**Where Queer Things Him Befell**

**by Mark Nixon**

**MARK NIXON:** *Shadows at the Door* is a podcast designed to scare and delight you. It’s intended for an adult audience and content warnings are available in the show notes.

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

**MARK:** A man looks back at a trip to the north east of England when the door to the other side was opened and has never closed since. This episode follows our former disbeliever, Professor Troughton, and can be enjoyed alone, but is best paired with season 1, episodes 1 and 9, and season 2, episodes 1 and 11.

[Timestamp: 1:14]

[SFX: A CLOCK TICKS. MUTED TRAFFIC CAN BE HEARD FROM OUTSIDE AN OFFICE.]

**LAURENS:** [WARM AND INVITING. AS HE SPEAKS, HE CLICKS HIS PEN.] So, where shall we begin?

**TROUGHTON:** Well, this is our third session. I’m surprised you haven’t asked about my mother yet.

**LAURENS:** Do you want to talk about your mother?

**TROUGHTON:** No.

**LAURENS:** [PROBING.] So you don’t want to talk about your mother?

**TROUGHTON:** [FORCEFULLY.] No.

**LAURENS:** [‘MM’ THAT SAYS ‘INTERESTING,’ THEN A LOUD INHALE.] Well, typically therapists like to get a full history before we begin exploring your childhood experiences in greater detail: your core values and things like that. Over your last few sessions we’d discussed your experience in Anworth, the loss of your friend not long after, and then your experiences in Suffolk and Cardiff. [SHORT PAUSE.] That’s a considerable amount of experience in a short period of time. I’m not surprised that it is taking the length it is to discuss these.

**TROUGHTON:** Well, there certainly has been a lot of ground to cover.

**LAURENS:** And before we go any further, I want to check in and see if you had any thoughts since we last spoke. Any questions that may have presented themselves…

**TROUGHTON:** [THINKING.] Well, it’s certainly been an interesting exercise to review exactly what has occurred in the past few years. I appreciate the safety of the space in which I can speak but if I’m entirely honest I’m not convinced this process offers anything a dictaphone doesn’t. With the greatest respect, that is.

**LAURENS:** [SMALL LAUGH.] That’s certainly an interesting way of looking at it. Are you asking for more feedback?

**TROUGHTON:** No.

**LAURENS:** So what are you asking for?

**TROUGHTON:** I’m not entirely sure. It’s enough that I’m here, isn’t it?

**LAURENS:** It’s a big step for you, yes. And the events you’ve experienced have been traumatic enough to—

**TROUGHTON:** [INTERRUPTING.] I wonder if they’re as traumatic as you think they are.

**LAURENS:** [AFTER A SLIGHT PAUSE.] How so?

**TROUGHTON:** Irving was… is a loss, yes but he was a colleague who had become a friend. What right have I to claim his loss for my own?

**LAURENS:** Must our proximity to a person dictate the loss that we feel?

**TROUGHTON:** I suppose not, but I still don’t feel it’s my loss.

**LAURENS:** Consider a person’s impact on the world. They go about life touching others and becoming part of their lives, be it fleetingly or permanently. In theory these connections are limitless. So, if someone’s impact can spread like that, do you still feel there is a finite limit as to who can feel their loss?

**TROUGHTON:** Well, it almost seems mathematical when put like that.

**LAURENS:** And is that more comforting to you?

**TROUGHTON:** Well, I don’t know if I would use that word, but it’s something to reflect on.

**LAURENS:** And what of your other experiences? The assault, staring into the face of death — perhaps almost literally. Seeing your friend become manic and harm you? What do you consider those experiences?

**TROUGHTON:** [A LONG INHALE.] Traumatic experiences, yes. Lasting nervous prostration? No.

**LAURENS:** That’s an interesting term to use. Has someone used those words to describe you?

**TROUGHTON:** Not quite.

**LAURENS:** Would you like to talk about that?

**TROUGHTON:** No.

**LAURENS:** Would you like to discuss your role at the University coming to an end?

**TROUGHTON:** No, that’s straight forward.

**LAURENS:** A lot of people would consider that a stressful time.

**TROUGHTON:** [THOUGHTFULLY.] No… It came with some relief as a matter of fact, and income shouldn't be an issue for a little while. There’ll be opportunities, I’m sure. [SCOFFS.] I had the most ridiculous offer from America the other day, in fact…

**LAURENS:** [CHANGING TACTICS.] So. [EXHALES AS HE GETS COMFORTABLE HIS IN SEAT.] I suppose that leaves us with continuing along your journey.

**TROUGHTON:** Yes, I suppose it does.

**LAURENS:** Mm. So, last time we were at Cardiff. You felt the experience had given some clarity to your beliefs.

**TROUGHTON:** That’s correct, yes. ’Clarity,’ clarity, yes, that’s very appropriate. After I returned to Coventry and had time to recover, I began the process of preparing for leaving my role at the University.

**LAURENS:** That was a big decision.

**TROUGHTON:** Yes.

**LAURENS:** Say more.

**TROUGHTON:** Well, my pursuits had long been incompatible with the University’s position. If I were going to investigate earnestly, it would need to be entirely independently.

**LAURENS:** The university were concerned, weren’t they?

**TROUGHTON:** Oh yes, paid leave, paying for these sessions. Technically, I’m still on their books but I sincerely doubt that I’ll return.

**LAURENS:** And why’s that?

**TROUGHTON:** Because even after the encounter at Catchlove Hall—in Cardiff—there was another experience. Something that could be replicated.

**LAURENS:** Ah, yes, you mentioned this in your first session. This was in Newcastle, yes?

**TROUGHTON:** That’s right. A few weeks before our first session.

**LAURENS:** Tell me about that.

**TROUGHTON:** Well, as I was organising my affairs at Warwick, I received an invitation to speak at the Newcastle Centre of Russian Studies, part of the University’s History Department, you understand. It was modestly paid but the invitation was very persuasive, complementary even—

**LAURENS:** [INTERRUPTING.] Is that important to you?

[[*MUSIC: AS TROUGHTON SPEAKS, AIRY, SUSTAINED STRING NOTES COME IN BEHIND HIM, ALMOST GROWING OUT OF THE TRAFFIC.*]]

**TROUGHTON:** Well, ordinarily, no, but within academia… [WITH SOME HESITATION AND A SLIGHT LAUGH.] Well, I haven’t been in receipt of much respect as of late; far from it, in some cases. In fact at that point, Doctor Parkins in Suffolk was the last professional to truly treat me as a peer—outside of my students that is. So yes, perhaps I was seduced by this recognition when I agreed to it. The centre had secured a room of a beautiful private library; one of the centre’s co-founders, a Doctor Hannah Shoulder, was chairing. Now, as for my talk, I’d been asked to talk about the correspondence between Ivan the Terrible and Elizabeth the First….

[SFX: TROUGHTON’S LAST WORDS FADE OUT ALONG WITH THE ATMOSPHERE OF LAURENS’ OFFICE. A CRESCENDO IN THE STRINGS COVERS THE FINAL TRANSITION AS HIS WORDS TO LAURENS ARE COVERED BY HIM READING A LETTER FROM IVAN THE TERRIBLE TO A GROUP OF STUDENTS IN A LARGE, SLIGHTLY ECHOING ROOM.]

**TROUGHTON:** …had sought honour to your self and profit to your Country, and therefore we did pretend those weighty affairs between you and us. But now we perceive that there be other men that do rule, and not men, but boors and merchants, the which seek not the wealth and honour of our majesties, but they seek their own profit of merchandise. And you flower in your maidenly estate like a maid; and whosoever was trusted in our affairs and did deceive us, it were not meet that you should credit them.’ [AMUSED CHUCKLE] Oh, dear… Belittlement both as a woman but as a sovereign also. One can only imagine Elizabeth’s reaction upon reading such a letter. Now, as I understand it, we're breaking for tea now, right? Is that-eh, is that right Doctor Shoulder?

**SHOULDER:** We certainly are. Thank you for this, Professor Troughton. Very insightful and entertaining.

[SFX: A PAGE TURNS.]

**TROUGHTON:** Oh, it’s my pleasure. Thank you.

[SFX: APPLAUSE FROM THE AUDIENCE AND THEY BEGIN SPEAKING TO EACH OTHER AND MOVING IN THE BACKGROUND. SHOULDER APPROACHES WITH AUDIBLE FOOTSTEPS.]

**SHOULDER:** Can I get you some tea, Doctor?

**TROUGHTON:** Oh, that would be lovely, thank you.

**SHOULDER:** Earl Grey?

**TROUGHTON:** You read my mind.

**SHOULDER:** Lavender Earl Grey? Rose Earl Grey? Standard…

**TROUGHTON:** Oh, my…

**SHOULDER:** We’ve got all the fancy stuff here, you know!

**TROUGHTON:** So it seems! Uh, lavender, please.

**SHOULDER:** I’ll be right back.

[SFX: SHOULDERS FOOTSTEPS MOVE AWAY. SVETLANA’S HEAVIER FOOTSTEPS APPROACH.]

**TIKHONOVA:** Hello. I just wanted to say thank you for speaking to us, Professor.

**TROUGHTON:** Thank you to the Centre for inviting me.

**TIKHONOVA:** How are you finding it up north?

**TROUGHTON:** Quieter. Which is not unwelcome. And, uh, what about yourself, that’s not a local accent.

**TIKHONOVA:** No, not quite. [SLIGHT LAUGH.] But I’ve been studying here for nearly four years now.

**TROUGHTON:** Excellent. How do you find it?

**TIKHONOVA:** Not as quiet as you do. You know, I’ve always been aware of Ivan’s letters to Elizabeth but I’ve never thought to actually read them.

[SFX: MORE FOOTSTEPS APPROACH.]

**TROUGHTON:** Yes, I think sometimes the fact of the matter can prevent us from admiring the details. Woods and trees, and all that.

**HARRIS:** [APOLOGETIC.] Svetlana, I’m sorry, do you mind if we…?

**TIKHONOVA:** Of course. [TO TROUGHTON.] Thank you, Professor.

**TROUGHTON:** My pleasure.

[SFX: SVETLANA WALKS AWAY.]

**TROUGHTON:** [NARRATING.] I’d noticed the two students conspiring to approach me as soon as we called the tea break. While this isn’t uncommon for such events, they didn’t have a demeanour of curiosity, but rather urgency.

