**Silent Warnings**

**by Mark Nixon**

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

**MARK NIXON:** Welcome, to the season finale of *Shadows at the Door, the Podcast.* As always, I’m Mark Nixon and together with David Ault, it’s my pleasure to bring you another ghostly audio drama. Before we begin, I hope you’ll forgive this short indulgence. We wanted to say that we’ve been overwhelmed by the support and feedback you’ve all given us. And though this is the season finale, we hope to bring you more pleasing terrors in the future. Please see the show notes, and all the episode’s discussion, for more information.

Now, our season began with the story “Leave a Light on for Me.” It followed Professor Troughton as he travelled to examine an ancient lantern. An experience he barely survived. Today, Professor Troughton returns in a story named “Silent Warnings.” In this tale, the Professor settles back into normal life, but a colleague soon pulls him back into the shadows. You need not have listened to “Leave a Light on for Me” to understand this sequel, but you will find more to enjoy if you have. It is quite appropriate that Troughton has become the bookends for this season as you’ll learn after the production.

So, gather around the fire, pour yourself some tea, and we’ll begin.

[[*MUSIC: STRINGS FADE OUT. A LOW HUM WITH HIGH ELECTRONIC NOISE PULSING COMES IN AND CONTINUES UNDER TROUGHTON FOR A FEW SECONDS BEFORE ALSO FADING OUT.*]]

[Timestamp: 2:26]

[SFX: INSIDE A LECTURE HALL AT WARWICK UNIVERSITY, STUDENTS SHUFFLE AND COUGH AS TROUGHTON LECTURES IN THE BACKGROUND.]

**TROUGHTON:** [LECTURING IN A LARGE HALL, VERY MUCH IN HIS ELEMENT.] …So Henry comes to the throne, as a very young, very arrogant man – well, as most young men certainly are – and he came with a singular purpose: the absolute reversal of his father’s foreign policies. And you must remember, this period was the most glorious soap opera of all time! The whole future of countries turning on what these huge personalities felt like when they got out of bed in the morning. And Henry wants what every red-blooded king wants: to start a fight with the French.

[SFX: AUDIENCE LAUGHS.]

**TROUGHTON:** [FADING INTO THE BACKGROUND.] However, he finds himself confronted by some obstructions.

[SFX: A STUDENT SHIFTS, CAUSING THEIR SEAT TO CREAK IN THE FOREGROUND.]

**STUDENT ONE:** [HUSHED, SPEAKING OVER TROUGHTON’S LECTURE.] I’ve got to say, Professor Troughton looks well.

**STUDENT TWO:** [ALSO HUSHED.] What, you mean for a man who was nearly strangled to death?

**STUDENT ONE:** Well, yeah. But… he doesn’t look bothered, does he?

**TROUGHTON:** [IN THE BACKGROUND, BEHIND THE STUDENT CONVERSATION.] Namely a structure of bribes and backhanders; that is to say that the whole of the English political establishment has been bought by the French. This, of course, was down to Henry’s father who had wanted to do away with the tradition of fighting the French.

**STUDENT TWO:** [SARCASTIC.] Were you expecting a neck brace?

**STUDENT ONE:** No. He just seems as well as he was *before* the trip. Moreso, even.

**STUDENT TWO:** I’m pretty sure he’s always okay once he’s had his Earl Grey. [WITH A SLIGHT LAUGH.] Hey, maybe he got laid!

**STUDENT ONE:** I don’t think he does that…

**STUDENT TWO:** [CHUCKLES.]

**TROUGHTON:** [STILL BEHIND THE STUDENTS, THEN CONTINUING.] In fact, Henry the Seventh had been extremely conniving as he wedded personal self interest to higher national objectives, to reversing the tradition of fighting the French, so why not get the French to pay to bribe the English establishment? It was extraordinarily effective, if a slightly unethical way of doing it. Henry, then, has to overcome this and he also has to overcome the assumption that peace was a good thing. [BEAT.] And how well was Henry the Eighth equipped to do this? Well, we’ll discuss that next time. For now, though, are there any questions?

[SFX: CLOTH RUSTLES AS A LARGE MASS OF HANDS RAISE.]

Any questions relating to Tudor foreign policy and *not* my recent mishap? [OBSERVES THE HANDS LOWER, THEN SCOFFS GOOD NATUREDLY.] Your concern continues to warm my heart, though I wish you would direct your energies to better use. [SIGH.] That’s it for today, I will see you all tomorrow.

[SFX: CHAIRS ARE LOUDLY PUSHED BACK AS THE AUDIENCE STANDS TO LEAVE, BEGINNING TO TALK INAUDIBLY IN THE BACKGROUND.]

**STUDENT ONE:** Right, I’m just going to give him these.

[SFX: FLOWER PACKET CRINKLES.]

**STUDENT TWO:** I still think it’s weird to give him flowers.

**STUDENT ONE:** Well, it was my girlfriend’s idea, if you must know…

**STUDENT TWO:** Right, well, I’ll meet you outside.

[SFX: STUDENT ONE DESCENDS WOODEN STEPS CARELESSLY UNTIL HE REACHES TROUGHTON, WHO IS PACKING PAPER AND OTHER MATERIALS INTO HIS BAG.]

**STUDENT ONE:** Excuse me, Professor?

**TROUGHTON:** Yes? Oh, uh, yes, hello, um, Mr., uh… [PONDERS ALOUD.] uh, Watson, isn’t it?

**STUDENT ONE:** Close. Watkins.

**TROUGHTON:** Ah, yes. And what is it I can do for you, Mr. Watkins?

**STUDENT ONE:** I just wanted to say that we’re all pleased to have you back so soon. [HESITANT. THE FLOWERS CRINKLE.] Um, uh, some of us got you some flowers…

**TROUGHTON:** [PLEASANTLY BEMUSED.] Oh, my, very kind. ‘Get well soon.’ Hm, I do wonder how one can ‘get well soon’ over an assault. [REPRIMANDS HIMSELF.] But, yes, terribly kind. Thank you, Mr. Watkins.

**STUDENT ONE:** Well, I-I know it’s-

**TROUGHTON:** [CUTTING THE STUDENT’S EXCUSES OFF.] No-no, it’s not. Honestly, thanks without end.

[SFX: FOOTSTEPS ON THE WOODEN FLOOR ARE HEARD IN THE BACKGROUND.]

**STUDENT ONE:** Oh, I-I see Professor Irving waiting for you. I’ll see you tomorrow, Professor.

**TROUGHTON:** Yes. See you then, Mr. Watkins.

[SFX: STUDENT ONE QUICKLY WALKS AWAY UP THE WOODEN STAIRS.]

**TROUGHTON:** [LAUGHING TO HIMSELF AS HE PUTS THE FLOWERS IN HIS BAG.] ‘Get well soon.’

[SFX: THE LECTURE HALL DOOR CREAKS OPEN AND CLOSED. AS IRVING APPROACHES TROUGHTON, HIS FOOTSTEPS ARE VERY HEAVY.]

**IRVING:** [JOVIAL.] Troughton! Come on, give me a hug!

**TROUGHTON:** [STARTLED AND OUT OF HIS COMFORT ZONE BUT TRYING TO BE CHEERFUL.] Oh, um, nice to see you, too, Irving. [CLOTH RUSTLES AS THEY HUG.] Um… [STRAINED.] Thank you.

**IRVING:** [STILL JOVIAL.] How’ve you been?

**TROUGHTON:** Uh-uh-uh, not bad, all things considered.

**IRVING:** Yes, uh, you look well!

**TROUGHTON:** Thank you. And, um, [HESITANT.] uh, not to be rude, Irving, but I wish I could say the same for you.

**IRVING:** [LAUGHS IN DISBELIEF.]

**TROUGHTON:** You look… tired.

**IRVING:** Oh, well… I am. [SIGHS AND TAKES A DEEP BREATH.] Been a lot on my mind, I suppose.

**TROUGHTON:** Oh? Anything you’d like to talk about?

**IRVING:** Maybe. [RUBS HIS HANDS TOGETHER.] Tell you what. Drinks. Tonight. How about it?

**TROUGHTON:** Oh, god, you’re not offering to ‘*be there*’ for me, are you? Everyone’s been doing that. And when *did* everyone get so touchy-feely?

