas, far too boisterous for my liking. [THE SOUNDS OF PEOPLE FADE, BUT THE FOLK MUSIC CAN STILL BE HEARD FADING INTO THE DISTANCE.]

I was alone on the streets and were it not for the pub, I would’ve felt entirely isolated. [OVER THE MUSIC, THE LIGHT SKITTERING OF DEBRIS CAN BE HEARD FALLING ON THE PAVEMENT.] And yet, there was some noise around me. [FOOTSTEPS STOP. THE MUSIC FADES OUT, LEAVING ONLY SOUNDS OF THE WIND BLOWING THROUGH THE TREES.] I half turned discreetly but saw no sign of anyone. [AS TROUGHTON'S FOOTSTEPS BEGIN AGAIN, DEBRIS ALSO FALLS.] There it was again!

Ever more aware of the cold, I nonetheless stopped this time and scrutinised the area intensely. [PAUSE.] Nothing. I was about to continue my way when I was finally able [DEBRIS IS HEARD AGAIN.] to locate the source as pebbles skipped down the sloping path toward me. [VICTORIOUS.] Ah, hah! Something was disturbing the debris on the rooftops. [TROUGHTON BEGINS WALKING AGAIN.] I walked backwards onto the road to see what was causing such a thing. The streetlamps were rather dim and it was in fact the moonlight that allowed me to scan the rooftops.

I could certainly see some form up there too large to be a bird. [FRUSTRATED EXHALE.] When I squinted my eyes, I could almost see it! [[*MUSIC: OMINOUS HIGH PITCHED SUSTAINED NOTES.*]] Whatever that thing was, it scrabbled onto the next rooftop [MORE DEBRIS FALLS.] further up the hill. And then it stopped. I took a few steps [TROUGHTON’S FOOTSTEPS BEGIN AGAIN.] in order to follow it. Suddenly it grew in height, becoming quite erect and allowing its form to clearly be seen.

[NERVOUSLY.] Someone was on the roof. I now locked eyes on a hulking figure standing on the rooftop. With the moonlight behind its back, I was unable to make out any features, but I could tell that whoever it was [LOUD EXHALE.] was looking right at me. The event was so unusual, so strange that I felt paralyzed. I admit that I was gripped with fear. I could not stand to be in its gaze, nor could I bear to look away. I worried that if it were to move toward me, I may call out in a primal panic.

It was the figure that moved first, as it slipped behind a chimney. As it disappeared, so, too, did my fear. My sense, strength, and rationale returned with each slowing beat of my heart. My head cleared and I was embarrassed - no, *angry*, that this figure, this man, had robbed me of my dignity. [TROUGHTON WALKS QUICKLY BUT UNEVENLY AS HE LOOKS AROUND.] I walked quickly and lightly, my eyes ever watching the rooftops for signs of the prowler. The moonlight served me well; the glare on the rooftops was uninterrupted, be it by bird or by intruder. Nonetheless, I knew [TROUGHTON STOPS.] they must still be within earshot. [[*MUSIC: A PERCUSSIVE RATTLE JOINS THE SUSTAINED NOTES.*]]

**TROUGHTON:** Just what the hell do you think you’re doing? [TROUGHTON IS QUIET WHILE THE WIND BLOWS THROUGH THE TREES.] Nothing to say, eh? [[*MUSIC: GIVES WAY TO JUST THE WIND.*]]