**TUCKWOOD:** [ALMOST APOLOGETICALLY.] Hi.

**TROUGHTON:** Yes, hello.

**HARRIS:** Professor, I really enjoyed your paper in Fortean Times.

**TROUGHTON:** [SURPRISED.] Oh, I see, thank you. [A SLIGHT BEMUSED LAUGH.] That’s not what people in these environments tend to approach me about.

**HARRIS:** [TRYING TO RUSH ALONG THE CONVERSATION BUT POLITELY.] Yeah and I see—well, we see—how seriously you take this sort of thing and we were wondering if there’s something we could draw you attention to.

**TROUGHTON:** [GUARDED.] I see.

**HARRIS:** [WITHOUT STOPPING FOR HIS RESPONSE.] Uh, we w-we were hoping that we could–

**TROUGHTON:** [NOT LIKING WHERE THIS IS GOING.] What sort of thing?

**TUCKWOOD:** Did you read about Dani Ferguson?

**TROUGHTON:** No, I don’t think I did, should I have?

**HARRIS:** She was a student here [SOME SLIGHT HESITATION.] who died earlier this year.

**TROUGHTON:** [WITH SOME SYMPATHY.] Oh, how sad.

**HARRIS:** Yeah, uh, we, uh…

**TUCKWOOD:** [SPEAKING FOR HARRIS] We tried to get the word out but the press didn’t see much interest in the story.

**TROUGHTON:** Word out about what, specifically?

**TUCKWOOD:** [WITH SOME TREPIDATION.] The [LONG PAUSE.] circumstances of her death. She was performing a, well, a ritual at the time. We only managed to get it in a few niche publications, and we’d hoped it would catch the eyes of people like, well, like you.

**TROUGHTON:** I see… [THINKS.] No I’m afraid this is new to me. What about this ritual? What are the specifics?

[SFX: FOOTSTEPS APPROACH.]

**TUCKWOOD:** Well.. [LOOKS TO HARRIS.]

**HARRIS:** Yeah, so, we were hoping we could speak to you later on… [GESTURING AT THE CROWD.] Somewhere else.

[SFX: A TEACUP RATTLES SLIGHTLY AGAINST A SAUCER AS SHOULDER HANDS TROUGHTON HIS TEA.]

**SHOULDER:** Here you are.

**TROUGHTON:** Ah, thank you.

**SHOULDER:** [GOOD NATURED SCOLDING.] Amy, Lydia, I do hope you’re giving the Professor five minutes to himself.

**HARRIS:** [TRYING TO BE NORMAL AND CHEERFUL.] Uh, yeah!

**SHOULDER:** These two were our biggest advocates in inviting you.

**TROUGHTON:** [SUSPICIOUSLY.] I see.

**TUCKWOOD:** We’ll leave you to it.

**HARRIS:** [TRYING TO SOUND NATURAL BUT THERE IS SOME URGENCY TO HER VOICE.] Yeah, uh, so, I’ll just give you this, if that’s ok.

[SFX: A RUSTLE OF PAPER AS SHE HANDS OVER A NOTE.]

**TROUGHTON:** Uh, thank you.

**TUCKWOOD:** Thanks for your time.

**HARRIS:** Yeah, thank you.

[SFX: THEY WALK AWAY.]

**SHOULDER:** Don’t let your tea get cold.

**TROUGHTON:** [DISTRACTED.] Hm? Oh yes, of course.

**SHOULDER:** I was going to ask someone to nip to Greggs later if you want anything?

**TROUGHTON:** Oh, let’s see. Oh, maybe? Oh, actually, it has been a long time since I’ve had a sausage roll.

[SFX: THE END OF TROUGHTON’S WORDS FADE OUT. THE CLOCK AND BACKGROUND TRAFFIC OF LAURENS’ OFFICE FADE BACK IN.]

**TROUGHTON:** [NARRATING THE EVENTS TO LAURENS.] Lydia handed me a piece of paper with the name and address of a seminar room in town along with a time for later that afternoon. There was something about her that expressed a sense of urgency. I got the impression they hadn’t been taken seriously much before on this matter…

**LAURENS:** So you went?

**TROUGHTON:** I did.

**LAURENS:** That seems very trusting of you.

**TROUGHTON:** I wonder if it was. I just felt as if I were needed, or at the very least, that I had something to learn from this. In any case, the talk had been successful and it gave me an excuse to walk the streets of Newcastle a short while. Eventually, I found my way to the building and made my way to the seminar room. However, I wasn’t sure I had the right room after all…

[SFX: LAURENS’ OFFICE FADES OUT. THE SOUND OF A BUSY UNIVERSITY BUILDING IN THE BACKGROUND FADES IN. MOHINDER OPENS A BRIEFCASE AND SORTS PAPERS IN A LECTURE ROOM. OCCASIONALLY A PHONE RINGS IN THE BACKGROUND.]

**TROUGHTON:** [OPENING THE DOOR, TROUGHTON IS CONFUSED.] Oh—I’m sorry. Um… Is this room two point five?

**MOHINDER:** [DISINTERESTED.] It is, yes.

**TROUGHTON:** I see, i-it’s just I thought it was booked by—

**MOHINDER:** [INTERRUPTING.] Lydia Harris? It was.

**TROUGHTON:** [AN AWKWARD SIGH WITH A HINT OF ANNOYANCE.] Has the booking been moved, or…?

**MOHINDER:** [VERY SHORT.] No, no, it’s been cancelled. I’m lecturing here this evening and I wanted to have the room prepared in advance. Besides, I’m not sure it was entirely appropriate for two students to book it in the first place.

**TROUGHTON:** I see, the-the thing is they’d actually invited me to speak to them and I—

**MOHINDER:** [CUTS HIM OFF.] Did-didn’t you already speak to them at the Lit & Phil?

**TROUGHTON:** [BEMUSED AND IRRITATED.] …Yes? [SIGH.] I-I’m sorry, you seem to have me at a disadvantage.

**MOHINDER:** [WANTS THIS OVER WITH.] Doctor Mohinder, Religious History.

**TROUGHTON:** [FALLING BACK INTO FAMILIAR AUTHORITY.] Professor Troughton, History.

**MOHINDER:** [ALMOST MOCKING.] Yeah, yep, I know… [WITH A HINT OF DISGUST.] I’ve seen you on television.

**TROUGHTON:** [AN AWKWARD, UNIMPRESSED NOISE.] Well, I admit I’ve not come across your name before, Doctor.

**MOHINDER:** No, no, I doubt you would have. I’m too busy supervising Master’s students and co-running the Centre. No time for much else.

**TROUGHTON:** I see.

**MOHINDER:** [ANNOYED.] Can I–Sorry, can I help you with anything else? I’m-I’m trying to set up here…

**TROUGHTON:** No, I’ll not waste your time any further.

**MOHINDER:** Thank you.

**TROUGHTON:** Although…

**MOHINDER:** [EXASPERATED.] Yes?

**TROUGHTON:** The centre you mentioned, is that The Newcastle Centre of Russian Studies?

**MOHINDER:** I’m the co-founder, yeah.

**TROUGHTON:** I thought your name sounded familiar, Doctor Shoulder mentioned you.

**MOHINDER:** I’m sure she did.

**TROUGHTON:** And it was two students in your centre who booked this room, and you just so happened to cancel it.

**MOHINDER:** I’m aware of my students’ diaries, yeah.

**TROUGHTON:** That seems a surprising level of interest, if I may say so.

**MOHINDER:** [STARTS INHALING TO REPLY BEFORE TROUGHTON FINISHES TALKING.] Perhaps it is, or perhaps we just do things differently here. [POINTEDLY.] Professor. [PAUSE.] Look, excuse me, but I-I best carry on. [A BRIEFCASE LATCH OPENS.] Yeah?

**TROUGHTON:** Of course.

[SFX: TROUGHTON WALKS AWAY. THE SOUNDS OF THE BUILDING FADE BACK INTO LAURENS’ OFFICE.]

**LAURENS:** Did you consider that exchange… Confrontational?

**TROUGHTON:** Somewhat. I’m not unfamiliar to frosty reception but combined with the intervention? Doctor Mohinder’s behaviour almost seemed targeted.

**LAURENS:** You felt attacked?

**TROUGHTON:** I wouldn’t have gone that far, but there was certainly the sensation of feeling blocked.

**LAURENS:** And where did all this leave you?

**TROUGHTON:** Typically, my interest was piqued. The implication that my business with Ms. Harris and Ms. Tuckwood was over, or should be over, evoked a stubborn desire to see it through. So I contacted Doctor Shoulder, it, uh… [HALF LAUGHS.] Well, it took some time to convince her that my desire to contact the two young students was above board. Eventually she offered me Ms. Harris’ contact details and I was invited to her house share.

[SFX: LAURENS’ OFFICE FADES TO THE SOUNDS OF A BUSY STREET. AS TROUGHTON WALKS UP TO THE DOOR, THE THUDDING BASS OF LOUD MUSIC GROWS.]

**TROUGHTON:** [UNEMOTIONAL SIGH.]

[SFX: TROUGHTON RINGS THE DOORBELL SEVERAL TIMES. AFTER A LONG MOMENT, THE DOOR OPENS. THE MUSIC IS NO LONGER MUFFLED.]

**HARRIS:** [POLITE IF NOT A LITTLE AWKWARD.] Hi! Uh, thank you for coming.

**TROUGHTON:** [ALSO POLITE IF NOT A LITTLE AWKWARD.] Hello there.

**HARRIS:** [RAISED VOICE TO INSIDE.] Amy, he’s here! [TO TROUGHTON, NORMAL VOLUME.] Come in.

[SFX: TROUGHTON STEPS INSIDE.]

**HARRIS:** Amy!

**TROUGHTON:** [SLIGHTLY RAISED VOICE OVER MUSIC.] Would you like my shoes off?

**HARRIS:** [SLIGHTLY RAISED VOICE OVER MUSIC.] Are they clean?

**TROUGHTON:** Uh, yes?

**HARRIS:** Yeah, then don’t worry about it. Hang on… [SHOUTING TO HOUSE.] Amy! [WITH AN EXASPERATED SIGH, SHE SWITCHES OFF THE SPEAKER THEN SHOUTS AGAIN.] Amy! He’s here!

[SFX: THE MUSIC FINALLY STOPS.]