**IRVING:** [INTERRUPTING.] Troughton, old boy, I’m not interested in discussing what happened in Northumberland. I-I wanted some company tonight and thought you might, too. [PAUSE, THEN CONTINUES IN A SING-SONG VOICE.] It’d be a great excuse for me to open that cognac…

**TROUGHTON:** …the Louis the Thirteenth?

**IRVING:** That’s the one.

**TROUGHTON:** Well, then, you’ve twisted my arm.

**IRVING:** Of course I have. Look, I best crack on, but let’s say eight o’clock. Do you remember the way?

**TROUGHTON:** Certainly.

**IRVING:** Then I’ll see you then. Oh, and be careful on your way up. The weather’s been relentless in my neck of the woods and the roads are bad enough at the best of times.

**TROUGHTON:** [CHEEKY.] Yes, mother.

[SFX: FOOTSTEPS WALKING AWAY ON THE WOODEN STAIRS.]

**IRVING:** Cheeky bastard.

[SFX: LATER THAT NIGHT, AS TROUGHTON DRIVES ALONG COUNTRY ROADS TO VISIT IRVING, HIS WINDSCREEN[[1]](#footnote-0) WIPERS STRUGGLE AGAINST HEAVY RAIN. TROUGHTON’S BREATHING IS STRESSED.]

**TROUGHTON:** [TO HIMSELF.] Perhaps I should have rearranged for another evening…

**TROUGHTON (VOICE OVER):** The sun set a little too eagerly that day. I was late leaving work but even so, I had not expected dusk so soon. The drive to Irving’s was considerable – 50 minutes along country roads – and while our colleagues were baffled by his lengthy commute and refusal to move closer to the university, I understood exactly why he did it. Irving lived a solitary life, alone in his sumptuous cottage outside of Coventry. I admit it’s the sort of place I’d love to end up myself.

I’ve touched on this before, but I’ve always been a man who has contemplated mortality; my recent experience did not make *that* much difference, it must be said. And no, it is not an existential anxiety; I know my place in existence and I am thankful for it. Even so, life *is* fragile and I admit to gripping the steering wheel that little tighter and steeling myself as I drove along the winding country roads.

The wind began to push the rain sideways, leaving the windscreen unusually clear. What little sun there was set behind and flared into the rearview mirror. [AN EERIE WHOOSH COMES IN BEHIND TROUGHTON’S WORDS FOR A MOMENT.] I slowed down, as is the sensible thing to do in such conditions… and then, something caught my eye.

[[*MUSIC: A SINGLE MID-RANGE HORN NOTE COMES IN BEHIND TROUGHTON’S NEXT WORDS.*]]

**TROUGHTON:** [TO HIMSELF.] Good lord. Who’s that on the road? [AGITATED.] What are they doing?

[[*MUSIC: DISTORTED BELLS COME IN OVER THE HORN NOTE AND THE EERIE WHOOSH RETURNS.*]]

**TROUGHTON (VO):** At first I thought it a pedestrian, even in this weather, but the shape was not solid. [PAUSE.] The spray of rain [THE RAIN SOUNDS ARE MORE OF A STATIC OF SPRAY HITTING THE WINDSCREEN.] onto the road seemed to coalesce and wisp into the vague silhouette of a figure. It *was* there, and yet it *wasn’t*.

**TROUGHTON:** [PANICKING.] What the hell *is* that??

[SFX: TROUGHTON SLAMS ON THE BRAKES. THE CAR SKIDS AS TROUGHTON GRUNTS, PANICKED. WHEN THE SHRIEK OF THE TIRES STOPS, THE ONLY THING THAT CAN BE HEARD IS THE WINDSCREEN WIPERS CONTINUING TO BEAT AND THE DRONING NOTE AND OCCASIONAL EERIE HUM.]

**TROUGHTON (VO):** The car began to swerve and with white knuckles I tried to pull it back under control. [ANOTHER TIRE SCREECH.] I took my eyes off the phenomenon for only the briefest of seconds and when I glanced back, it held both shapeless arms above its head. It never moved from the other side of the road and if there was intelligence behind the gesture, it was not to threaten, but to catch my attention. It seemed to cower and [TROUGHTON PAUSES AND THE EERIE WHOOSH IS HEARD AGAIN.] I-I think it had wanted me to stop.

[SFX: TROUGHTON PANTS WITH ADRENALINE AS THE WIPERS CONTINUE IN THE BACKGROUND. GRADUALLY, HIS BREATHING SLOWS.]

**TROUGHTON (VO):** The shape began to fall apart as each raindrop passed through and I blinked to clear it from my sight completely as if it had been a hallucination. But… I still saw the hands linger before they, too, dissipated.

**TROUGHTON:** Come on, Troughton. Get it together, man.

**TROUGHTON (VO):** What had I seen? A trick of the light? Had light passed through the rain and warped into something my mind’s eye twisted into a familiar shape? Or was it the delusion of a traumatised mind I had insisted was fully recovered? There was another option, of course, but I was not willing to entertain it.

**TROUGHTON:** Deep breaths, hands on the wheel…

[SFX: TROUGHTON BEGINS DRIVING AGAIN AND THE SOUND OF WIND AND RAIN ON THE WINDSCREEN PICKS UP AGAIN.]

**TROUGHTON (VO):** As I continued along the road, I kept an eye on the rearview mirror. [PAUSE.] There was [SIGH] nothing.

[SFX: 4 SECONDS OF THE SOUNDS OF THE WIPERS AND RAIN GRADUALLY FADING AWAY TO SILENCE.]

[SFX: RAIN IS FALLING, THIS TIME HEARD FROM OUTSIDE AS TROUGHTON’S CAR PULLS UP TO IRVING’S COTTAGE. AFTER A MOMENT OF IDLING, HE TURNS OFF THE CAR AND GETS OUT.]

**TROUGHTON:** [DISPLEASED.] Oh, blasted rain. Ugh.

[SFX: CONTINUING TO GRUNT AT THE RAIN, HE SWIFTLY WALKS TO THE DOOR AND RINGS THE DOORBELL. HE DOES NOT GET AN IMMEDIATE RESPONSE.]

**TROUGHTON:** Oh, come on.

[SFX: STILL GRUNTING AT THE RAIN, HE RINGS THE DOORBELL SEVERAL TIMES MORE IN SUCCESSION WITHOUT WAITING FOR AN ANSWER. FINALLY, THE DOOR OPENS.]

**IRVING:** [RUSHED] Come in, quickly. Come in!

[TROUGHTON DASHED IN AND THE DOOR CLOSES. THE SOUND OF RAIN CHANGES TO THAT HEARD FROM INDOORS.]

**TROUGHTON:** [SHAKING OFF THE RAIN.] Ugh. Brr.

**IRVING:** [CHUCKLES.] Wet, is it?

**TROUGHTON:** [SNARKY.] Just a tad.

**IRVING:** Did you get here okay?

**TROUGHTON:** [LYING, AND NOT VERY WELL.] Um, yes. Yes, uh, no problems.

**IRVING:** [OBLIVIOUS.] Good. Now, come through. I’ve got the fire on. Cup of tea?

[SFX: FOOTSTEPS AS THEY MOVE FURTHER INTO THE COTTAGE.]

**TROUGHTON:** [IN RELIEF.] Oh, yes, please.

**TROUGHTON:** [SEARCHING FOR SMALL TALK AS IRVING PREPARES THE TEA IN THE BACKGROUND.] It really is a lovely cottage, Irving.

[[*MUSIC: GENTLE DAMPENED ELECTRONIC BELL TONES FROM A RHODES ELECTRIC PIANO THAT SLOWLY FADE OUT AS THE NEXT ONE SOUNDS.*]]

[SFX: TROUGHTON AND IRVING RELAX AROUND A CRACKLING FIRE AS A CLOCK TICKS IN THE BACKGROUND.]

**TROUGHTON:** [DRUNK, SPEAKING OVERLY EXAGGERATEDLY.] You know what, Irving? That clock. That one right there. Is very loud.

**IRVING:** [HAS ALSO BEEN DRINKING.] Oh, oh, oh! Time flies! [PAUSE.] You know, Geoffrey, this is the most relaxed I’ve ever seen you. [AUDIBLY GRINNING.] You’ve even loosened your tie!