**TROUGHTON (VO):** I fixed my eyes on the rooftop on which he most logically could be, and I realised it was only a stone’s throw away from the Cherry Tree. I was about to call again when something stopped me. [[*MUSIC: LOW, SUSTAINED, OMINOUS NOTES BEGIN.*]] This did not feel right in the slightest. And I most certainly did not wish to pass under that building, but indeed it was necessary. [TROUGHTON STARTS WALKING AGAIN ON THE PAVEMENT AGAIN.] Instead, I turned a sharp corner away from the offending presence and made my way down to the stream, intending to follow it around to the other side of the castle [A MOURNING DOVE CALLS IN THE BACKGROUND.] and to my temporary abode. [TROUGHTON’S FOOTSTEPS ARE MUFFLED AS HE LEAVES THE PAVEMENT. OTHER BIRD SOUNDS ARE ADDED TO THE DOVE’S.] Thankfully, even my own footsteps were cushioned by the grass. Nonetheless I still found myself glancing behind from time to time, almost expecting to see someone giving chase. What could they want, exactly? [TROUGHTON REACHES A SOFTLY BUBBLING STREAM.] There was a moment of panic as I looked ahead and caught sight of someone approaching [MUFFLED FOOTSTEPS.], only to relax as I spotted the Staffordshire bull terrier beside them. I offered a nervous smile as we passed, and my loop of the castle was almost complete.

[SFX: FOUR SECONDS OF WATER BUBBLING, BIRDS CALLING, AND MUFFLED FOOTSTEPS.]

I arrived at The Cherry Tree a little shaken. Upon closing the door behind me, I exhaled as if I’d been holding my breath the entire walk home. [OUTDOOR SOUNDS STOP.] I made conversation with the manager who kindly prepared me something to eat. [SLIGHTLY ANNOYED.] I’d apparently missed dinner. And he granted me access to the hotel’s WiFi.

[TROUGHTON SITS NEXT TO A CRACKLING FIRE.] As I sat in the empty restaurant, I composed an email to a colleague. In it, I described the bizarre antics of the day and attached a photo of the lantern. I glanced down at my satchel, the large shape of the lantern bulging at the seams. It pushed loose items held in the side pockets and I noticed the book I had earlier discarded.

**TROUGHTON:** Ah, yes. *On Ghosts and Ghouls of the Northeast*. Highbrow reading, indeed.

**TROUGHTON (VO):** I’m ashamed to admit that the curiosity got the better of me. [TROUGHTON FLIPS THROUGH THE BOOK.] Soon I found the entry on “Old Edgar’s Lantern,” which was listed as a Northumberland legend specific to Anworth. The book’s language was abysmal and [GETTING ANNOYED.] it took three paragraphs simply to survive the preamble.

However, it did hold some merit. It told the story of a lighthouse keeper in the seventeen hundreds named, plainly, Old Edgar. [TROUGHTON TURNS THE PAGE.] He was said to live a simple life, diligent in his duties and frequenter of the local establishments.

It tells of a storm that debatters the lighthouse so much that it is partially destroyed. Edgar, who can see a ship battling its way to the shore, panics and runs outside in a vain attempt to warn them. Without the lighthouse, the ship runs off course and heads straight for the rocks. Armed with his lantern, Edgar swings it above him in hysterical panic trying to get their attention. Of course, his efforts were fruitless and the ship crashed, killing all aboard. [TROUGHTON TURNS THE PAGE.] He was apparently never seen again, but some days later his lantern was found washed up on the shore. [[*MUSIC: LOW, OMINOUS STRINGS BEGIN.*]] It is said that he who lights the lantern [A PAUSE AS TROUGHTON SWALLOWS NERVOUSLY.] would call to the dead beneath the wreckage.

**TROUGHTON:** [LONG INHALE.] Surely not.

**TROUGHTON (VO):** I left the book on the table. Surely the cleaner would want her scaremongering propaganda back. [TROUGHTON LEAVES THE CRACKLING FIRE.] I settled my bill with the manager and mentioned the book’s appearance, though he decided to play coy.

**HOTEL MANAGER:** The cleaner isn’t in the habit of leaving books around, sir. Are you sure it isn’t one of yours?

**TROUGHTON:** I don’t spend my time reading such things.

**HOTEL MANAGER:** [WITH A SHORT LAUGH.] Except today.

**TROUGHTON:** [CURTLY.] Quite.

**HOTEL MANAGER:** You could’ve paid your bill upon checkout, y’know? In fact, I thought you’d already gone upstairs. Could’ve sworn I heard you in your room just now.