**HARRIS:** [NORMAL VOLUME, TO TROUGHTON] Sorry about this. Do you want a drink?

**TROUGHTON:** No, I-I think I’ll be alright, thank you.

**HARRIS:** Okay, just this way. We’ll sit in the kitchen.

[SFX: TROUGHTON AND HARRIS WALK TO THE KITCHEN. A KETTLE CAN BE HEARD BOILING. AS THEY DO, AMY RUSHES DOWN THE STAIRS.]

**HARRIS:** [ALMOST TEASING AMY.] Ah, here she is…

**TUCKWOOD:** [SLIGHTLY OUT OF BREATH AS SHE FOLLOWS THEM.] Sorry. I had my headphones on.

**TROUGHTON:** Hello, there.

**TUCKWOOD:** Hi.

[SFX: THE SOUND OF THEIR FOOTSTEPS CHANGES AS THEY REACH THE KITCHEN, AND THE KETTLE IS LOUDER. THE REFRIGERATOR HUMS IN THE BACKGROUND.]

**HARRIS:** Shit. Tara, sorry, I-I didn’t know you’d be in.

**BEST:** [SLIGHTLY CONFUSED.] I mean, I do live here…

[SFX: TINS CLANK AS TARA PREPARES HER TEA.]

**HARRIS:** I just thought you had Crossfit tonight, that’s all.

**BEST:** Not tonight. [TRYING NOT TO BE CONFRONTATIONAL] Also, hun, you left all the lights on again.

**HARRIS:** [DISMISSIVE BUT NOT RUDE.] I know.

**BEST:** [CONFUSED BY TROUGHTON’S APPEARANCE IN HER KITCHEN.] Sorry, who’s this exactly?

**HARRIS:** This is Professor Troughton.

**TROUGHTON:** [JUMPING IN.] I-I’m sorry to intrude.

**TUCKWOOD:** This is the guy we were telling you about.

**BEST:** [THINKS ON IT.] No, doesn’t ring a bell. He’s not staying the night is he?

**TUCKWOOD:** [SCOFFS LOUDLY.]

**TROUGHTON:** [THIS GOT VERY UNCOMFORTABLE VERY FAST.] Um…

**HARRIS:** [SCOFFING.] Christ, Tara….

**TROUGHTON:** If I’m intruding then we can easily meet tomorrow, [SLIGHTLY LOWER.] somewhere public perhaps…

**HARRIS:** [NOW MORE SERIOUS.] No. [NORMAL] No, we wanted to talk to you in private.

**TUCKWOOD:** Especially after Doctor Mohinder intervened.

**HARRIS:** Yeah.

**TROUGHTON:** What was that all about, exactly?

**BEST:** [SERIOUS.] This is about, Dani, right?

**TUCKWOOD:** [EXHALES.] Yeah. Yeah, it is.

**BEST:** Then I want to hear what this is all about.

**TUCKWOOD:** Are you sure? Because it’s about, well, you know…

**BEST:** Oh not this again—

**HARRIS:** [INTERRUPTING WITH AN ANNOYED SIGH.] I knew you’d be like this!

**BEST:** What?

**HARRIS:** [STARTING TO BUILD MOMENTUM.] This! This is why we didn’t invite him here in the first place!

**BEST:** Because you don’t want to hear someone talk sense?

**TUCKWOOD:** [TRYING TO GET A WORD IN.] Tara—

**HARRIS:** You don’t know what you’re talking about!

**BEST:** I know not to assign meaning to things that don’t mean shit!

**TUCKWOOD:** [RAISED VOICE] Can you both just stop?

**HARRIS:** [ANGRY AND ROLLING RIGHT OVER TUCKWOOD.] Well why don’t you get the tattoo and see for yourself?

**BEST:** What? Are you daft?

**HARRIS:** Well, if it bothers you so much then why don’t you just leave us to it!

**TROUGHTON:** [EXHAUSTED.] Excuse me.

**BEST:** I can’t exactly leave you to it when you bring— [GESTURES AT TROUGHTON.] whoever this is into our home, can I?

**HARRIS:** Well, this guy knows—

**BEST:** [RAISED VOICE, TALKING OVER HARRIS.] Why can’t you just begin to accept—

**HARRIS:** [RAISING HER VOICE IN RESPONSE.] This guy knows what we’re talking about! You don’t!

**TUCKWOOD:** [HALF STERN, HALF PLEADING.] Guys.

**BEST:** Oh so just because I’m not studying fucking Russian shit, it means I can’t understand?!

**HARRIS:** That’s not what I meant and you know it!

**TUCKWOOD:** [SHOUTING] Guys! For fuck’s sake. How does this help? Like, at all? Tell me how shouting at each other helps us?

[SFX: EVERYONE IS QUIET FOR A MOMENT.]

**TROUGHTON:** [SIGH.] I f-I-I’m clearly causing some conflict, perhaps it’s best I leave.

**HARRIS:** [ALMOST PLEADING.] No, please.

**TUCKWOOD:** Sorry, it’s just— [LONG PAUSE.] We lost Dani not long ago. She lived here with us. It’s hard…

**BEST:** [STRUGGLING A BIT.] Look, I’m sorry.

**HARRIS:** [ALSO STRUGGLING.] Yeah, me too.

**TUCKWOOD:** And, like, the circumstances are weird. That’s why we wanted to talk to you.

**BEST:** Aims, I know you want to make sense of it all, but don’t let someone take you in. [TO TROUGHTON.] No offence mate, but I don’t know you from Adam.

**TROUGHTON:** [BITTERLY.] None taken.

**BEST:** I’ll leave yous to it, I don’t want to cause any more shit.

[SFX: BEST TAKES HER TEA AND LEAVES THE KITCHEN.]

**HARRIS:** It’s not just you, ok? Don’t worry about it.

**BEST:** Thanks, Lydia. I’ll see you later.

**TUCKWOOD:** [CALLING AFTER HER IN A FAMILIAR CALL AND RESPONSE.] Love you!

**BEST:** [WHILE LEAVING.] Love you too. Just shout if you need me, ok? Seriously.

**HARRIS:** [SIGH.] Sorry.

**TROUGHTON:** I understand. House sharing can be… difficult, at the best of times.

**HARRIS:** You sure I can’t get you a cuppa?

**TROUGHTON:** [CONSIDERS IT WITH A SIGH.]

**TUCKWOOD:** Fuck that, I need a drink. I’m cracking the wine open. Do you two want any?

**TROUGHTON:** [EXHALES AND SHRUGS.] Why not?

**HARRIS:** [SUBDUED.] Aye, me too.

[SFX: TUCKWOOD GRABS A WINE BOTTLE FROM THE COUNTER, AND COLLECTS THREE GLASSES.]

**TROUGHTON:** So, care to explain why I’m here?

[SFX: TUCKWOOD GRUNTS AS SHE POPS THE BOTTLE OF WINE OPEN. SHE POURS IT AS HARRIS SPEAKS.]

**HARRIS:** [SIGH.] All this hassle getting you here and I don’t even know where to start. [SLIGHT, HUMOURLESS LAUGH.]

**TROUGHTON:** You mentioned a ritual when we met.

**HARRIS:** I did, aye, yeah. Um… So me, Amy, and Dan were studying our Master’s. Mine’s in Slavic Neopaganism, but, I mean, that’s the thing with Slavic studies, it gets dominated by Russian studies so joining the Centre made a lot of sense to me. Uh, anyway, that’s where we all met. And, well, you know how it is. You do these things together and you form friendships that are—

**TUCKWOOD:** Family.

**HARRIS:** Yeah.

**TUCKWOOD:** [LOW, QUICK.] Here you go.

[SFX: TUCKWOOD WALKS OVER TO GIVE TROUGHTON HIS WINE.]

**HARRIS:** Cheers.

**TROUGHTON:** Oh, thank you.

**HARRIS:** But this is where Doctor Mohinder comes in. It’s his centre, and–Well, his and Doctor Shoulder’s.

**TUCKWOOD:** But he’s much more hands on. Doctor Shoulder is great and all, but Mohinder was really proactive. Suggesting extra papers to us, really taking an interest in our progress, extra guidance.

**HARRIS:** It would have been creepy if he wasn’t so…

**TUCKWOOD:** You just didn’t get that kind of vibe from him.

**TROUGHTON:** I’m sorry, ‘vibe’?

**TUCKWOOD:** You know, a pervy one.

**TROUGHTON:** Ah.

**HARRIS:** He seemed… Ambitious. And if we did well then it would look good on him, so you accept that. It benefited us all, really.

**TUCKWOOD:** Dani loved him.

**HARRIS:** [A SINGLE SAD LAUGH.] She did, aye.

**TROUGHTON:** [TAKES A SIP OF WINE.] I met him earlier.

**HARRIS:** Doesn’t surprise me.

**TROUGHTON:** Seemed a little hostile.

**HARRIS:** Also doesn’t surprise me. [SIGH.] I think he’s onto us.

**TROUGHTON:** How so?

**HARRIS:** Well, about four or five months ago, we got an idea for these tattoos.

**TUCKWOOD:** [CORRECTING.] Four.

**HARRIS:** Yeah?

**TUCKWOOD:** I still have the appointment in me diary.

**HARRIS:** Okay. So, uh, Doctor Mohinder had been showing us some vyaz. Do you know it?

**TROUGHTON:** [HE THINKS.] Cyrillic calligraphy, isn’t it?

**HARRIS:** Pretty much. [SHE TAKES A SIP OF WINE.] Ancient decorative lettering linked continuously. It’s complicated as fuck. It hasn’t really been used since Ivan the Terrible’s time but it’s… Let me-let me show you. [SHE ROLLS US HER SLEEVE WITH A SIGH.]

[[*MUSIC: QUIET, HIGH, SUSTAINED WAILING NOTES WITH A LOW DRONE UNDERNEATH.*]]

**HARRIS:** See?

**TROUGHTON:** [LEANS IN.] Oh yes… That’s rather beautiful, I must say.

**HARRIS:** [A BITTER SINGLE LAUGH.] We thought so too…

**TROUGHTON:** And it circles your lower forearm? Ah, so it does.

[[*MUSIC: A LOUD, LOW SUSTAINED STRING JOINS IN AS TROUGHTON EXAMINES THE TATTOOS.*]]

**TUCKWOOD:** The three of us got it.

**TROUGHTON:** I see. And these are identical?

**TUCKWOOD:** Yeah.

**HARRIS:** Yeah, and Dani’s, too.

**TROUGHTON:** Uh… What does it say?

**HARRIS:** Well, Mohinder had shown this one to us, and he kept telling us it was a prayer. About strength, knowledge, and family ties.