**TROUGHTON:** [SINGLE LAUGH.] Well, I suppose it *is* out of working hours. It’s a hard habit to break, nonetheless. Uh, you know, in Oxford, we-

**IRVING:** [SUDDEN DELIBERATE LAUGH AT TROUGHTON, CUTTING HIM OFF.]

**TROUGHTON:** [GOOD NATURED.] I… beg your pardon?

**IRVING:** You always find a way to pepper ‘Oxford’ into the conversation!

**TROUGHTON:** [AFTER A SELF-CONSCIOUS PAUSE.] Do I?

**IRVING:** Yeup! [TAKES A MOMENT TO SWALLOW HIS DRINK.] Is Warwick not posh enough for you?

**TROUGHTON:** [CHASTISING, STILL GOOD NATURED.] Now, Irving, you know that’s not the case.

**IRVING:** [CORRECTING, A LITTLE HESITANT.] Uh, Philip.

**TROUGHTON:** Oh, uh, of course. Ye-yes, yes… Um… [CLEARS THROAT TO TRY AGAIN.] *Philip.* You know I’m *honoured* to be at Warwick.

**IRVING:** I should hope so! Bloody good university is Warwick. I did my undergraduate here, actually. It’s in my blood! Stay here long enough and it’ll seep into yours, too, like some delightful virus. [TROUGHTON CHUCKLES.] Right, I’m empty. *Refill* our drinks, please!

[SFX: IRVING PLACES THE GLASS DOWN. TROUGHTON PULLS A CORK AND REFILLS THE DRINKS, SLIDING ONE ACROSS THE TABLE TO IRVING.]

**IRVING:** Another toast?

**TROUGHTON:** Yeeeeeeeess… [DRAWING OUT THE ‘YES’ WHILE HE TRIES TO THINK OF SOMETHING.] Ung… To Warwick!

**IRVING:** Nicely done. To Warwick!

[SFX: THEY CLINK THEIR GLASSES AND DRINK. TROUGHTON MAKES AN ‘MM’ NOISE AND IRVING CHUCKLES.]

**TROUGHTON:** I must say that’s… very fine cognac.

**IRVING:** An expensive taste, though quite worth it. Books and booze, that’s all my money goes on! [REMEMBERING.] Oh, yes! I was showing off my hardbacks, wasn’t I?

**TROUGHTON:** Yes! And you had a-a lot more fiction than I anticipated.

**IRVING:** Come, now, there’s more to life than study. Uh, uh, for examples, um… [SEARCHES FOR A BOOK.] Ah. Have a gander at this beauty.

[SFX: HE HANDS THE BOOK TO TROUGHTON WHO FLIPS THROUGH IT, MAKING THOUGHTFUL NOISES TO HIMSELF.]

**TROUGHTON:** Um, beautiful binding… *The Golem*? I didn’t see you as a reader of horror.

**IRVING:** [ALMOST UNDER HIS BREATH AND WITH A NERVOUS LAUGH.] Chris, you’d better not look at the paperback collection, then…

**TROUGHTON:** [HALF LAUGHING.] Oh, no, no, I-I hold nothing against the genre! I, myself, once read *The,* uh, *The Haunting of Hill House*, for example.

**IRVING:** Good lord! Geoffrey reads for fun! [LAUGHING.] And gothic horror, no less!

**TROUGHTON:** *One book!*

[BOTH MEN LAUGH.]

**IRVING:** [STRUGGLING TO GET THE WORDS OUT.] So, uh, how, um, do you feel about that sort of stuff, now, anyway?

**TROUGHTON:** Hm? What stuff?

**IRVING:** Well, y’know, um, spirits and ghosts…

**TROUGHTON:** [GETTING SUSPICIOUS.] What do you mean?

**IRVING:** Well, after, um, after your, uh, your recent, um-

**TROUGHTON:** [DISMISSIVELY CUTTING HIM OFF.]I haven’t the foggiest idea what you’re talking about.

**IRVING:** Well… [SEARCHING FOR HIS THOUGHTS.] Hang on, you call that a top-up? Here, give me the bottle…

[SFX: IRVING POPS THE CORK AGAIN AND REFILLS THEIR GLASSES.]

**TROUGHTON:** [WITH A HALF LAUGH.] You’re trying to get me drunk.

**IRVING:** And I’m succeeding.

[BOTH MEN LAUGH. A CHAIR SCRAPES ACROSS THE FLOOR.]

**IRVING:** Hey! Hey, careful, don’t spill it!

[[*MUSIC: THE LAST NOTE TRAILS TO SILENCE.*]]

[SFX: A TICKING CLOCK COMES IN AND THE SOUNDS OF BIRDS HERALD THE MORNING. IT’S DEFINITELY TOO MUCH FOR POOR TROUGHTON AS HE ROLLS OVER AND GROANS, HUNGOVER. HE RUBS HIS HANDS OVER HIS FACE AND GROANS SOME MORE.]

**TROUGHTON:** [SLIGHTLY RAISED VOICE.] Philip, you have the most uncomfortable sofa I’ve ever had the displeasure to sleep on. Gaugh. [UNDER HIS BREATH.] It’s far too early. [RAISED VOICE AGAIN.] Are you awake? [WALKING ACROSS THE WOODEN FLOOR.] Ugh… Ugh, how the students do this every day, I have no clue… [CLIMBING STAIRS WITH A GRUNT.] Philip. Philip?

[SFX: TROUGHTON KNOCKS ON THE BEDROOM DOOR THREE TIMES.]

**TROUGHTON:** Philip, are you awake? Do you want a cup of tea?

**IRVING:** [THROUGH THE DOOR.] Come in, Geoffrey.

[TROUGHTON OPENS THE DOOR AND WALKS IN.]

**TROUGHTON:** Um… Sorry, if I’ve woken you. I’m rather desperate for a cup of t- Oh! [IMMEDIATELY FLUSTERED.] Um… You’re half-dressed. Uh… H-have you even been to bed?

**IRVING:** [DISTRACTED.] I tried. I couldn’t. I’m glad you’re up, though.

**TROUGHTON:** Are-are you all right? [HESITANTLY.] Have you been staring out of the window all morning? Philip?

**IRVING:** [MATTER OF FACT.] There’s someone watching me.

[[*MUSIC: LOW, AIRY WIND NOTES.*]]

**TROUGHTON:** [SHOCKED.] What?

**IRVING:** Come and see.

[TROUGHTON TUTS AND WALKS OVER TO THE WINDOW.]

**IRVING:** Do you see him?

**TROUGHTON:** [PEERING.] Oh, oh, yes, just about. There’s a… [PAUSES.] There’s a fellow in the field.

**IRVING:** [SLIGHT RELIEVED SIGH.] I’m almost relieved you see him.

**TROUGHTON:** [SCOFFS.] Why wouldn’t I?

**IRVING:** [SUBDUED.] He’s wrong, that one.

**TROUGHTON:** [A SCOFF BECOMES A LAUGH.] What on earth are you on about? It’s just some rambler?

**IRVING:** No. It’s not.

**TROUGHTON:** [LOOKING CLOSER.] Hm, I rather think it is. Some eccentric local with a penchant for walks at six in the morning.

**IRVING:** It’s *really* not.

**TROUGHTON:** Well… What makes you so sure?

**IRVING:** [STAMMERING.] He… Um, we- [TAKES A DEEP BREATH THEN CONTINUES WITH A TREMBLING VOICE.] He’s… been around for a week now. Appearing, I mean, I-I mean, I, first, I assumed as you did, some oddball. But, he-he simply *appears* every so often, never moving, never-never going anywhere. I… He’s always outside, always starting at me. I, and I don’t like it.

**TROUGHTON:** Have you tried talking to him?

**IRVING:** After his second appearance, I shouted over. Nothing aggressive.

**TROUGHTON:** Nothing?

**IRVING:** Not a thing. [TREMBLING SIGH.] The thing is, Geoffrey, I-I-I rather think I… I rather think he’s not quite alive.