**TROUGHTON:** No, I’ve been savouring every last bite, after your kindness. I’m off to bed now, though. Would you please ensure I’m not disturbed before ten?

**HOTEL MANAGER:** You will not be disturbed, Mr. Troughton.

**TROUGHTON:** Yes. Thank you.

[[*MUSIC: SUSTAINED STRINGS FADE AWAY.*]]

[SFX: TROUGHTON WALKS UPSTAIRS WITH DULL FOOTSTEPS.]

**TROUGHTON (VO):** To be fair to him, there was an abundance of footsteps upstairs. I even had to squeeze past a gentleman wrapped in a towel as he returned from the shared bathroom. [TROUGHTON UNLOCKS AND OPENS HIS DOOR.] The first thing I noticed about my room was that it was freezing. [AS TROUGHTON CLOSES HIS DOOR, SOUNDS OF THE WIND ARE CLEARLY HEARD.] I quickly dashed to the window and closed it, clearly having left it open that morning. [TROUGHTON PULLS THE WINDOW CLOSED, LEAVING ONLY THE BACKGROUND SOUND OF A TICKING CLOCK.] The air had a dampness to it and the slightest hint of an odour. Were it not for my fatigue, I may have marched downstairs and requested a different room. For now, though, it was enough to take off my shoes and lie on the bed. [TROUGHTON LIES ON A SOFTLY CREAKING BED.]

Victorian doctors allegedly used to prescribe extended trips to the seaside for asthmatics and insomniacs. Indeed, I felt similar medicinal effects as I slipped into a slight snore before even falling completely asleep.

I roused myself long enough to undress [TROUGHTON UNDRESSES WITH A RUSTLE OF CLOTH.] and get into bed. [THE BEDSPRINGS CREAK AS TROUGHTON LIES DOWN.] Quickly, I slipped into a deep and dreamless sleep.

[SFX: SIX SECONDS OF A TICKING CLOCK. THEN A WOODEN CREAK IS HEARD SUDDENLY.]

I awoke suddenly. Whether it had been 30 minutes or three hours, I hadn’t the slightest clue. I reached for my spectacles and noted immediately that the cupboard was wide open. And that’s [BEGINNING TO SOUND STRESSED.] when I saw them. [[*MUSIC: HIGH, SUSTAINED STRINGS.*]] Two feet at the foot of the bed. [SHAKY INHALATION.] Someone was sitting in the chair.

**TROUGHTON:** [STAMMERING.] Who-who is that? What are you doing in- [SWALLOWS.] …in here?

**TROUGHTON (VO):** [SHAKEN] I waited for what felt like an eternity for an answer. Even with the moonlight shining across the foot of the bed, my eyes could not penetrate the darkness. All I could make out was the pair of boots, ugh, soggy – no, drenched in water. [[*MUSIC: STRINGS INTENSIFY.*]] I could taste the salt, even. [WATER DRIPS OFF THE FIGURE.]

**DROWNED MAN:** [VOICE IS DISTORTED AND WET.] Thank you.

**TROUGHTON (VO):** I wasn’t sure if those words had been spoken or whether they were created by the fevered state [[*MUSIC: STRINGS ADD LOWER, SCRATCHY NOTES.*]] of my mind. [THE CHAIR CREAKS AS THE DROWNED MAN SHIFTS.] As the thing leaned forward, its face – or-or what remained of it – entered the light. The skin was bloated, waterlogged even, and rotted in patches. The lips were so full that it could hardly speak intelligibly. But as it did, water spilled from its mouth and splattered down to the floor.

**DROWNED MAN:** You guided me here from the sea, sir. Thank you.

**TROUGHTON (VO):** The word “fear” does not convey my feelings at this moment with any justice, nor does “terror.”

**TROUGHTON:** [FAINTLY.] G-Get out.

**DROWNED MAN:** You took too long, sir. We have lain at the bottom of the bay for an age. [THE DROWNED MAN BEGINS WALKING TOWARDS THE BED WITH HEAVY, SLOSHING, DRAGGING FOOTSTEPS.] You took too long.