**TUCKWOOD:** We’re pretty sure it doesn’t have anything like that.

**TROUGHTON:** You can’t read it?

**TUCKWOOD:** I speak a little Russian but it’s unreadable to me. It must be around 13th century and even if we knew that language, the text is hard to read.

**HARRIS:** Basically we’re no better than those lasses that got Chinese tattooed on them and thought it meant mum when it really meant ‘sweet & sour chicken’

**TUCKWOOD:** Look, I don’t think it’s the same.

**HARRIS:** [A LITTLE ANNOYED.] Well either way he pulled a fast one on us didn’t he? [WITH DISDAIN.] Could have been live, laugh, love in ancient Russian for all we knew. We lapped it up, didn’t we? Fuck’s sake. [SHE DOWNS HER WINE.] Sorry.

**TUCKWOOD:** This word here? We figured out this is Stribog. An old slavic god. They don’t even know what he was the god of, but the best theory is of wind.

**TROUGHTON:** And you think this is a prayer to Stribog?

**TUCKWOOD:** Honestly, I doubt it. It might evoke his name but I think it’s something more fucked up.

**TROUGHTON:** Why?

**HARRIS:** [FORCEFULLY.] Because of what’s happened.

**TROUGHTON:** And what’s that exactly? [AFTER A MOMENT OF SILENCE.] Ladies, if you think I can help, you’re going to need to tell me everything, and I can assure you that—

**HARRIS:** [INTERRUPTING.] The ritual.

**TROUGHTON:** Yes, yes, you mentioned this earlier.

**TUCKWOOD:** Look, Mohinder was really enthusiastic about our tattoos. And a few weeks after we got them he encouraged us to experience slavic practices personally.

**HARRIS:** [ANGRY.] I don’t know how I fell for it, it sounded totally new to me and I’m studying this exact sort of thing. [ANNOYED SIGH.]

**TUCKWOOD:** It’s not your fault, Amy.

**HARRIS:** Isn’t it?

**TUCKWOOD:** He’s the fucking lecturer, of course we’d believe him! And he’d been working on us for months.

**TROUGHTON:** What was the ritual?

**HARRIS:** [TRYING TO BE FACTUAL.] In a darkened room, stand with your back to the door. Take a single candle, hold it close… [HER WORDS COME SLOWLY.] You light it and wait.

**TROUGHTON:** For what?

**HARRIS:** [WITH SOME RELUCTANCE.] For the breathing. [PAUSE.] You listen and soon you hear him. Breathing. [AFRAID.] He comes closer and closer, but there’s no footsteps, you-you just hear his breath get closer and closer to you. [STEADIES HER BREATH.] A-and then you have to blow out the candle. [SWALLOWS.] Before he does.

**TROUGHTON:** [ILL-ADVISED QUESTION, BUT HE HAS TO KNOW.] What happens if he blows it out?

**HARRIS:** [DEADLY SERIOUS.] You stop breathing.

**TROUGHTON:** Suffocation?

**HARRIS:** [QUIETLY.] …Yeah. The air just goes. At least that’s what it looks like… It was fucking awful. [NORMAL VOLUME.] No choking, no closing of the airways, the air’s just… Gone.

[[*MUSIC: AS HARRIS FINISHES DESCRIBING DANI’S DEATH, THE MUSIC FADES AWAY INTO NOTHING.*]]

**TUCKWOOD:** The coroner said it was sudden heart failure.

**HARRIS:** Yeah, after they ruled everything else out… And it sounds like they really wanted to pin it on something else.

**TUCKWOOD:** I mean, how many people in their twenties just die of natural causes?

**HARRIS:** [SCOFFS THEN QUIETLY.] Natural causes…

[SFX: THE KITCHEN FADES QUICKLY INTO LAURENS’ OFFICE AS HE SPEAKS.]

**LAURENS:** Natural causes?

**TROUGHTON:** As in a death not caused by external circumstances, yes.

**LAURENS:** Seems decidedly unnatural to me.

**TROUGHTON:** Well, quite.

**LAURENS:** How were you feeling at this point?

**TROUGHTON:** [INHALE AND A SIGH.] Trusting. I’d been in their position, more than once.

**LAURENS:** Do you suspect you had any other motivations?

**TROUGHTON:** How so?

**LAURENS:** Did you want this to be true?

**TROUGHTON:** [WITH A LAUGH.] Why would I want it to be true?

**LAURENS:** Earlier you mentioned the prospect of a— shall we call it a haunting? A haunting that could be replicated, under observable circumstances no less. That’s part of the scientific process after all. You can’t tell me you weren’t… Excited?

**TROUGHTON:** Not a word I’d care to use, no.

**LAURENS:** What is it about that word you don’t like?

**TROUGHTON:** It implies… Insensitivity.

**LAURENS:** Were you being sensitive?

**TROUGHTON:** I think so.

**LAURENS:** Say more.

**TROUGHTON:** No. I’d rather just tell you what happened next, in all honesty.

**LAURENS:** [FRIENDLY] Tell me what happened next, then.

**TROUGHTON:** Well our conversation could only go so far, without well, without replicating the ritual.

**LAURENS:** I see…

**TROUGHTON:** Lydia suggested it. I think it was important to her that I see for myself. She knew I’d had real experiences and I suppose she wanted me to treat hers just as seriously. They had tried to replicate the experience with their housemate but as she didn’t have the tattoo, nothing had happened. That was how they had linked it to their tattoos, after all.

**LAURENS:** But you didn’t have the tattoo either…

**TROUGHTON:** No. Believe it or not, we actually recreated it on my arm with a sharpie pen. We assumed the markings simply needed to be present on the flesh.

**LAURENS:** And that worked?

**TROUGHTON:** Well…

[SFX: BACKGROUND FADES BACK TO THE KITCHEN. HARRIS DRAWS THE BLINDS CLOSED.]

[[*MUSIC: QUIET, LOW, PULSING HUMS WITH SOME AIRY HIGHER NOTES ACCENTING IT.*]]

**HARRIS:** Well, that’s the last of the blinds…

**TROUGHTON:** Effective.

**TUCKWOOD:** [DISTRESSED.] I’m sorry, I ca-I can’t be in here for this. I-I thought I could but I can’t.

**HARRIS:** It’s ok, I get it.

**TUCKWOOD:** How can you be so calm?

**HARRIS:** [WITH A LAUGH.] I’m not! I’m really not. But how else is he going to know?

**TUCKWOOD:** Is it worth it, though?

**HARRIS:** It’s important. We’ll blow it out well beforehand… Promise.

**TUCKWOOD:** Okay… I’m sorry but I can’t…

**HARRIS:** It’s ok.

[SFX: TUCKWOOD OPENS THE DOOR.]

**TUCKWOOD:** Be careful.

**HARRIS:** Yeah, I will.

[SFX: TUCKWOOD LEAVES AND CLOSES THE DOOR.]

**TROUGHTON:** Are you sure about this?

**HARRIS:** I didn’t just spend an hour drawing on you to back out now.

**TROUGHTON:** Okay.

**HARRIS:** [STEADIES HER BREATH.] Ready?

**TROUGHTON:** Ready.

**HARRIS:** Alright then.

[SFX: HARRIS STRIKES A MATCH AND LIGHTS THE CANDLE TROUGHTON IS HOLDING.]

**HARRIS:** [LOW.] You got it?

**TROUGHTON:** [LOW.] Yes.

**HARRIS:** Okay… [TAKES A DEEP BREATH AND EXHALES STEADILY.]

[SFX: A PAUSE.]

[[*MUSIC: GETTING LOUDER AND MORE INTENSE.*]]

**TROUGHTON:** [QUIET.] How long do you expect we’ll need to wait?

**HARRIS:** [WHISPERING.] Should be any second now.

[SFX: ANOTHER, LONGER PAUSE.]

**HARRIS:** [WITH ADRENALINE.] There.

**TROUGHTON:** It’s here?

**HARRIS:** [TERRIFIED BUT REMAINING CALM.] Can’t you hear it?

**TROUGHTON:** No.

**HARRIS:** [SOTTO BUT INTENSE.] Shit, man. [BREATHING HARDER.] He’s getting closer. Be ready.

**TROUGHTON:** [FRUSTRATED. LOW.] I don’t hear anything.

[SFX: HARRIS IS BREATHING FASTER AND FASTER. THEN A LONG, DEEPER BREATH IS HEARD, CLEARLY NOT HARRIS OR TROUGHTON.]

**HARRIS:** [PANICKED.] Now! Blow it out! Now!

**TROUGHTON:** I… Okay. [BLOWS OUT THE CANDLE.]

**HARRIS:** [CATCHING HER BREATH.] Oh, thank fuck. Oh, thank fuck for that.

[SFX: QUICK KNOCKS ON THE KITCHEN DOOR.]

[[*MUSIC: THE INTENSITY OF THE MUSIC DECREASES, EVENTUALLY FADING AWAY ENTIRELY.*]]

**TUCKWOOD:** [THROUGH THE DOOR.] Lydia! You all right?

**HARRIS:** [STILL CATCHING BREATH, RAISED VOICE.] Yeah, Amy, everything’s all right. Two tics, yeah?

**TUCKWOOD:** Okay!

**HARRIS:** You didn’t hear anything?

**TROUGHTON:** [FRUSTRATED, GENUINELY NOT SURE.] I… I-I don’t think so. I-I’m not sure. Maybe? Can we try it again?

**HARRIS:** No. We’ve never tried it again so soon. I don’t want to push our luck.

**TROUGHTON:** That—Yes, yes, that makes sense.

**HARRIS:** You sure you didn’t hear anything?

**TROUGHTON:** I don’t think so.

**HARRIS:** Maybe a sharpie isn’t going to do it.

**TROUGHTON:** Perhaps not. [TO HIMSELF.] Damn it.

[SFX: FADE OUT OF THE KITCHEN AND BACK TO LAURENS’ OFFICE.]

**LAURENS:** How were you feeling at this point?

**TROUGHTON:** Frustrated, as you can imagine.

**LAURENS:** Mm-hm.

**TROUGHTON:** It was as if I were behind glass, I-I could see, I had some… [LOOKS FOR THE WORD.] Some awareness of what was going on, yet there was an aspect hidden from me.