**TROUGHTON:** [INCREDULOUS.] I beg your pardon?

**IRVING:** I thought you of all people would understand.

**TROUGHTON:** [FRUSTRATED.] Why, Philip? Why would *I* understand? Hm?

**IRVING:** After what you’ve said about the lantern in Anworth. You-you saw something, it–

**TROUGHTON:** [FIRMLY.] We’ve been over this–

**IRVING:** You gave me your rehearsed explanation.

[SFX: TROUGHTON MAKES SEVERAL NOISES OF ANNOYANCE AS HE STORMS BACK INTO THE LIVING ROOM FOR HIS SHOES.]

[[*MUSIC: STATIC ECHOES ARE ADDED TO THE SUSTAINED NOTES IN THE BACKGROUND.*]]

**TROUGHTON:** [ANGRY AND DETERMINED.] Well. Let’s find out, shall we?

[SFX: TROUGHTON GETS UP FROM THE COUCH WITH A CREAK OF SPRINGS AND BOTH MEN LEAVE THE ROOM.]

**IRVING:** …what?

**TROUGHTON:** Oh, yes. Let’s find out. You and I, right now. Get your coat.

[[*MUSIC: DIES AWAY TO SILENCE.*]]

[SFX: DIES GRADUALLY, LEAVING JUST THE BIRDS AND CLOCK, THEN JUST THE CLOCK. AFTER ABOUT FOUR SECONDS OF SILENCE, BIRDSONG IS HEARD ONCE MORE, THE DOOR CLOSES, AND FOOTSTEPS ARE AUDIBLE AGAIN ON A HARD SURFACE.]

**TROUGHTON:** [IMPATIENT.] Oh, come on.

[SFX: THE MEN GET TO THE GRASS, MUFFLING THEIR FOOTSTEPS. THEY STARTLE SOME BIRDS WHICH TAKE FLIGHT NEARBY IN A FLUTTER OF WINGS.]

[[*MUSIC: AS THE VOICE OVER BEGINS, LOW THRUMMING HUMMED STRING-LIKE NOTES BEGIN, ALMOST MORE FELT THAN HEARD.*]]

**TROUGHTON (VO):** I practically frogmarched poor Irving out the door. I had half hoped that the Watcher in the field would not be there by the time we stepped outside, but there he remained.

[[*MUSIC: MORE PERCUSSIVE ELEMENTS ARE ADDED.*]]

We didn’t speak to each other as we approached. I cannot speak for Irving, but I supposed *I* attempted an air of authority, a pitiful attempt at intimidation, as it were. [A FOX BARKS AT SOMETHING IN THE DISTANCE.] The rising sun was behind the figure, the brightness so much that it was almost blinding. Being forced to look at the ground was a blessing; despite my apparent resolve, I did not relish confrontation. I stole glances as we approached, the dark shape of the Watcher was a black hole against the sea of light. At first, he appeared as a pupil in a large, bright eye.

Through some effort and squinting, I was able to see that the figure wore a large, black overcoat, perhaps too formal for a country walk. [MORE BIRDS FLY AWAY, STARTLED.] At last we reached him and I stood closer than Irving, of course. That was to be expected. [FOOTSTEPS STOP.] I raised a hand to shield my view and I tried to meet the fellow in the eye. However, our visitor was looking at the ground, thin, straggly hair draped over skin seemingly too pale to be healthy.

**TROUGHTON:** [CLEARS THROAT DELIBERATELY.] Uh, excuse me… Excuse me, sir, might we speak with you? [AFTER A PAUSE, AN ANNOYED EXHALE.] For goodness sake. [ANGRY.] You there!

[[*MUSIC: NOTES MOVE FASTER.*]]

[SFX: THE WATCHER EXHALES, A LONG, TINNY SOUND.]

**IRVING:** Troughton…

**TROUGHTON:** [ANGRY.] I said, excuse me! [TUTS.] You see, Philip? Just some fool who doesn’t even have the decency to speak to us. Some nosey cretin making us doubt our own bloody sanity. [FOOTSTEPS ON GRASS.]

**TROUGHTON (VO):** At this point, I took a step forward, for what purpose I didn’t know and still don’t. But I was not able to entertain the thought further.

[SFX: ALL SOUNDS OF SURROUNDING NATURE STOP. THE WATCHER EXHALES AGAIN, EVEN LONGER AND DEEPER THAN BEFORE.]

[[*MUSIC: MID-RANGE AIRY NOTES COME IN OVER THE TOP OF THE DEEP NOTES, BLEEDING INTO A SOUND MORE LIKE WOOD ON STRINGS.*]]

**TROUGHTON (VO):** The man, the Watcher, raised its head. Or… at least, it tried. The neck leaned back, yet the head remained forward. And I realised he had not been looking down out of choice. The neck soon leaned back enough to cause the head to limply loll backward, giving us a full view of the face. Never before had I been so reminded that the body is simply a shell of organs and bones. Irving had been convinced this man was not alive and I had berated him. [SCARED AND STRAINED.] But does a living man’s skin pull tightly over bone? Does a living man’s jaw drop open involuntarily and does he look at you with eyes grey and rotten? How does such a thing glare with such disdain, such *malice*? Why was there instantly such judgement passed over us? Or perhaps… just one.

[[*MUSIC: FADES TO NOTHING.*]]

[SFX: THE DOOR SLAMS SHUT.]

**TROUGHTON:** [PANTING AND SCARED.] He’s gone. He must have left when we walked away.

[SFX: THE MEN WALK TO ANOTHER ROOM. THE CLOCK CAN BE HEARD TICKING IN THE BACKGROUND AND THE BIRDSONG HAS RETURNED, THOUGH QUIETLY.]

**IRVING:** [ALSO OUT OF BREATH.] Well, are you satisfied, Troughton?

**TROUGHTON:** That’s unfair…

**IRVING:** I told you that wasn’t a bloody man. Are you convinced now, hm? No smart-arsed answer this time?

**TROUGHTON:** Look, I accept that there are things far grander and far–

**IRVING:** Oh, spare me your politician’s answer!

**TROUGHTON:** [EARNEST.] Philip. If you’d seen what I’ve seen, then you’d be equally keen to hide from the truth.

[SFX: IRVING CLUTCHES HIS HEAD IN HIS HANDS AND PACES THE ROOM, MAKING A FEW AGITATED NOISES BEFORE LETTING OUT A FRUSTRATED CRY.]

**IRVING:** [WHIMPERING.] I killed someone, Geoffrey.

**TROUGHTON:** …what?

**IRVING:** [JUST AS A FOX BARKS IN THE DISTANCE.] Last month, just before you went away. I hit someone on the drive back from work.

**TROUGHTON:** Oh, god. Irving, was this…

**IRVING:** Up the hill, there’s a sharp turn in the road.

**TROUGHTON:** [SHOCKED.] I-I know, I-I-I lost control last night myself on the way here. I-I-I saw something…

**IRVING:** [ALMOST AT A WHISPER.] There was some pensioner walking across the road. He-he-he saw me before I saw him. He looked-he looked terrified, Geoffrey. I-I-I couldn’t stop the car in time.

**TROUGHTON:** Well, did you stop? A-After you hit him, I mean?

[SFX: IRVING SOBS.]

**TROUGHTON:** Irving! Did. You. Stop??

**IRVING:** [SOBBING.] He knows! That bloody thing knows!

**TROUGHTON:** [TRYING HARD TO SOUND CONVINCING.] You don’t *know* that.

**IRVING:** Oh, come on. You saw him! He knows! And he’s making sure I don’t forget it.

**TROUGHTON:** Look, I don’t know what’s going on. I-I-I don’t know what’s beyond this life. I-I’ve seen things I can’t explain, that much is true. But… [SIGH.] But the simplest explanation is often the most correct one, is it not? Irving, if what you say is true, *if* this thing knows. Perhaps if you take responsibility, it will relent? [AFTER A PAUSE.] Look, it’s Friday today. You have until Monday, and if you don’t do something, well… I will.

**IRVING:** [SOBBING.] Oh, no, Geoffrey…

[SFX: TROUGHTON PICKS UP HIS KEYS, AND LEAVES, CLOSING THE DOOR FIRMLY BEHIND HIM.]

[[*MUSIC: THE DAMPENED RHODES PIANO NOTES RETURN.*]]

**TROUGHTON (VO):** Sleep was but a concept that weekend. Come Monday, I stood in my office on the fifth floor in the midst of an anxious fever. My phone rested heavily in my breast pocket, ever ready to make the call that would both betray my friend but make steps to put things right…

I looked to the offices across the university grounds, looking for distraction. My next lecture was but an hour away and yet I had done little to prepare. I scanned the workplaces through the clear glass wall and saw something that stood against the modern setting.