**TROUGHTON:** [WITH INCREASING PANIC.] Get out. Get out! Get out of my room!

[SFX: THE BED CREAKS AS THE DROWNED MAN GRABS TROUGHTON BY THE NECK. TROUGHTON CHOKES AND STRUGGLES AS HE IS STRANGLED BY THE DROWNED MAN.]

**TROUGHTON (VO):** [AGITATED.] I was powerless to stop it, though with one hand, I tried to push it away while the other fought the unnatural grip. Through my own fingers, I could see its face begin to twitch and grimace with eagerness. Even through its warped features, I could see the malevolence and I felt darkness descend on me.

[SFX: TROUGHTON CONTINUES TO STRUGGLE WITH THE DROWNED MAN. THE HOTEL MANAGER BEGINS TO BANG ON THE DOOR.]

**HOTEL MANAGER:** [VOICE MUFFLED THROUGH THE DOOR.] Mr. Troughton! Mr. Troughton are you all right? [TROUGHTON CHOKES AND STRUGGLES, TRYING TO CALL FOR HELP.] Mr. Troughton! Mr. Troughton, I’m coming in!

[SFX: THE DOOR SLAMS OPEN. TROUGHTON LOUDLY GASPS FOR AIR.]

Mr. Troughton?

**TROUGHTON (VO):** I was alone in the room when the manager burst in. [[*MUSIC: FADES AWAY TO SILENCE.*]] A second or two later and he would’ve been too late. I’m told that I then fell unconscious and, indeed, my next memory is a paramedic shining a torch in my eyes. My account did not corroborate with the police’s findings. My neck was without bruises and the other guests only reported hearing my screams. In time, I withdrew my record of events to protect my dignity and, indeed, my reputation. I fought hard to be where I am now, and I cannot risk sounding like a child or the mad. But no one could explain why my sheets and the inside of my cupboard were drenched in seawater. [[*MUSIC: SHADOWS AT THE DOOR THEME BEGINS.*]] And, of course, why the lantern was nowhere to be found.

[[*MUSIC: SHADOWS AT THE DOOR THEME CONTINUES.*]]

[Timestamp: 33:10]

BEGIN DISCUSSION SECTION

**MARK:** So that was “Leave a Light on For Me” by Mark Nixon, that’s me. I’m joined by the entire cast, Mr. David Ault.

**DAVID:** Hello, there! It’s very lovely to be here! So, yes, why are we here? What is *Shadows at the Door*?

**MARK:** *Shadows at the Door* is a very small corner of the internet. Well, at least, it started off as a very small corner. I would like to think it has since grown and evolved. It was a little place for me to start sharing some ghost stories I wrote for fun. We then expanded, we’ve had more people provide stories for the website, and a few years ago, we were very kindly backed by our Kickstarter backers to produce our first anthology. One of which was a audiobook, produced by 9th Story Studios and the fans just kept saying that they want more audio stories, so here we are!

**DAVID:** Excellent! Now, with *Shadows at the Door*, we’ve talked in the past about ghost stories in general and particular influences. Do you have any particular influences that affect your writing at all?

**MARK:** I think anyone who knows M. R. James will see that written all over that story.

**DAVID:** [LAUGHING.] Ah, yes.

**MARK:** I think it’s an homage, David, and I think that makes it okay to say it’s an homage. [DAVID LAUGHINGLY AGREES.] I dunno, I just think when you encounter someone who was the master of ghost stories that there’s not much else you can try to do to expand on that and who am I, to do it better than Monty James? Because we’re so close, I will refer to him as ‘Monty’ from here on out. Oh, I also thought that was a good name for a dog, when I get one.