**LAURENS:** That upset you.

**TROUGHTON:** [UNGUARDED, FOR ONCE.] Perhaps. It drove me, that much is true.

**LAURENS:** How could you be so sure there was something hidden?

**TROUGHTON:** In a word? Trust. Some corroborative evidence. Two reliable witnesses—

**LAURENS:** Reliable?

**TROUGHTON:** Yes.

**LAURENS:** How so?

**TROUGHTON:** Well. Matching statements, they demonstrated an ability to analyse the situation critically—I mean we’d been in that kitchen for hours by that point—they were… They were… [LOOKS FOR THE RIGHT WORD.]

**LAURENS:** Educated?

**TROUGHTON:** Yes.

**LAURENS:** And that gave their testimony… credence?

**TROUGHTON:** Yes.

**LAURENS:** More so than others?

**TROUGHTON:** [WITH A BIT OF SHAME.] Yes.

**LAURENS:** Okay, well it’s good for you to be aware of that.

**TROUGHTON:** [EMBARRASSED.] Yes, well…

**LAURENS:** I think this is a good moment for us to touch base. By this point you’ve experienced… three, possibly four encounters yourself?

**TROUGHTON:** Mm-hm.

**LAURENS:** And now you’re presented with this haunting. In your mind, do they bear any resemblance to each other?

**TROUGHTON:** Yes and no. The specifics, the motivations of each entity were apparently different, but in each of them they seemed to exist only at certain moments or under certain circumstances. Ignoring the specifics of each one, we look at this fact: they all needed a moment to sync with human senses in order to present themselves.

**LAURENS:** Human senses?

**TROUGHTON:** Look at it this way: if the electromagnetic spectrum were the distance from Land’s End to John o' Groats–1,189 miles–then the visible part of the human eye would be just over half a football pitch somewhere near Birmingham.

**LAURENS:** Fascinating.

**TROUGHTON:** [PRESSING HIS POINT.] We see 0.0035% of the spectrum. It’s entirely scientific to acknowledge that there is so much we can’t perceive. Now if we continue the analogy, if certain bodies or entities—call it what you will—pass briefly along this half-a-football-field stretch? That can explain sightings, fleeting or otherwise. And how frustrating that must be. To pass, ever so briefly, into our world, only to be dragged out of it as soon as one entered it. Life itself is equally fleeting and perhaps only from the perspective of relative eternity can we see truly how terrifying that is.

**LAURENS:** Is that terrifying?

**TROUGHTON:** You don’t think so?

**LAURENS:** I’m not here to pass on my opinions, but I know I didn’t exist before I gained consciousness in the womb and I was entirely fine with not existing then.

**TROUGHTON:** How could you miss what you couldn’t perceive? Consciousness is a gift, the great lottery of the universe–and we all win! I truly believe that we as complete individuals come from nothing and go back to nothing. I’ve–well, I’ve experienced this truth, even.

**LAURENS:** [TRULY INTERESTED, ALMOST INTERRUPTING.] So how do you explain these ghosts?

**TROUGHTON:** Because sometimes, the process of death, of the end of consciousness… [FOR LACK OF A BETTER WORD.] glitches.

**LAURENS:** Go on…

**TROUGHTON:** It comes down to energy. Energetic activity is fundamental to all physical processes, it drives biological behaviour. Neuroscientific evidence suggests consciousness is a product of the organisation of energetic activity in the brain. The nature of that energy, though, remains largely mysterious, we still don’t fully understand how it contributes to brain function or consciousness. [SIGH.] Nonetheless, at the time of death, when brainwaves cease, consciousness is lost. There is nothing. It seems to me, that as the dying brain begins to shut down, as the energy, the mind, begins to fade there are instances of the energy failing to dissipate.

**LAURENS:** Consciousness existing after death?

**TROUGHTON:** Consciousness without form. Except perhaps, when travelling along that minuscule section of the electromagnetic spectrum.

**LAURENS:** [INTERESTED.] I see.

**TROUGHTON:** What would you do, if you were tapped in such a state? Caught in that metaphorical current?

**LAURENS:** I’d try to stay in the visible spectrum, try to exist.

**TROUGHTON:** Perhaps. You may try to hang on, to reach out, to find purchase.

**LAURENS:** How exactly?

**TROUGHTON:** By any means necessary. But even then, can you imagine how it would be to exist after death? Even if you could remain tethered, to-to observe the living? Can you imagine the sheer frustration of not existing in those moments? Not connecting with another, [LAUGHS AT HIS USE OF THE WORD.] well, another soul? How long could you withstand that isolation? How many lifetimes until you were driven mad?

**LAURENS:** That’s a strong word.

**TROUGHTON:** And I’m sure it’s entirely inadequate.

**LAURENS:** Well, it’s certainly a provocative thought exercise. Were these thoughts in your mind as you left the girls that evening?

**TROUGHTON:** More or less. If I gave them the benefit of the doubt, I needed to know what made the tattoo special. What made it attract the presence?

**LAURENS:** You had research to do.

**TROUGHTON:** Better yet, I knew someone who spoke the language.

[SFX: LAURENS’ OFFICE FADES OUT. AS TROUGHTON LECTURES, THE SOUNDS OF A CAFE FADE IN: PEOPLE TALKING IN THE BACKGROUND, THE CLINK OF DISHES AND SILVERWARE.]

**TROUGHTON:** [NARRATING] I’d stayed in a cheap hotel in the city centre and had arranged that morning to meet with Svetlana, whom I’d met at the lecture…

**TIKHONOVA:** [MID-CONVERSATION.] This isn’t just Russian, this is old Russian, though luckily for us, yes, I can read it.

**TROUGHTON:** Well, I really do appreciate your efforts, the calligraphy makes even transposing it difficult.

**TIKHONOVA:** Or for sure. Even I’m having some difficulties…

**TROUGHTON:** Have you seen this design before?

**TIKHONOVA:** Well I know Amy and Lydia have it. [SAD PAUSE.] And Dani did. I think I’ve seen it peeking out of one or two other people’s shirts from time to time, or something like it. It’s obviously not something that can be read easily or quickly and, well, I don’t like to stare.

**TROUGHTON:** I’m sure. Though I must admit I’m surprised to hear others may have had it.

**TIKHONOVA:** Oh, I can’t be sure. But maybe it’s a trend?

**TIKHONOVA:** Ugh, this is getting frustrating.

**TROUGHTON:** How so?

**TIKHONOVA:** [ANNOYED.] It’s not even consistent. Okay, look at this part here? It’s actually in modern Russian: ‘Я режу и оставляю шрамы. Я режу и наполняю цветом…’ ‘I carve and I scar, I carve and I colour’ — I’ll write this all down for you. Wait…[TO HERSELF.] ‘Чтобы я мог ходить, чтобы я мог… дышать? ’…

**TROUGHTON:** [GETTING HER ATTENTION AGAIN.] Is it making much sense?

**TIKHONOVA:** Yes, sorry, uh… It uh… [FOCUSES HER ATTENTION.] It reads that someone ‘carves and scars’ so that they ‘walk and breathe.’

**TROUGHTON:** Hm, I see. And does that phrasing have a cultural significance that you know of?

**TIKHONOVA:** No… [TO HERSELF.] Чё за херня?[[1]](#footnote-1) [TO TROUGHTON, NOT IMPRESSED WITH THIS TEXT.] Some of the text is actually English transliterated into Cyrillic.

**TROUGHTON:** That’s unexpected.

**TIKHONOVA:** You’re telling me. Okay, here we are, this is what we were expecting: this would be ‘внуки Стрибога ’. ‘Grandsons of Stribog’, which could be interpreted as the wind, if I’m remembering correctly.

**TROUGHTON:** [THIS IS WHAT HE WAS TRYING TO CONFIRM.] But certainly a mention of Stribog.

**TIKHONOVA:** For what it’s worth, yes.

**TROUGHTON:** It’s what Ms Harris and Ms Tuckwood thought it was. I did some reading online, it seems the nature of this God is unclear?

**TIKHONOVA:** …We gave up our Gods when Christianity came, so there are gaps in our modern understanding to say the least. [SCOFFS.] I’m not getting much sense from this, it’s a lot more simple than I imagined and somehow that makes it make less sense. I’ll write it all down and answer what I can but unless there are larger meanings for the passages, it doesn’t make much sense to me. I’m sorry.

**TROUGHTON:** No, this is extremely helpful, thank you. If you’re prepared to do this then it helps a great deal.

**TIKHONOVA:** My pleasure. Perhaps I can pick your brains about Elizabeth the First once we’re done?

**TROUGHTON:** [HE DOESN’T REALLY HAVE THE TIME BUT WANTS TO BE POLITE.] Uh, yes, I’m sure you can. Not that I expect you’ll gain a lot that wasn’t already in the lecture, that is.

**TIKHONOVA:** I can try!

**TROUGHTON:** [POLITE FAKE LAUGH.]

[SFX: THE CAFE FADES OUT.]

**TROUGHTON:** She was right; of course a great deal of it seemed nonsensical. Unless the assembled words had somehow been imbued with their own meaning, there wasn’t a great deal of explanation with the translation. But perhaps that didn’t matter, what did make sense of course were the words in modern Russian; they seemed to imply the very act of ‘colouring’ the design into the skin was in itself part of the prayer. Of course it’s easier to convince somebody to get a tattoo than it is to scar their body, and that did leave one more avenue to investigate…

[SFX: HEAVY METAL MUSIC PLAYS AND TATTOO GUNS CAN BE HEARD IN THE BACKGROUND. A BELL RINGS AS TROUGHTON OPENS THE DOOR TO THE TATTOO PARLOUR. HE CLOSES IT AS IT RINGS AGAIN. HE WALKS FURTHER INSIDE.]

**TROUGHTON:** [SOTTO] Good Lord. [AN AWKWARD COUGH.]

**SQUIRES:** [IN GREETING.] Alright?

**TROUGHTON:** Yes, hello.

**SQUIRES:** [AMUSED.] Hello.

**TROUGHTON:** Yes. Uh, I was wondering if you could help me with something. [BEGINS TO GET PAPER OUT OF HIS SATCHEL.] I, uh, I have this, uh, this design that you tattooed onto a few friends of mine recently. On their forearms. And, uh, well, basically I was wondering [PUTS THE PAPER ON THE TABLE.] if you remembered doing it.

**SQUIRES:** [LOOKS AT THE DESIGN, HE RECOGNISES IT AND ROLLS HIS EYES, THEN SARCASTICALLY.] Just a few, aye.

**TROUGHTON:** I’m sorry?

**SQUIRES:** [WITH A SUBTLE HINT OF ANNOYANCE.] I've done this one quite a few times, mate. Normally I don’t like doing exact designs people bring in but a job’s a job, right?