I saw the unmistakably wasted figure of the thing from outside Irving’s cottage. I had scarcely been able to look back when I first saw him, but now I stared. I stared until my eyes ached and dried. Its head, though limp and to one side, was still able to fix on me and in the expressionless face there was somehow a countenance, a burning sensation of anger. [[*MUSIC: ADDITION OF STATICKY DISTORTION OVER THE NOTES.*]] Whether this malevolence was aimed at me, I was unsure, but my view was suddenly obstructed for the most fleeting of seconds as something suddenly passed between us. [TROUGHTON GASPS.]

[SFX: A WOMAN SCREAMS.]

**TROUGHTON:** My god!

**TROUGHTON (VO):** It was Irving. He fell 12 floors from the roof, quite on purpose, I’m told. [SOMBRE.] Atonement, it seems, was too much to ask of him and I remain disappointed, to say the least. I ran down to see him and fought through the crowd. Bodies that fall from such heights are not as clean and intact as you would hope.

[[*MUSIC: BEGINS SPEEDING UP AND CHANGING INTO THE SHADOWS AT THE DOOR THEME.*]]

I have yet to return to the roads leading to Irving’s cottage, but I suspect that if I do, the shape that appeared in the rain will not be there again. And I doubt – I hope – that I will never see the Watcher again, also. [BITTERLY.] He had done his job. Let that be the end of it.

[[*MUSIC: 13 MORE SECONDS TO THE FINALE OF THE SHADOWS AT THE DOOR THEME.*]]

[Timestamp: 30:12]

BEGIN DISCUSSION SECTION

**MARK:** And that was “Silent Warnings,” written by… me! I am joined, as always, and for the ninth time, the entire cast. David Ault!

**DAVID:** Thank you very much, Mark! Pleasure to be back. Ninth and final (possibly) time.

**MARK:** [LAUGHING.] You tease.

**DAVID:** I know. Very much so. But yes! It was a pleasure to be back as Professor Troughton. In all his tweed, repressed glory.

**MARK:** Yes, I do like the Professor, although he’s only had two published stories of which we’ve now, you’ve now heard. I feel like I’ve had this character for a long time and I don’t know how all the other writers listening do it, but I have, on my hard drive, probably 15 short stories that have been started and never finished. Two of which are Troughton stories, but then one of them– there was a third, but then I heavily changed it halfway through and it became “Carve and Colour,” which appeared on *The NoSleep Podcast*.

**DAVID:** Yes! Yes, I remember. That was Christmas a couple of years ago.

**MARK:** Yeah, I’d always wanted to do a story about a haunted tattoo, especially as somebody who has many tattoos, so the idea was that Troughton, having now seen, y’know, at least three ghosts, was now obsessed with researching them. And he travelled to Durham and then the paragraphs I wrote of him exploring Durham became the story “Quem Infra Nos,” which now appears in *The Shadows at the Door* *Anthology*. But he went to Durham to find a very rare book, even though we have no independent book- – well, we do, we don’t have many independent bookshops in Durham – and he met someone who was doing the same thing, but this character was covered in tattoos, which he would use to almost fight Troughton. But then, of course, it became the story in *NoSleep*, which then became a bit of a Weinstein response story. But I would – if you’re curious about the story, and indeed, David Ault is *in* the story, he’s marvellous in it – I would suggest finding the British Christmas special that, David, you actually directed, I believe?

**DAVID:** I was behind it, certainly. It was directed mostly, though, by Olivia White who is our script manager and all-round person kind of thing at *The NoSleep Podcast*. The British Christmas special is one of the specials, paid-for specials, so you would need to get the season pass or there is the option of just getting the Christmas specials. More information on that at the *NoSleep* website. But also, I do have one of my stories on there as well, as one of the… Which, actually, was one of the stories I did at the Newcastle castle event back in December.

**MARK:** [SPEAKING OVER DAVID'S LAST WORDS.] It’s all connected. [OVER MARK’S NEXT WORDS, DAVID SAYS “It is all connected.”] There’s a meme, David. There’s a meme of Charlie Day from *It’s Always Sunny in Philadelphia* putting all this red string on the wall, turning to look at someone and his eyes are bloodshot and he’s tired, and it’s like all of our short stories are connected. It’s all very incestuous. [BOTH LAUGH.] But, yeah, Troughton, he’s *back*!

**DAVID:** He’s back and he’s more repressed than ever. [MARK LAUGHS.] Walking into his friend’s bedroom, early in the morning, with his friend half-naked. It’s dripping, *dripping* with sexual tension.

**MARK:** [LAUGHING.] Well, that’s it, ‘cause I thought I was being really smug and smart and when I wrote it… I mean, I wrote this story years ago. This story got heavily rewritten to – as did “Leave a Light on For Me” – for the podcast. It was a nice opportunity to address, y’know, what I would’ve changed in the story when I did this. But I always liked having that little bit of tension between Irving and Troughton. Then David Ault says, “hold my beer,” (or tea) and, with Irving’s performance… I mean, I thought… I obviously had to listen to this several times when I was editing and then I listened to it once for fun at the end, when it is, indeed, released. But, you definitely went a bit gay with your performance, didn’t you, David?

**DAVID:** [LAUGHING.] Well, I tried not to go *overly* so, but when trying to come up with another voice, I just thought, [IN AN EXAGGERATED VERSION OF IRVING’S VOICE AND ACCENT.] “well, why not go full Alan Bennett. So, as I was sitting, drinking m’tea, and talking with Vera Duckworth about custard creams, and I thought, ‘oh, well, why not.’” [BACK TO HIS OWN VOICE.] And, yeah, that was just where it started. I reined it back, ‘cause I thought, “I’m not gonna go that far.” But that was definitely the start.

**MARK:** [STARTING OVER DAVID’S LAST SENTENCE.] I will point out if we do the outtakes, there’s a bit when Troughton knocks on the door [THREE KNOCKS.] and the script calls for Irving to go, “come in, Geoffrey.” David will sometimes give me several takes of one line so I can pick. [DAVID CHUCKLES.] As any good actor would. And it’s like, “come in, Geoffrey.” [MORE LILTING.] “Come in, Geoffrey.” [ADDING MORE OF A SEDUCTIVE FEEL.] “Oh, come in, Geoffrey, you sexy sod, you.” [BOTH LAUGH.] I was like, “I beg your pardon! That’s not in the script!”

**DAVID:** Just like the dog poo in “The Signalman.”

**MARK:** Yes. There’s all these little gems I need to find, if I didn’t hastily remove them in my quest to get these out once a week. And they were in production a long time. But yes. But yeah, I mean, as we’ve discussed, and I will touch it again in the first episode, Troughton is very much a Jamesian protagonist, albeit with, believe it or not, less stuffy than the Jamesian protagonist. But, and as we’ve discussed in previous episodes, there is that suppressed sexuality element to James that many of us see when we read it, so I very much enjoy putting that into Troughton and I couldn’t help myself with the line of “maybe he got laid.” “I don’t think he does that.” So…

**DAVID:** Yes. And it was very much a Jamesian story, as well, because we have the Irving, who has done an action, as we discussed in “Number 13,” though the Jamesian protagonists will do an action, whether it’s getting a book, looking at a woodcutting, getting a crown out of the ground, they will do an action and then there will be a Watcher.

**MARK:** Yeah.

**DAVID:** Something coming closer, slowly, in all of those ways. Yeah. And this one, spoiler alert, you’ve just listened to it, this ghostly Watcher kills, or causes Irving to plummet to his death.