**DAVID:** Oh, yes?

**MARK:** Something very English, like a corgi. Monty the Corgi.

**DAVID:** Or a beagle.

**MARK:** Yes!

**DAVID:** Monty the Beagle. [IN A POSH ENGLISH ACCENT.] Monty!

**MARK:** Oh, I have to go out and get a dog now. But yes, he has influence no matter… A lot of people know him to be a very big influence on H.P. Lovecraft. H.P. Lovecraft, I believe, sent M.R. James some fanmail and M.R. James was very unkind about it. [DAVID CHIMES IN WITH A SALACIOUS “AH.”] So a lot of my work is very Jamesian. I take it as a compliment when it is described as Jamesian. You might say I am a terrible thief, but…

**DAVID:** What is it they say about there’s not an original story out there?

**MARK:** This is true. And imitation being the highest form of flattery.

**DAVID:** Indeed so!

**MARK:** But yes.

**DAVID:** Now, ghost stories is a very particular niche in the grander world of fiction. I’ve loved ghost stories since I was a child. There’s always just been something about it. I had a book, and in fact I recently re-found the book in my mum’s attic, called *Mad About Ghosts* by a lady called Mary Danby. Which gave a nice introduction to all of the various different types of ghosts and it gave some poetry and some short stories and I’ve just always loved ghosts. I lead the ghost walk around Rippon from time to time, which is the small city where I live.

**MARK:** Of which once I attended and heckled.

**DAVID:** Indeed so! Indeed, you did. I’ve never actually seen a ghost. I’m one of these people that says I have never seen them but there are too many reports to dismiss them all as fantasy. So that’s where I come from in terms of ghosts and ghost stories. I just love the idea, the atmosphere. But it’s something that I’ve not experienced myself.

**MARK:** Do you hope to experience it?

**DAVID:** Oh, I would love to! I’d like to think I’m very open minded. Yes, I’d love to see a ghost, I would be very interested to see one.

**MARK:** So, if anyone would like to don a bedsheet and come and knock on the doors of David’s lovely home in Ripon, I think he’d very much appreciate that. Yeah, I mean, ghosts have always been there for me. That’s my bent when it comes to horror. I’m partial to a zombie, I love a vampire. Well, no vampires, not A Vampire in particular. [DAVID STARTS GOADING HIM ON WITH “YOU SURE? MM-HM?”] It’s not like a Twilight thing. I dunno, Nosferatu, he has a look about him.

**DAVID:** Ah, yeah, the bald protruding forehead kind of.

**MARK:** That’s my type. But there’s rules for vampires and zombies. And there isn’t for ghosts. Sometimes it’s appeasing them, but it often doesn’t work. Much like you, I read ghost stories as a child. I went to my local library and I started reading the children’s ghost stories and then when I finished those, I remember reading “The Signalman” by Charles Dickens when I was probably a bit too young to understand it. And that was absolutely terrific. And there’s no rules for ghosts. You can build atmosphere, you can make it up as you go along. You can have a banshee or a grey lady, of which there’s always a grey lady in all these nearby towns. In Durham, there is the ghost of a piper under the bridge where there’s now a dodgy nightclub.

**DAVID:** I’m sure there’s plenty of wailing that goes on, of an evening.

**MARK:** Yeah, so that’s the love for me, it’s the atmosphere. I mean, I think it’s very hard to scare people in this day and age. And if I were to provide you a very well written monster, it might be entertaining, it probably would be, but I think it’s a lot better when you as the reader, or in this case the listener, fills in the gaps and uses your own imagination.

**DAVID:** And that’s what I love about the audio medium. The fact that, yes, it’s often been said that on TV or on film, everything is put there for you. But the best horror, the best ghost stories happens in your own head. Because you are there filling in those blanks. So, yes, I’ve always loved the audio medium from everything.

**MARK:** You’ve dabbled, haven’t you?

**DAVID:** Yeah, I’ve listened to a few things. Maybe given my voice to a couple of things, but not very… It’s something I’ve, yeah.