**TROUGHTON:** How many is ‘quite a few times?’

**SQUIRES:** [SIGHS.] I don’t know man, like, six, seven?

**TROUGHTON:** [SURPRISED.] That many?

**SQUIRES:** Over the past couple of years. aye. There was some lasses a few months ago. [THINKS.] A few at Christmas. [REMEMBERS.] A lecturer designed it, didn’t he?

**TROUGHTON:** Well, that’s what I’m trying to ascertain.

**SQUIRES:** [ANNOYED NOISE.] Fuck’s sake. Is it a stolen design? I knew I shouldn’t have agreed to a fucking stamp.

**TROUGHTON:** [REASSURING] No, no, no, no, no. Not stolen—well, as far as I know—but I am curious where you heard about a lecturer designing it.

**SQUIRES:** [DISMISSIVE.] Because of what the others said. [TRYING TO END THE CONVERSATION.] Look, are you wanting a tattoo?

**TROUGHTON:** [A LITTLE TOO QUICK, ALMOST TO SELF.] Not if I can help it.

**SQUIRES:** What’s that supposed to mean?

**TROUGHTON:** [ANNOYED BUT AWKWARD.] No, I’m— [BREATH.] I’m just trying to get to the bottom of something.

**SQUIRES:** [THIS IS WEIRD.] Ah ha, look I’m pretty busy, like.

**TROUGHTON:** [ALMOST BULLISH.] Just another few moments of your time, please.

**SQUIRES:** [ANNOYED SIGH.]

**TROUGHTON:** Do you remember who was the first to get the design?

**SQUIRES:** Aye.

**TROUGHTON:** Excellent.

**SQUIRES:** [INTERRUPTING] But I can’t tell you.

**TROUGHTON:** [SUBTLE ANNOYED GROAN.] I can assure you this is important. Can I perhaps pay you for your time? [LOW, SOME SARCASM.] Seeing as you’re so busy.

**SQUIRES:** [LAUGHS AT TROUGHTON.] Did you just offer to bribe us, like?

**TROUGHTON:** [ANNOYED.] No—

**SQUIRES:** [RAISED VOICE TO ANOTHER ARTIST.] You hear that, mate? He just offered me a bribe! [LAUGHS.] Aye, right?

**TROUGHTON:** That’s not what I’m asking.

**SQUIRES:** You can’t just offer to slide me twenty quid over the counter and expect me to violate privacy, mate.

**TROUGHTON:** I’m not asking for names, I’m just–

**SQUIRES:** Sounded like it.

**TROUGHTON:** [SIGH.] Were you aware that one of your customers has died?

**SQUIRES:** What?

**TROUGHTON:** [QUICK TO SHUT DOWN AN ARGUMENT BEFORE IT STARTS.] Now there’s zero implication that the fault lies with your practice or ink or what have you. But there is a suggestion that the design may be linked to some sort of unsafe practice.

**SQUIRES:** [SHOCKED AT HEARING ABOUT THE DEATH.] Shit…

**TROUGHTON:** Can you help me on this?

**SQUIRES:** Are you the police?

**TROUGHTON:** Do I look like the police?

**SQUIRES:** I dunno, kinda.

**TROUGHTON:** [SIGH.] No. I’m not. I am trying to motivate the police though.

**SQUIRES:** [HE THINKS THE POLICE ARE SHIT.] Aye, that sounds about right… [UNDER HIS BREATH.] Fuck’s sake. [NORMAL.] Look, I can’t give you a name. But I can tell you one of the first people who got this was the guy who said he designed it. [SECOND GUESSING HIMSELF.] Or that someone designed it for him. Oh, I dunno, I can’t really remember; boring sod, he was. It was his, anyway.

**TROUGHTON:** Ok, well if we can identify where the design came from exactly this could help a great deal. Is there anything else you can divulge? Please?

**SQUIRES:** Well, he was the lecturer I was on about. Didn’t seem the type. I mean we get all sorts, but not many like you…

**TROUGHTON:** Uh huh…

**SQUIRES:** That’s all I can give you, mate.

**TROUGHTON:** [ACCEPTING DEFEAT WITH A SIGH.] Well, thank you, this has certainly helped to some degree.

[SFX: QUICK FADE FROM THE TATTOO PARLOUR TO LAURENS’ OFFICE.]

**LAURENS:** [INCREDULOUS.] Did it..? Though? Help much?

**TROUGHTON:** Well, it told me that Mohinder himself had the tattoo.

**LAURENS:** Now why would he have it?

**TROUGHTON:** Because, he encouraged both the tattoo and the ritual itself onto students. He knew it worked because he’d done it himself.

**LAURENS:** That was your theory?

**TROUGHTON:** [WITH SOME DISDAIN.] One that seemed more and more likely…

[SFX: LAURENS’ OFFICE FADES OUT TO BE REPLACED BY A BUSY STREET. THE DOOR CLOSES BEHIND TROUGHTON AS HE LEAVES THE TATTOO PARLOUR.]

**TROUGHTON:** [OF COURSE IT’S RAINING.] Right then.

[SFX: HE STARTS WALKING WITH SMALL SPLASHES AND UNLOCKS HIS PHONE. AS IT’S RINGING, THE PREACHER BEGINS HIS TIRADE.]

**PREACHER:** [OVER A MEGAPHONE IN THE BACKGROUND.] We could never live a life [TROUGHTON INTERJECTS WITH AN “Oh, for Pete’s sake.” THE REST OF THIS CONTINUES OVER THE TELEPHONE CONVERSATION.] worthy of God on our own! So Jesus lived a life without sin on our behalf!

**HARRIS:** [OVER PHONE.] Hello?

**TROUGHTON:** [SLIGHTLY RAISED VOICE OVER THE PREACHER.] Lydia, hi. It’s Professor Troughton.

**HARRIS:** Yeah, hi.

**TROUGHTON:** How’ve you both been?

**HARRIS:** No worse than before, no better either, like.

**PREACHER:** [CONTINUING BEHIND THE CONVERSATION.] And then he died the painful death our sins deserve! John 3:17 says, “God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”

**TROUGHTON:** So I thought you’d like to know you were right about the content of the tattoo's text.

**HARRIS:** Right! Okay, yeah. How so?

**TROUGHTON:** [RAISING HIS VOICE OVER THE PREACHER.] What?

**HARRIS:** [SLIGHTLY RAISING HER VOICE.] I was asking what you meant!

**TROUGHTON:** [FRUSTRATED AT NOT BEING ABLE TO HEAR HARRIS.] Sorry, there’s a preacher!

**HARRIS:** There usually is, yeah!

**TROUGHTON:** [HE CAN’T HEAR OVER THE PREACHER.] What?

**HARRIS:** Doesn’t matter!

**TROUGHTON:** Hang on.

[SFX: SOMEONE YELLS “THERE’S NEE NEED FOR THAT, LIKE!” AT THE PREACHER. TROUGHTON’S FOOTSTEPS STOMP PAST IN FRUSTRATION.]

**PREACHER:** [REPLYING TO THE HECKLER.] No, you shut up! This is God’s will! [TAKES A MOMENT TO GET BACK ON TRACK.] By sacrificing for us on the cross, he took the punishment for all of our sins at once! This made him the ultimate sacrifice—once and for all satisfying the demands God’s justice required! That is why we call Jesus “Lamb of God.”!

**TROUGHTON:** Ugh, there, I can hear myself think now… So, the tattoo. You were right about Stribog, but there’s more, about the act of tattooing itself.

**HARRIS:** [ANNOYED.] I knew it.

**TROUGHTON:** Lydia, I meant to ask last night; do you know if Doctor Mohinder has the tattoo himself?

**HARRIS:** Uh, I dunno. Why?

**TROUGHTON:** I think he does. The artist seemed to imply that a lecturer–the one who designed it–was the first to get it.

**HARRIS:** Fuck’s sake, he kept that quiet then.

**TROUGHTON:** Right.

**HARRIS:** Does it make a difference? Realistically?

[SFX: A LOUD ENGINE RUMBLES BEHIND TROUGHTON.]

**TROUGHTON:** It means he knows exactly what’s going on. It’s the text as a tattoo. You were right about that as well. The text doesn’t have much special meaning on its own but when it’s etched into skin? That’s the first part of the ritual, the procedure of tattooing itself gives it higher meaning. At least I think so.

**HARRIS:** What?

**TROUGHTON:** There’s only one way for me to be sure. If I do something radical…

**HARRIS:** You’re joking. Right?

**TROUGHTON:** I wish I was.

[SFX: THE RAIN FADES OUT TO THE INTERIOR OF THE TATTOO PARLOUR. THE TATTOO GUNS BUZZ OVER THE METAL MUSIC PLAYING IN THE BACKGROUND. OCCASIONAL SOUNDS FROM ARTISTS AND CUSTOMERS CAN BE HEARD. THE BELL RINGS AS TROUGHTON OPENS THE DOOR, ALLOWING A BRIEF SOUND OF RAIN TO COME THROUGH BEFORE HE CLOSES IT.]

**SQUIRES:** Back so soon?

**TROUGHTON:** [SIGH.] Yes, as a matter of fact, I’m back as a customer.

**SQUIRES:** [DISBELIEVING.] Haddaway, man… You serious?

**TROUGHTON:** I’m afraid so! [WITH TREPIDATION.] Can you tattoo this for me?

[SFX: TROUGHTON HANDS OVER THE DESIGN.]

**SQUIRES:** [AMUSED NOISE.] Wait, I thought you said this was dangerous?

**TROUGHTON:** Only if you’re a risk taker.

**SQUIRES:** Are you a risk taker?

**TROUGHTON:** What do you think?

**SQUIRES:** [WITH A SHORT LAUGH.] No. So, you want it exactly like this? Like the others I did?

**TROUGHTON:** Yes. Can you fit me in?

**SQUIRES:** What, now?

**TROUGHTON:** Now, yes. I can tip.

**SQUIRES:** I should hope so! Aye, I can fit you in. Hoy your jacket over there and come through.

**TROUGHTON:** Alright.

**SQUIRES:** Where we doing this, your arm?

**TROUGHTON:** Forearm, yes, just above the elbow.

**SQUIRES:** All the way around?

**TROUGHTON:** [UNENTHUSIASTIC.] Yes please…

[SFX: THE BACKGROUND FADES OUT, THEN FADES BACK IN WITH A DIFFERENT SONG PLAYING AFTER SQUIRES HAS DONE THE PREP WORK.]