**MARK:** And what I like about this story is that we kind of join it halfway through Irving’s story. He’s knocked the person down and we see that person in the roadside, y’know, like an echo of the dramatic death, and then the Watcher, which is this almost, like, reaper that is there to make Irving atone for it or indeed just have revenge. And you could start that from A to B, but instead Troughton is brought into it and I actually really enjoyed having a story where they’re actually arguing whether it’s a ghost or not because in so many of these classic stories, it’s like, “oh, my god, my bedsheets have come to life and then later I reflected that it could be a ghost.” Or, “my god, there’s a guy chasing me and later, I decided it could be a ghost.” In this one, they’re literally going “it’s a ghost,” “it’s *not* a ghost,” “it’s a *fucking* ghost.” You know, and [PAUSES FOR DAVID’S LAUGHTER] and I enjoyed that. It’s very rare that a character can use the “g” word in a ghost story and…

**DAVID:** Yes, yes, very true. Now, for me, when I saw the words “the Watcher” and then also having Irving fall to his death, and, y’know, sue me, but I’m getting my Doctor Who reference in early, in “Logopolis,” the last Tom Baker story, he is haunted by the ghostly Watcher.

**MARK:** He was the Doctor all along!

**DAVID:** He was the Doctor all along, exactly. So you’ve got this white ghostly shrouded figure that appears in all the-in a whole load of various areas which… And the music that went along with that, I always like that sort of motif, but anyway, that’s a different thing entirely. And, of course, it ends up the Watcher is there to remind the Doctor that he is going to die. [INQUISITIVE “HM” FROM MARK.] And then at the end, he’s there, Tom Baker falls from the Jodrell Bank telescope, and the Watcher is there to be the future echo of the next Doctor.

**MARK:** And I love how comfortable the Doctor looks once he’s fallen. It’s like, it’s a very famous clip [OVER HIM, DAVID ADDS “EXACTLY!”], you can find it on YouTube, but the Doctor has fallen and he’s just lying there, and he’s like, “Ah, this is very comfortable.” Scarf neatly, y’know, tied around him and… And indeed in “Silent Warnings,” Troughton has just said that bodies that fall from such a height are rarely as clean as you would like them to be. I’m glad you made a Doctor Who reference. Because as I was listening to it, I thought, “this is a bit ‘Woman in Black.’” Which is a huge influence on me, which I couldn’t help but wonder. But the Watcher, of course, does not *force* Irving to… You know, a writer once told me to never explain my stories… [DAVID LAUGHS.] Coming from David Lynch, as well, but yes, the Watcher does not f-he doesn’t *supernaturally* make Irving do it, he just drives him insane by watching him. And making him know that he knows.

**DAVID:** Hm. Would the Watcher have stayed at the same distance, do you think? Wherever Irving went?

**MARK:** I had always imagined it – and in fact when I was writing it, there was going to be another scene where Irving saw him – where he was always some distance away. Like, it was always… he was never gonna be, like, one day he opens the curtains and he’s there. In fact, that image is actually from a different story that I’ve written. But anyway, it was gonna be… it was just always not quite in his peripheral, but just somewhere in the background. It would just… However, in the story, Irving makes it clear he’s always at the house. Just purely because, as I was beginning to write ghost stories (this is when I started living on my own and I live in a very old house), sometimes the idea of just someone being outside my house, looking at the house, would be an image that would really creep myself out and that’s where a lot of my stories come from, just I tease myself with these little horrifying images that might sound quite mundane to you listening right now, but to me, y’know, it’s like you’re doing your dishes, you look out, there’s someone in your garden looking at you. That would be quite scary.

**DAVID:** Interesting. Yes. Because of course, we’re going back there, to “Pit Village,” and the people that would stand outside your house looking in while your carpets are getting changed over.

**MARK:** Well, I guess, if it’s during the day, they’re cult members about to kill me. If it’s at night, they’re ghosts. [DAVID LAUGHS.] So… There are rules, David.

**DAVID:** And what is that you’ve done that requires a Watcher to be there to make you atone for your sins?

**MARK:** I dunno, probably just try to be the centre of attention when I was at my friends’ or something like that. I think, I imagine there will be people listening who have written stories that have appeared in audio productions and it is always very exciting when your story’s adapted for that. But one thing I really enjoyed about this one was Nico’s soundtrack. In fact, out of all the nine episodes, this is probably my favourite soundtrack. It’s so deliciously electronic and very much influenced… We were looking at the soundtracks from Trent Reznor and Atticus Ross. ‘Cause the whole point of this podcast, the whole format was meant to be “new story, old story, new story, old story,” so it was like, *Shadows at the Door* was old meets new and we very much tried to convey that with the music like we discussed last week. This time we said to Nico, “y’know what, let’s just go full-on new. Let’s just really go into it.” And I *think* you will all agree that it sounded absolutely fantastic. So, once again, thank you, Nico.

**DAVID:** Yes. That it did. Thank you very much.

**MARK:** And as you said, David, a lot of my stories are Jamesian, but I do always try to give them a bit of a modern twist. Now, we’ll probably cover this a little bit more in the Q and A session, but somebody did mention, “what is it about the ghost story appeals?” And most ghost stories are set in the past because of course, with modern horror stories, a lot of the time the terror of this can be averted with the use of a smart phone. So, ghost stories, of course, when they’re set in a certain time do not have the smart phones. And I try to write stories in which the use of a smart phone would not stop it. And certainly for the few stories in this one, it wouldn’t really do anything whether you had one or not. But certainly in this story, y’know, we have Troughton in the car, so I guess a car is modern. [LAUGHTER.] There weren’t that many cars around in James’ time. But then I have written stories in the past – and again, “Carve and Colour” for NoSleep – where the use of a phone is actually very important to the story, so…

**DAVID:** Yes, I think there… I mean, I haven’t written nearly as much as you have and, in fact, I’ve only essentially got four published stories and those have all been Christmas episodes of NoSleep, but – oh, there’s a couple on Reddit – but, I think the one writing tip that I was given which I’ve tried to stick to is “why is this happening now and what would the protagonist do to try to stop it if it’s something bad.” And try and think… Because I’ve listened to some stories where you just think, “there is a massive plot hole here, why wouldn’t this person do x, y, z?” You’ve got to think, if the audience is screaming that, then you’ve got to address that. And so, that’s why I’ve always thought, when I’ve done writing, why is it happening now and why isn’t the protagonist doing everything in their power to stop it or to address, y’know, what could be.

**MARK:** No, I do agree with what you’re saying, because in your story “All Children Look the Same,” the protagonist does everything he can to prove what he perceives is happening is true and he is foiled in several ways. Some of them are quite amusing. But again, we won’t spoil that too much, ‘cause you should seek that out, “All Children Look the Same” on, no doubt, a Christmas special of *The NoSleep Podcast*.

**DAVID:** It was the first Christmas special that… Yeah, it was the first Christmas special. It was the 2015? one, yes, 2015 Christmas Special.

**MARK:** And as much as David Ault isn’t a huge fan, it’s time he admits he is the Charles Dickens of *The NoSleep Podcast*. [DAVID SPUTTERS AND BOTH LAUGH.] Well, moving away from that podcast, we should talk about our own a little bit more. Although not something I’ve come up with, and I’ve been writing for a good few years now, and about a year ago, I was watching an interview with Neil Gaiman… No, I was reading *A View from the Cheap Seats*, which is his book of collections of articles and such. And at one point he says, “write the stories you want to read.” And that’s the most simple thing I’ve ever heard, and yet… Because sometimes, especially when I was writing my first few stories, I was like, well, I’m going to write this for this audience, you know, I want it to appeal to these kind of readers and now, it’s like no, I’m writing what *I* want to read and I’ve got damn good taste. So, the kind of stuff that I want to read is hopefully the kind of stuff that other people want to read and Neil Gaiman’s just a wonderful – whimsical as fuck – but wonderful writer and man and y’know [**OVERLAPPING DAVID:** Brilliant man, yes.] a line such as that is just something that I very much remember when I’m writing.