**MARK:** Yeah, just a few things I don’t think anyone’s ever heard of David Ault.

**DAVID:** But the audio medium is very much one that I’ve always enjoyed. Right from childhood listening to tapes, as it was, back in those days–

**MARK:** [CHEEKY] Wow…

**DAVID:** [IGNORING MARK] –in fact, when I go round on the ghost walk and I talk about EVP, the electric voice phenomena, and tell the kids to ask their parents what cassette tape is. And some of them do actually turn to their parents and say, “what’s a cassette?” It’s scary how quickly time goes. But yeah, I used to listen to cassettes as a child. I listened to stories and I think that’s just stayed with me.

**MARK:** I think there’s no better medium than ghost stories besides obviously reading it in a lovely…by the fire on a dark and stormy night. But we’re hoping that people will agree that ghost stories, that it’s natural for them to come to the audio dramas as well. And there are of course many places and people who do a very good job of horror audio drama, but we are trying to specifically introduce people to stories where atmosphere and crescendo are absolutely everything. We will not linger too much on the monster, which I believe is the reason why Jaws and Alien were so effective, because we rarely see the aforementioned creatures.

**DAVID:** And it’s interesting what you say about rules and things, because I think some of the best Doctor Who monsters are the ones that we haven’t seen before. Because we don’t know the rules. As you say, vampires and zombies, they have rules. And so you know with zombies it’s gonna be chop off the head. You know with vampires, it’s et cetera, et cetera.

**MARK:** Seduce them.

**DAVID:** [WITH A STEREOTYPICAL “GAY” LISP.] Make them *sparkle*. [BACK TO HIS NORMAL VOICE.] But, yes, I think you’re absolutely right about ghosts and some of the best films have bent the ideas of ghosts. I’m just trying to think of…was it *Sinister* where they had the, there was the ghost in the house and it was also in the films, or the photos and things.

**MARK:** Yeah, it was Ethan Hawke.

**DAVID:** That was horrifying, because in all of these haunted house films, you’re yelling at the TV saying “just move house! Just leave! Why are you staying there?” And in this one, they did actually leave, spoiler alert. And you thought, “yes, brilliant, they’re finally doing what we’ve wanted people to do for so long.” So yes, it’s those stories, the ones that break the rules, or remake the rules, that have the power to scare, that remove people from their comfort zone, and also tell a really good story at the same time. The other thing about ghost stories I find is that they can be very formulaic.

**MARK:** Yes. It’s a trope of the genre.

**DAVID:** Absolutely. But that, in a way, the comfort of knowing how the story is going to pan out, or at least for the most part because there may or may not be a twist at the end, but how it’s going to pan out, where the relationships happen, it allows you to play more with the characters and get to know more about them and use the overall story as a vehicle for characters as well. And exploring relationships and exploring the human side of the story.

**MARK:** I think that’s a very good way to look at it. As, in my writing, I particularly like to torment characters who are rather well-to-do. As Troughton, as we’ve just heard in this story, he’s a very confident man, very assured of where he is, and it was quite nice to put him in a place where he wasn’t the authority in the room and maybe to remind him that he doesn’t have authority over all aspects of his life. Again, that is a bit of a trope of the genre as well, but it does, as you say, it does allow us to, they’re not just a device we can explore them a bit more.

**DAVID:** And when you were writing “Leave a Light on For Me,” where did you get the ideas for Troughton and for the vicar and who did you draw upon?

**MARK:** The vicar, I’ll start with, he’s quite easy. He is based off a-I went to a Catholic school and I think it was physically built into a church or we had a church literally a stone’s throw away from the door and there was a Father O’Gorman. He must be dead by now, so I can say his name, he was ancient. So this is Father Gorman, who’s a step away from it. There are some similarities to it, although he is quite young in this story. Troughton is a mix of every kind of academic I could think of. There is more to him, he will – [ADVERTISING VOICE.] Professor Troughton will return. [BACK TO NORMAL] He will come back, there is a lot more to learn about him. But if I am honest, and I was saying this to you when we were talking about the performance, there’s a bit of Richard Dawkins in him, which, however you feel about Professor Dawkins, I thought he is a character. There is a performance that comes with him and there is a lot of him in Troughton. But I think I’m like most writers, I think there’s a little bit of me in Troughton as well. So that’s probably why I enjoy tormenting him.