**SQUIRES:** Alright mate, just going to do the first line. Ready?

**TROUGHTON:** [HE’S NOT READY.] Ready.

[SFX: SQUIRES TATTOOS ONE LINE. TROUGHTON MAKES A QUIET, UNCOMFORTABLE NOISE.]

**SQUIRES:** How’s that?

**TROUGHTON:** [DEADPAN.] Thoroughly unpleasant.

**SQUIRES:** You want to carry on?

**TROUGHTON:** By all means…

**SQUIRES:** Why aye! You’ll get used to it, man. Just wait for those sweet, sweet endorphins to kick in…

**TROUGHTON:** [A SUBTLE NOISE OF PAIN.] I wish they’d hurry up.

**SQUIRES:** [LAUGHS.]

**TROUGHTON:** [HISSES IN PAIN.]

[SFX: THE TATTOO PARLOUR FADES OUT AND LAURENS’ OFFICE FADES BACK IN.]

**LAURENS:** Really?

**TROUGHTON:** Really.

**LAURENS:** [AMUSED.] I’m sorry, I just didn’t think you’d go that far.

**TROUGHTON:** Believe me, neither did I. [ALMOST RELUCTANTLY.] See for yourself.

[SFX: A RUSTLE OF FABRIC IS HEARD AS TROUGHTON UNBUTTONS HIS SLEEVE AND ROLLS IT UP.]

**LAURENS:** Well, you know, it’s quite beautiful.

**TROUGHTON:** If you say so. Thankfully I’m not one for t-shirts, really.

[SFX: HE FASTENS HIS SHIRT BACK UP AT THE WRIST.]

**LAURENS:** I suppose that is lucky then, if that’s how you feel.

**TROUGHTON:** [DISAPPROVING AGREEMENT] Hm.

**LAURENS:** So I assume you went back to the hotel to rest?

**TROUGHTON:** Well, not rest.

**LAURENS:** Oh?

**TROUGHTON:** The blood wasn’t dry on my arm before I had a candle in my hands.

**LAURENS:** [GRAVE.] I see.

**TROUGHTON:** [WITH MIXED EMOTIONS.] I had to experience it for myself. [WITH DETERMINATION AND FEAR STILL FRESH.] I had to…

[SFX: LAURENS’ OFFICE FADES OUT. TROUGHTON’S HOTEL ROOM FADES IN WITH RAIN POUNDING ON THE ROOF STILL. TROUGHTON DRAWS THE CURTAINS AND SETS UP A CANDLE ON THE TABLE. HE STRIKES A MATCH.]

**TROUGHTON:** [QUIETLY.] Okay, then…

[SFX: WITH A DEEP, STEADYING BREATH, HE LIGHTS THE CANDLE AND HOLDS IT.]

[[*MUSIC: QUIET, LOW, PULSING HUMS WITH SOME AIRY HIGHER NOTES ACCENTING IT. IT IS PERCUSSIVE, ALMOST LIKE A HEARTBEAT.*]]

**TROUGHTON:** [AFTER A MOMENT.] Now do I hold this closer or…?

**BOMGARD:** [A SINGLE, SUBTLE EXHALE.]

**TROUGHTON:** [VERY QUIET, NOT SURE IF HE HEARD ANYTHING.] Hm? [AFTER A PAUSE.] Hello?

**BOMGARD:** [HE BREATHES CLOSER STILL.]

**TROUGHTON:** [UNDER HIS BREATH, TRYING NOT TO SHOW FEAR.] And there you are…

[[*MUSIC: THE MUSIC BECOMES MORE FRENETIC; IT IS LOUDER, FASTER, AND HAS MORE OVERLAPPING PULSES.*]]

[SFX: BOMGARD BREATHES CLOSER AND CLOSER STILL. THERE ARE CONSTANT SOUNDS OF BREATHING AS TROUGHTON, WHO HAD BEEN HOLDING HIS BREATH, EXHALES NERVOUSLY ONLY TO HOLD IT AGAIN. BOMGARD’S BREATHING IS NOW EVEN CLOSER AND HAS BECOME ANGRY.]

[[*MUSIC: WHEN TROUGHTON BLOWS OUT THE CANDLE, IT DROPS OFF QUICKLY AT FIRST, THEN SLOWLY FADES AWAY.*]]

**TROUGHTON:** [PANICKED BUT FIRM.] No. [HE BLOWS OUT THE CANDLE ABRUPTLY THEN SPEAKS BREATHLESSLY.] Oh god. Oh god, oh god. [HE BREATHES HEAVILY FOR 4-5 SECONDS, LETTING HIMSELF CALM THEN SPEAKS TO HIMSELF, WITH BOTH FEAR AND EXCITEMENT.] It worked. It actually worked. [A STEADYING BREATH].

[SFX: THE HOTEL ROOM FADES OUT AND LAURENS’ OFFICE FADES IN.]

**LAURENS:** Just like that.

**TROUGHTON:** Just like that.

**LAURENS:** [INSINUATING TROUGHTON MUST BE PROUD.] Well, your theory was confirmed.

**TROUGHTON:** Yes, but… It didn’t feel like that.

**LAURENS:** But-but this is what you wanted, wasn’t it? A visitation that could be summoned at will, one you could potentially survive easily? [A SHORT PAUSE, NOT QUITE UNDERSTANDING TROUGHTON’S REACTION.] This was the goal, wasn’t it?

**TROUGHTON:** [THINKS, THEN BEGRUDGINGLY AGREES.] It was, yes.

**LAURENS:** But that makes you uncomfortable?

**TROUGHTON:** Yes.

**LAURENS:** Why?

**TROUGHTON:** Because people had died. And not just Dani Ferguson. As I sat for the tattoo, the artist had let slip more information about his previous appointments. The dates… [SIGH.] Well, the dates lined up with the deaths of two other students. If I’d [NOT SURE IF THIS IS THE RIGHT WORD.] a-achieved this feat, I’d walked on the bodies of the dead to get there. And what’s worse, I’d been goaded into it…

**LAURENS:** I see.

**TROUGHTON:** And there was still more to come.

[SFX: LAURENS’ OFFICE FADES OUT. THE HOTEL ROOM FADES BACK IN, BUT THE RAIN IS DONE, LEAVING ONLY THE HUM OF THE CITY IN THE BACKGROUND. THE BED CREAKS AND SHEETS RUSTLE AS TROUGHTON ROLLS RESTLESSLY WITH A FRUSTRATED SIGH.]

**TROUGHTON:** [NARRATING.] I’m not the best sleeper, not since Anworth anyway. The rain had stopped and I almost missed it. It was far too quiet in that room. In the dark…

[SFX: TROUGHTON’S PHONE VIBRATES ON THE SIDE TABLE. HE SIGHS DEFEATEDLY, GIVING UP ON SLEEP. HE ROLLS OVER AND REACHES FOR THE PHONE, ANSWERING IT.]

**TROUGHTON:** [TRYING NOT TO SHOW TOO MUCH ANNOYANCE.] Hello?

**MOHINDER:** [LOW, OVER THE PHONE. BARELY HIDING HIS EXCITEMENT.] Did you hear him?

**TROUGHTON:** I’m sorry?

**MOHINDER:** [OVER THE PHONE] You must have heard him by now.

**TROUGHTON:** Mohinder?

**MOHINDER:** [IGNORING HIM.] …In the dark?

**TROUGHTON:** I-I don’t find this amusing in the slightest.

**MOHINDER:** No, y-you wouldn’t.

**TROUGHTON:** What do you want?

[SFX: A DOG BARKS IN THE BACKGROUND.]

**MOHINDER:** It’s what I can offer, Professor, not what I want.

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

**MOHINDER:** I’m sending you my address. Come ‘round, tomorrow evening. I, uh, I assume you’ll still be in town?

**TROUGHTON:** [WARY.] I could be.

**MOHINDER:** [AMUSED.] Of course you will be. [URGENTLY.] Tomorrow night, let’s say seven. I’ll explain everything as best as I can.

**TROUGHTON:** Look, what’s this about, exactly?

**MOHINDER:** Tomorrow at seven, I’ll explain then.

**TROUGHTON:** [NOT SURE IF HE’S AGREEING.] Right…

**MOHINDER:** Goodnight, Professor.

[SFX: TROUGHTON ENDS THE CALL.]

**TROUGHTON:** Hm…

[SFX: TROUGHTON STRETCHES TO PUT THE PHONE BACK ON THE NIGHTSTAND AND SETTLES BACK INTO BED WITH A SIGH.]

[SFX: THE HOTEL ROOM FADES AWAY AND LAURENS’ OFFICE FADES BACK IN.]

**LAURENS:** …Did you decide to go?

**TROUGHTON:** [FLAT AND ANNOYED WITH HIMSELF.] Of course I bloody did, I was like a moth to the flame…

[SFX: LAURENS’ OFFICE FADES OUT, REPLACED BY THE SOUNDS OF NEWCASTLE CITY CENTER: PRIMARILY TRAFFIC. SHOULDER IS TYPING AT HER COMPUTER, MUMBLING UNDER HER BREATH, ALMOST MELODICALLY. TROUGHTON KNOCKS AT HER DOOR.]

**SHOULDER:** [RAISED VOICE.] Come in!

[SFX: TROUGHTON OPENS THE DOOR.]

**TROUGHTON:** Doctor Shoulder, good morning.

**SHOULDER:** [MILD SURPRISE.] Professor Troughton? You’re still in town?

**TROUGHTON:** Yes, I—

**SHOULDER:** Your talk was two days ago…

**TROUGHTON:** [A LITTLE HESITANTLY.] Well, I’ve been pursuing a concern that was raised with me.

**SHOULDER:** [READY FOR ANYTHING.] Okay. So what can I help you with?

**TROUGHTON:** Dani Ferguson.

**SHOULDER:** [ANNOYED SIGH] And I was hoping Lydia’s interest in you was to do with her Master’s.

**TROUGHTON:** Something more important. Are you aware of the tattoos that Lydia and Amy Tuckwood have? The one Dani also had?

**SHOULDER:** [VERY CONFUSED] No? Should I? [SHE REMEMBERS AFTER A MOMENT.] Wait, yes. I remember seeing a fresh tattoo on Amy I think.