**DAVID:** Yes, an excellent writer. Not just for Doctor Who, but in his own right, I think. ‘Cause he did…

**MARK:** I like that you… “Neil Gaiman, a part-time Doctor Who writer who’s also published some novels and short stories and comic books… I have no time for them…”

**DAVID:** I love his *Neverwhere* collection.

**MARK:** I mean, I actually prefer his short stories to his… ‘Cause some of the novels that he writes is not necessarily the genre that I’m interested in, which is, like, y’know, your Terry Pratchett fantasy types. But, certainly, his short stories. And he can write a terrifying short story. In fact, Neil Gaiman even wrote a marvellous essay on ghost stories and why we write them now. In fact, what I would suggest is, again, I’m going to make another book recommendation, is – and this is one where I do feel like an audiobook is stronger than the physical book – *View from the Cheap Seats*, get it on Audible, Neil actually narrates the entire thing, and it feels like he’s just having a conversation with you. You can do your dishes and he’s in your head going, [IN A VERY DELIBERATE VOICE.] “But what *are* dishes? And why do we wash them?” [LAUGHS.] And it’s just…

**DAVID:** It’s sounding a bit Brian Cox there.

**MARK:** Yeah, I guess he is… That’s just the limitations of my range. But… In any fantasy dinner party, I would very much have to have Neil Gaiman there. [“MM-HM” FROM DAVID.] You know, David, whenever I see a new film, I have this habit I’ve had for years where as soon as I’ve seen the film, I then go on IMDb and I read all the trivia about it. I must know every bit of trivia. So, if people want a little bit of trivia for this story, when Irving is arguing with Troughton about Irving saying “you must have seen a ghost,” Troughton begins to say “look, I accept that there are things in this life…” Troughton is actually starting to recite the script from the first episode. [DAVID LAUGHS.]

**DAVID:** Yes, yes, I see.

**MARK:** Yes, and he was like, had Irving not have interrupted him, Irving would have listened to “Leave a Light On for Me.” [BOTH LAUGH]. [IN IRVING’S VOICE.] “Well, that’s very good and well, Troughton, but that guy’s still outside.”

**DAVID:** And in fact, if I come back to where-to the voice, I reeled it back from Alan Bennett, and went more for the sort of Brian Cox.

**MARK:** Yes, yeah.

**DAVID:** [IN A BRIAN COX VOICE.] So the whole thing is just amazing. And if you think about the stars and how far away they are, they’re really, really far away…

**MARK:** [ALSO IN A BRIAN COX VOICE, THOUGH NOT QUITE THE SAME AS DAVID’S] Although not impossible, but improbable, Troughton has loosened his tie. [BOTH LAUGH AND MARK RETURNS TO HIS OWN VOICE.] It’s actually that line where I actually heard Brian Cox in your voice. [BRIAN COX VOICE.] You’ve even loosened your tie. Join me next week with Neil deGrasse Tyson.

**DAVID:** But yes, that was where I got the inspiration for Irving’s voice. Because I was trying to think of a decent way to make the two voices distinct. And it can be quite difficult to make some voices distinct. “Number Thirteen,” we’ve actually commented ourselves that it was a bit difficult at some points to know who was speaking and I apologise for that, that’s entirely my failing. But to have someone of a similar age and to be able to pull off an accent properly, I played around with the students to begin with and this you didn’t hear, because I stopped myself and I said “no, y’know, no way.” I tried one being Irish, but I just couldn’t quite get it right and so I thought I’m not going to do it, so I’ll just go back to “Pit Village” guy and just sort of stick that in instead.

**MARK:** But, I think, y’know, if we do do a season two, I’ve certainly come out of my shell a bit and…

**DAVID:** You have, yes.

**MARK:** You know, what’s really interesting, David, is that I’ve never told you this before, so this is… I actually dabbled with being a voice artist about, maybe about 10 years ago.

**DAVID:** Oh, yes?

**MARK:** Just because everybody would always comment on my accent and it was slightly less northern than it is now and I created a show reel and I even for a while, I had agreed to start doing traffic reports for a radio in Newcastle, but I couldn’t get there on time after sixth form[[2]](#footnote-1) but I did… But then for some reason, I just really went off the idea and now, I’m like, in season *two*, *I might perform!* Like Steven Toast…

**DAVID:** Great, mm-hmm.

**MARK:** You haven’t watched *Toast of London*, have you, David?

**DAVID:** [AFTER A PAUSE.] No.

**MARK:** Matt Berry plays a voice actor, well, an actor who does voice work…

**DAVID:** [A LIGHTBULB LIT UP.] Oh, yes, you’ve told me to watch this before, I’m sure.

**MARK:** Yeah, and I just love that there’s one episode that starts off in the booth going, [WITH INCREASING INTENSITY.] “Are you deaf? I said, are you fucking deaf? If you are, you might need a hearing aid? Call 1-800 now.” Yes, it’s very fun. I would suggest that people watch it and you might enjoy it. Yes.

**DAVID:** Yes, yes.

**MARK:** Random sitcom recommendation for you there.

**DAVID:** So we’ve talked, we’ve teased, we’ve mentioned an idea of a second series and we have already…

**MARK:** [STARTING OVER DAVID.] Never mind that, David, the people are demanding a second season!

**DAVID:** Well, one thing that we haven’t talked about in the discussions before because we’ve usually recorded them before we’ve actually launched anything, is our survey where people can take a little look, tells us what you think, what you would like to see, and also ask us a question for our question and answer session. And actually, we’ll begin this by asking you, the listeners, not just to fill out our survey, but also tweet us, who would you bring to a dinner party if you wanted five people, living, dead, five people to bring along to a dinner party. Who would they be? Let us know.

**MARK:** I know I would definitely *not* invite David Ault.

**DAVID:** That’s fair enough. Yeah, we’ve already had dinner once. Twice, in fact. Twice.

**MARK:** Yeah. No, it’s that legendary, y’know, the beginning of, like, anything with the talk about that legendary dinner where it all came together, or the legendary conference call.

**DAVID:** No, it was just you hawking your books in Sheffield.

**MARK:** Yes, it was, yeah. Well, again, that is one of the questions in the Q and A, so we’ll talk about [DRAMATIC VOICE.] the origin of *Shadows at the Door, the Podcast.*

**DAVID:** So, yeah, let us… we’ll be thinking of our five people that we would like to bring to a dinner party, have a think about yours, get in touch, let us know, but also I would like to say a big thank you to everyone who has bought us a cup of Earl Grey or two or three or four so far.

**MARK:** Yes, it’s been really lovely, thank you so much everyone. I’m not actually used to it. I’m still not used to people listening to this show and enjoying it and then being so kind as to put their hand in their pocket and try and help us make more. It’s just really nice. Thanks, guys!

**DAVID:** It is! It is, and I’ve just been at the PodUK convention, so this is dating this episode now, for when we are actually recording this discussion. And I’ve said about the *NoSleep* tours before… listeners are, to me, invariably lovely. The podcast community, the people that will come to see the *NoSleep* live shows, the people that came to the podcast convention, other people who are doing podcasting, audio drama, et cetera, are invariably lovely people because it’s such a nurturing community where we want people to produce their own stuff. To create and it’s a really warm, yeah, a really warm community and it’s an honour and a pleasure to be a part of it.

**MARK:** And not just podcasts, but, like, horror as well.

**DAVID:** Yes!

**MARK:** Most people who like horror are just nice people and that sounds like I’m just trying to say it to get a t-shirt made or something like… It’s just true, and even, like, you see people covered in tattoos and certainly when I was growing up, y’know, you were told that tattoos were very rough… The people that you’d look at, that you think, and they’re really into, like, dark stuff and all that, they’re just really nice. Just nice people. And most of my best friends, well, a lot of my best friends are women who are really into true crime podcasts.

So one thing David and I discussed as we were getting more feedback – and we’ve kind of come to this realisation in our last episode – is giving a little, a tiny little bit more structure to the discussion. One thing that we found that we did is (and I might, if I have the time, I might go back and actually put on the website, what exactly we have recommended and where people can get them) is we found ourselves recommending films, books, podcasts and, I dunno, country parks, [IN A POSH VOICE.] Fountains Abbey is lovely, [BACK TO NORMAL.] but yeah, so what we thought we might do is that we might, at the end of each discussion, wrap up with a little quick thing of “what’s Mark reading, what’s David listening to,” or indeed, performing in. You know, what film did we see, what would we recommend. On that note, just to kind of give you a little bit of a hint, is I’m going to recommend a book that I am currently halfway through. It’s called *The Quick*, by Lauren Owen, and I bought this book about three or four years ago and I actually saw the author do a talk at the Durham Book Festival, and it’s about… Now, it’s gonna sound really like you’ve heard this a million times before. It’s about vampires in the mid-1800s and they’re gay.