**DAVID:** And the place where it’s set, I think we both know where it is.

**MARK:** You’ve cracked the code!

**DAVID:** I have. Mainly because I went up there. I thought, let’s have a break in Northumberland, where should we go? Oh, look, there’s a haunted hotel in this small town. And so we went there for a weekend. Have you been there?

**MARK:** I spend as much time in Northumberland as I can. I live in County Durham, which is obviously immediately underneath it. Northumberland is just beautiful.

**DAVID:** It is, it’s gorgeous.

**MARK:** The towns all seem quite old. They’re not as touched by-there’s probably still a W.H. Smith operating quite strongly.

**DAVID:** And a Woolworth’s.

**MARK:** A Woolworth’s, even! For our American friends: Woolworth’s have not been around for some time, but they were a staple of the 80s. Possibly even the 90s.

**DAVID:** Even the 90s. I remember the one in Cambridge shut while I was there, so that would be the early 2000s.

**MARK:** Actually, yes, because I have memories of them as well. The town of Anworth is very much, it’s actually based off a place called Warkworth in Northumberland. The layout is described very much like it but it also has obviously fictional elements to it. And the church yard and the gravestones where the sea air has eroded them comes very much from Whitby. Which any horror fan who has been anywhere in the north of England would hopefully have been to. Wonderful place.

**DAVID:** Indeed so. So, there’s lots of elements into the writing there. Without wanting to big up anything, I thought it was a very good story.

**MARK:** Oh, stop.

**DAVID:** Yes, very Jamesian. What is it about M.R. James that you particularly like, for his writing?

**MARK:** Hm. I think it’s just that, if you ever sit down and read James, it’s very much the voice of the narrator is present and he can waffle on about absolutely nothing sometimes, and there can be very subtle jibes at Oxford, and things such as that, and people who play golf, and people who explore academia when they’re not qualified to do so, and all that. But then he can slip a detail into the story that can become quite important later and you’ve been so distracted by the waffle that you didn’t realise it was there in plain sight. And then he’s created these absolutely terrifying creatures and monsters. Sometimes it’s referred to as a Jamesian wallop, when the creature will come out and it really just sets the imagination going. I am convinced that, although the concept of a bedsheet ghost was around from Punch and Judy, which James even refers to at one point, I’m convinced that the story “Oh, Whistle, and I’ll Come to You, My Lad” has completely popularised that. And that is the reason why there’s sexy ghosts walking around Halloween with fishnet stockings on underneath. But James famously having no time for sex in his stories, would’ve probably been terrified of a fishnet stocking, more than a ghost itself.

**DAVID:** Yes, ‘cause “Oh, Whistle, and I’ll Come to You, My Lad” is, and that’s the other one that we were talking about earlier, with the wood carving-

**MARK:** “The Mezzotint.”

**DAVID:** “The Mezzotint.” Both of those have the protagonists finding something and then this thing coming after them. Or coming after something. And it’s that slow build. And there’s an inevitability about the horror of James which, it’s almost guttural in a way, because you know that something bad is going to happen. You can see it. It’s absolutely signposted that this thing is coming after you and there’s nothing you can do about it. So yes, that’s one thing *I* appreciate about James’ work and that’s also come into some of my writing as well. When I did things about the advent calendar and the twelve days of Christmas, it’s very much signposting ‘yes, you know something bad’s coming at the end.’

**MARK:** [INTERRUPTING.] And everyone knows it except the protagonist.

**DAVID:** Yes. Or even the protagonist does know it and is powerless to stop it.

**MARK:** In “A Warning to the Curious” by M.R. James, as soon as this man has this crown, he is aware of someone in his peripheral chasing him all the time. And we both saw the adaptation that the BBC did in the ‘70s of that story, where it’s just a blurry distance of a man in black, just constantly running. And what’s the line they said… I don’t know the line. I’m heavily paraphrasing what he says, “I know that he will never stop.” And ultimately the character tries to make amends by returning his crown, but we shall not ruin that story.

**DAVID:** No, no indeed. And of course, that idea, that trope has gone forward into very recent films like *It Follows*.

**MARK:** Which, it’s generally acknowledged that *It Follows* is an adaptation of “Casting the Runes” by M.R. James, except with it not being Nordic runes, it is sex. *It Follows* is probably the best examples I’d say of a recent horror film. Also, Sam Raimi’s *Drag Me to Hell* is also “Casting the Runes” as well. But there are, I wouldn’t say there are many films that are Jamesian, but there are many films where the themes that we’ve described are present in them. I recently saw, at the time of recording, I recently saw *Hereditary*, which we will not discuss in too much detail because *you* haven’t seen it yet.

**DAVID:** I haven’t seen it yet, no! Don’t tell me anything. Other than it’s good.

**MARK:** We will stop now. But there are moments in that of dread and also Nico has managed to capture that very well in the score for this episode as well where he’s just gradually just upped the ante of the music where it just becomes quite unbearable. We took some influence from *The Dark Knight*, actually, because if you remember in that film, I dunno, you’re a Cambridge graduate, have you seen a Batman movie?

**DAVID:** [BEGINNING OVER THE TOP OF MARK’S LAST SENTENCE.] I have, yes. [LAUGH.] Michael Keaton was my Batman.

**MARK:** Oh, dear.

**DAVID:** But yes, I have. I’ve seen *The Dark Knight* trilogy.

**MARK:** I’m good-I’m pleased, sorry. But yes, obviously there was like a high pitched noise whenever the Joker was doing anything and it was just becoming unbearable and you’d want it to end, you’d want whatever he was going to do to happen so we often do discuss influences with Nico of what we like to put in the music as well. Again, an homage, it’s not ripping it off. There’s nothing truly original out there, is there? We could edit this out.

**DAVID:** Well, we’ll bring that to a close. The ending [[*MUSIC: HIGH PITCHED STRINGS COME IN BEHIND HIM.*]] has inevitably crept up upon us. And is looming over our shoulders.

**MARK:** And perhaps the audience wanted it to end terribly as well. But thank you for joining us for our first story and we hope to catch you again.

**DAVID:** Yes, indeed. See you next time.

**DAVID (VO):** You’ve been listening to a Shadows at the Door production. Story by Mark Nixon. Performances by David Ault. Music by Nico Vettese. Editing by Mark Nixon. Copyright held by Shadows at the Door publishing.

If you enjoyed this production, please consider leaving a review wherever you listen to podcasts. We’ll see you very soon.

[[*MUSIC: STRINGS STOP.*]]

[SFX: LOUD BANG FOLLOWED BY ECHOES AND SOUND DISTORTIONS.]

[[*MUSIC: SHORT, DISTORTED VERSION OF THE SHADOWS AT THE DOOR SOUNDTRACK*.]]

CAST

Professor Geoffrey Troughton David Ault

*In his late thirties, Troughton is very well spoken and carries a slight air of superiority. As his world view is shaken however, he is humbled.*

The Hotel Manager David Ault

*Retirement age, overweight with a jovial disposition but comes across as disingenuous. Regional accent.*

Father Simon Gorman David Ault

*Early 40s, he has hardly slept in weeks. Was once a pillar of the community but is now living in fear. Born and bred northerner but well spoken.*

The Drowned Man David Ault

*Angry, forlorn and eager to rest. His entire body is waterlogged, and water spills from his mouth when he speaks.*

TRANSCRIPT BY: [EMORY COLVIN](https://twitter.com/nuclearalchemy) (TIPS: [ko-fi.com/emoryc](https://ko-fi.com/emoryc))