**DAVID:** Oh!

**MARK:** Yeah. Oh, David’s ears have pricked up. So, it’s about these two guys who, y’know, they’re finding it hard to like… Well, it’s about this one guy who’s finding it hard to kind of fit into life and he’s a writer and he moves to London to be a writer and he assumes all the interesting things will happen to him there. He becomes a big fan of Oscar Wilde, he starts idolising him and basically, this club of which all the members are vampires is introduced into the story and I won’t spoil it from there, but it is… It’s reminding me very much of when I first read *The Picture of Dorian Gray* in the respect that I was reading a classically themed book which was beautifully written, it had, like, supernatural elements to it… I enjoy the gay aspect to it as well, because, as we’ve discussed, there’s not enough of that in stories.

**DAVID:** Very much so.

**MARK:** And, I’m halfway through it and I’m sat thinking, “this might be one of my new favourite books.”

**DAVID:** Mm.

**MARK:** I’m not massively aware of Lauren Owen as a writer, besides this book and having seen her do a wonderful talk in Durham. I actually think she wrote this book while she was doing her master’s, as well, at Durham. [“WOW” FROM DAVID.] So, yeah, really, just, I’m really enjoying it. And I really think if, indeed there have been some people who’ve said that they’ve read *The Picture of Dorian Gray* or re-read it after we talked about it, so I would very much recommend *The Quick* by Lauren Owen and perhaps I might have finished it by the time we do our Q and A round, but I think it would be quite nice to recommend a book to you guys and podcasts, as well, as we’ve talked about and movies.

**DAVID:** Well, in that case, the podcasts that I’ve been listening to and has just actually finished, so I all of the episodes are now there for you to listen to, is *Small Town Horror*, which is…

**MARK:** I’ve heard of this.

**DAVID:** …the story of one man who goes back to the town of his childhood and all of the stuff that happens there and his investigation into what happened to him when he was a child. It’s not… it’s not a huge cast, it’s mostly Jon Grilz, who is behind *The Creepy Podcast*, who is a lovely guy. He came to our Minneapolis show, both years, and brought cookies! As well.

**MARK:** When you say “our,” you mean *NoSleep*?

**DAVID:** *NoSleep*, yes. So he’s the main narrator for the first three seasons, but there are, I would say, up to a dozen other people in there as supporting cast.

**MARK:** That does sound interesting.

**DAVID:** So, yeah, that is my… As I said, the fourth season has just been released as a block, so take a listen to that. Everything is now there, you can listen to all four seasons.

**MARK:** Excellent. I actually quite like bingeing. The reason why this episode came out weekly is I had initially suggested releasing half of the season one block and doing the rest, having never done a podcast before and David said that’s kind of not what listeners want. They want to have a regular show to listen to. In hindsight, I wonder if weekly was perhaps a little bit too harsh on myself, for production. I mean, the stories have already been made, but then it’s recording, getting the intros done and these discussions done and then edited down. But now that our full season’s out, David, I do hope that there’ll be new listeners who are bingeing us or going back and looking at the statistics, it seems to be that people, some people are going back to listen to the discussion once they just listened to the story, and indeed, to you listening right now, thank you, but perhaps you might like to go back and binge [IN A CONSPIRATORIAL WHISPER.] the stories again, or indeed, the full episodes, just to help the analysis, the analytics, y’know. [BACK TO NORMAL VOICE.] Yeah, and I think, as well, I’ll also wrap this up with a film recommendation.

**DAVID:** Oh, oh, careful!

**MARK:** Yeah, trifecta, y’know. I’m not going to recommend *Velvet Buzzsaw*, ‘cause I saw that last night and [EMBARRASSED.] it was really shit but I loved it. I’m going to recommend a film that you should be able to find on Netflix, both US and UK and Canada, called *Under the Shadow.* It’s actually a British-made film, but it is set in Iran. But it’s the early ‘90s, so I do believe it’s the Gulf War, and it is about a mother who was training to be a doctor but has not been allowed to finish her training because of her political leanings and her husband goes off, he’s been conscripted into the army to go treat people (her husband’s a doctor as well), so she is stuck in an apartment complex with her daughter and everyone starts evacuating but they don’t, and they are haunted by a djinn, which is, like, a sort of ghost or very much in the Islamic belief…

**DAVID:** A spirit, it’s a spirit.

**MARK:** A spirit, yeah, and without ruining it too much, the djinn looks very much like… So this protagonist, she’s quite liberal and the djinn looks very much like a large headscarf or a burka, so there’s a little bit of symbolism in her being oppressed as a women, but then it’s also really scary. And it’s not in English, so I would suggest watch it with subtitles – always watch with subtitles rather than dubbed. But it’s one of my favourite horror movies, it’s really scary. It doesn’t have the jump scares, it’s very atmospheric. You can find it on Netflix and I just, not enough people have seen it and I really would recommend that you watch *Under the Shadow* and tell us if you enjoyed it, ‘cause I saw it at the cinema and I had to see it at a cinema in Newcastle that shows all the small releases, Tyneside Cinema, where I also do a film quiz every other month, and it’s just really fantastic film, so I would suggest that. So your recommendations are, *Under the Shadow* for your movie, *The Quick* for your novel, and *Small Town Horror* for your podcast. If we continue to get the amazing support we’ve been getting so far and season two does become a reality, if you like the idea of getting a trifecta of recommendations, probably a bit briefer and a little bit tidier than what we’ve just done there, then do let us know and I think we would enjoy doing that. I’ve always got my nose in a book, David’s always got his headphones on listening to a podcast and who isn’t always watching films. So…

**DAVID:** Sometimes all three at once.

**MARK:** And then again, and it would all kind of be stuff that, if you’re a fan of *Shadows at the Door*, we think you’d be a fan of these things, too, so do let us know. I think this is probably gone on a bit of a while today, because I [VOICE RAISING TO A WHINE.] kind of don’t want it to end. [MAKES AN AGONISED SQUAWK.]

**DAVID:** Don’t worry, it is the end, but the moment has been prepared for.

**MARK:** It’s been prepared for. [BOTH LAUGH.] Yes. So, this is, this concludes the first season, or series, of *Shadows at the Door, the Podcast*. You *will* be hearing our tones again very soon, because we will be doing the Q and A episode that a lot of you have asked for. We have quite a few questions now, there’s still room for a few more if you want to and we very much look forward. It’ll probably just be, like, maybe an hour long special where we just answer the questions and what have you. As for season two, we really do want to do it, I think we already have quite a few stories in mind, we’ve even considered some more voice actors… We just, we need the help to get there. If you can support us with that, it would be very much appreciated. We would love to continue to bring you classy, quiet horror, as we dare to call it.

**DAVID:** Absolutely. So, the more tea that you can, the more cups of Earl Grey that you can provide for us, the better. And we will be bringing you on either this feed or on the Ko-fi site, but probably on this feed, some various little things throughout the year, just to keep us in your minds, I think, is probably best, whether those be bloopers or just little discussion-type things over the course of the year until series two has become a reality.

**MARK:** And drunk ghost stories, because I want to get hammered and talk about ghosts.

**DAVID:** Drunk ghost stories, yes.

**MARK:** When I get drunk, I get more Northern, so I’m like, [IN AN EXAGGERATED NORTHERN ACCENT.] ‘Why, David, ghosts! Ghosts. Ghosts.’ [NORMAL VOICE.] It’s never [POSH VOICE.] ghosts. [NORMAL.] It’s [NORTHERN.] ghosts. [NORMAL VOICE, WITH CHUCKLES.] [[*MUSIC: SHADOWS AT THE DOOR THEME BEGINS IN THE BACKGROUND.*]] Sorry. It goes a bit deeper, too, for some reason. But for now, thank you very much. Do continue to pour yourself some tea, stay by the fire, and we’ll speak to you soon.

**DAVID:** We will see you very soon. 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. And we’ll see you very soon.

[[*MUSIC: STRINGS STOP.*]]

CAST

Professor Geoffrey Troughton David Ault

*A history professor in his mid-30s, well spoken, confident – Dawkins, but slightly less smug. Returns after the events of “Leave a Light on for Me.”*

Professor Philip Irving David Ault

*Middle aged and middle class. Softly spoken but sure of himself. A man who doesn’t need to be the most important person in the room. Speaks with a Lancashire accent.*

Student One David Ault

*A young student of Troughton’s.*

Student Two David Ault

*Another young student of Troughton's.*

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

1. For US English speakers, windshield. [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. Final two years of secondary education before university, around ages 16 to 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)