**TROUGHTON:** Do you know where they got the design?

**SHOULDER:** No…

**TROUGHTON:** Doctor Mohinder. He has the same tattoo.

**SHOULDER:** That’s it? [DISMISSIVE.] So they have a little hero worship going on? It’s not what you think.

**TROUGHTON:** I don’t think that.

**SHOULDER:** [FRUSTRATED.] Then what? I’m sorry but this is really weird, if I’m honest.

**TROUGHTON:** [A LITTLE FORCEFULLY.] What’s weird are the deaths of students linked to this faculty.

**SHOULDER:** [ANGRY.] Jesus Christ. This is getting out of line. What exactly are you implying?

**TROUGHTON:** [WITH RESTRAINED ANGER.] Dani Ferguson. Nicholas Coleman. Daan Villi. These names must be familiar to you. How could they not be? Three students, linked to this faculty within the past two years, two of which I discovered and connected within fifteen minutes on Google.

**SHOULDER:** [ANGERY, DEFENSIVE.] Look it’s awful, but it happens. Undergraduates alone—

**TROUGHTON:** [INTERRUPTING WITH SOME DISGUST.] Don’t. Don’t do that. [SIGH.] And, I have reason to believe they all had Mohinder’s tattoo.

**SHOULDER:** [THIS IS GETTING SILLY. SHE INITIALLY STRUGGLES TO KNOW HOW TO REACT THEN DISMISSIVE.] That sounds like a stretch… [FRUSTRATED.] Look, I have a great deal of respect for your work in the historical field. I have one of your books, even. But I know you have a [LOOKS FOR THE WORD.] habit of pursuing that sort of thing now and I don’t want it in my—

**TROUGHTON:** [INTERRUPTING.] And why exactly do you think Lydia and Amy pressured you into inviting me? And why Mohinder was against it? [FRUSTRATED SIGH.] How many more have to die until you recognise what’s going on here? One more? Three more? Ten more? [ANGRY INHALATION.] How many? I refuse to believe you haven’t noticed.

**SHOULDER:** [HESITATES.] I… There must be an explanation. [TRYING TO CONVINCE HERSELF] Coincidence maybe, it has to be a common tattoo…

**TROUGHTON:** I’ve spoken to the artist, believe me. It’s not.

**SHOULDER:** [GIVES UP.] Then what? Clearly you have some angle.

**TROUGHTON:** [CALMER.] The design, the vyaz. It’s carefully written, not just some generic prayer. The act of tattooing it onto the body is the beginning of a ritual of some kind.

**SHOULDER:** [THIS IS TOO MUCH.] Oh come on, I can’t believe that. [SOTTO.] Jesus.

**TROUGHTON:** I don’t need you to believe it. I just need you to help me. If nothing else then to stop what’s happening. Humour me for ten more minutes and lose nothing.

**SHOULDER:** [EXASPERATED SIGH.] How?

**TROUGHTON:** The vyaz is Slavic, this is your field, right?

**SHOULDER:** [CONFUSED.] Yes… I mean not exclusively, but yes.

**TROUGHTON:** Then you understand about religious practices. Prayer.

**SHOULDER:** Yes?

**TROUGHTON:** So show me what I need to stop this.

[SFX: THE SCENE FADES OUT, REPLACED BY HEAVY RAIN. TROUGHTON SPLASHES AS HE WALKS UP TO MOHINDER’S TOWNHOUSE AND RINGS THE DOORBELL. THUNDER ROLLS. MOHINDER OPENS THE DOOR.]

**MOHINDER:** Ah! Evening.

**TROUGHTON:** Good evening.

**MOHINDER:** You best come in.

**TROUGHTON:** Thank you, yes.

[SFX: TROUGHTON WALKS INSIDE. THE DOOR CLOSES BEHIND HIM, MUFFLING THE SOUNDS OF THE STORM. THEY ENTER AN ECHOING HALLWAY WITH A TICKING CLOCK.]

**MOHINDER:** You’ll be pleased to know the heating is on.

**TROUGHTON:** Mm.

**MOHINDER:** Can I get-get… L-let me-let me take your jacket?

**TROUGHTON:** No. Thank you.

**MOHINDER:** Oh, okay then. Please, please, right-right-right this way.

[SFX: THEY WALK FURTHER INTO THE HOUSE. MOHINDER OPENS A DOOR FOR TROUGHTON, WHO BEGINS WALKING UP THE STAIRS. MOHINDER CLOSES IT BEHIND THEM.]

**TROUGHTON:** Thank you.

**MOHINDER:** Make yourself comfortable.

[SFX: CLOTH RUSTLES AS TROUGHTON SITS ON A COUCH.]

**MOHINDER:** [NEUTRAL.] So, I could offer you tea? Or… How ‘bout something stronger? [SLIGHT LAUGH.]

**TROUGHTON:** [ALSO NEUTRAL.] It seems the sort of night to warm one’s bones. What do you suggest?

**MOHINDER:** I was thinking of the 16 year old malt whisky.

**TROUGHTON:** Why not?

[SFX: AS HE SPEAKS, MOHINDER OPENS THE LIQUOR CABINET AND TAKES TWO GLASSES.]

**MOHINDER:** [SLIGHT LAUGH.] I mean, I know it’s a school night, but it seems sacrilegious not to mark the occasion.

**TROUGHTON:** Perhaps so.

[SFX: MOHINDER UNSCREWS THE TOP AND POURS TWO WHISKIES, THEN SCREWS THE TOP BACK ON. HE RETURNS TO TROUGHTON WITH THE TWO DRINKS.]

**MOHINDER:** [WITH A GRUNT AS HE SITS.] Kay, here you are.

**TROUGHTON:** Thank you.

**MOHINDER:** [HE SAVOURS THE SMELL AND TASTE, SHOWING OFF.] There’s a… There’s a rounded softness to it, hints of hazelnut and candied peel. Mm.

**TROUGHTON:** [DOWNS THE DRINK IN ONE GO, GASPING AT THE BURN.]

**MOHINDER:** [A LITTLE APPALLED.] Or you could just down it, of course.

**TROUGHTON:** [RECOVERING.] Forgive me, I really am chilly.

**MOHINDER:** [DISINGENUOUS.] Of course. [HE TAKES A SIP OF THE DRINK AND MAKES A QUIET SATISFIED NOISE.] Wow.

**TROUGHTON:** So…

**MOHINDER:** [WITH A LONG INHALE OF ANTICIPATION.] So…

**TROUGHTON:** How long have you had your tattoo?

**MOHINDER:** [MATTER OF FACT.] Oh… Um, about three years now? What about you? [MISCHIEVOUS.] About twenty four hours? [SLIGHT LAUGH.]

**TROUGHTON:** Something like that.

**MOHINDER:** Just make sure you carry out the appropriate aftercare, it’s, uh, it’s part of you forever, now, after all.

**TROUGHTON:** [IGNORING THE FAUX CONCERN.] So how is it that you’ve never felt any ill effects?

**MOHINDER:** You mean why haven’t I died?

**TROUGHTON:** Well, yes.

**MOHINDER:** [TAKES ANOTHER SIP OF HIS DRINK.] Sorry, did you want a refill?

**TROUGHTON:** If you’re offering.

**MOHINDER:** [FINISHES HIS DRINK, REACTING TO THE BURN.] Ah, hand me your glass.

[SFX: MOHINDER TAKES THE GLASSES BACK TO THE CABINET AND REFILLS THEM.]

**MOHINDER:** [HE SINGS A COUPLE OF NOTES TO HIMSELF, THEN REFILLS THE GLASSES.] In answer to your question: I know what I’m doing.

**TROUGHTON:** With regards to the full ritual?

**MOHINDER:** Yep.

**TROUGHTON:** And how is it that you know the parameters?

**MOHINDER:** Well… [SLIGHT LAUGH.] The design isn’t mine.

[SFX: MOHINDER RETURNS WITH THE DRINKS.]

**TROUGHTON:** Thank you.

**MOHINDER:** You going to savour this one or– [SEES TROUGHTON IS DOWNING IT AND DISGUISES HIS DISGUST.] no, no, no, there you go. All in one. [SUBTLE SIGH AS HE SITS.]

**TROUGHTON:** [DOWNS THE DRINK, REACTING TO THE BURN. HIS WORDS ARE HOARSE.] I imagine that’s rather tasty if enjoyed properly.

**MOHINDER:** It is… [TAKES A SIP.]

**TROUGHTON:** [HIS VOICE RETURNING TO NORMAL.] So if the tattoo design isn’t yours, whose–pray tell–is it?

**MOHINDER:** [SMILES.] Professor Fraser Bomgard. My old lecturer.

**TROUGHTON:** I see.

**MOHINDER:** He came to similar conclusions as you and I about the afterlife, or at least, those who, um… linger…

**TROUGHTON:** [SUB-VERBAL NOISE OF SLIGHTLY EXAGGERATED INTEREST.]

**MOHINDER:** Eh, but you can’t derive truths about the real world by second hand experiences alone, you have to experience. I mean, you must understand this better than most…

**TROUGHTON:** To some extent. I can’t argue with that.

**MOHINDER:** [WITH A LAUGH.] Professor Bomgard knew this, all too well… In short: he was determined to have knowledge, to truly have that knowledge.

**TROUGHTON:** [WARY.] I see…

**MOHINDER:** He experimented. He… Did what he could to dance on the thresholds of life. I’m sure you understand. [SIPS HIS WHISKY.] But he was no fool. He began to find means of tethering himself to ensure he would remain with the living in case… [HALF LAUGH.] Well, you get it.

**TROUGHTON:** He tethered himself via tattoos?

**MOHINDER:** [SUB-VERBAL NOISE OF AGREEMENT WHILE HE FINISHES HIS WHISKY.] Oh, he was covered. Covered! And he wasn’t the type to even get one on his gap year, you understand. I-I couldn’t help but notice. Eventually he filled me in. And not long after that I began to supervise.

**TROUGHTON:** [INCREDULOUS.] Supervise?

**MOHINDER:** [AFFIRMING.] Supervise. [PAUSES FOR A MOMENT.] Oh, he did all sorts. I’ll, um… I’ll not bore you with the details but needless to say… [LONG INHALE.] Yeah, one day he ventured too far.

[SFX: THE COUCH CREAKS AS MOHINDER STANDS UP WITH A GROAN. HE TAKES THE GLASSES AND WALKS OVER TO THE COUNTER ONCE MORE. HE POURS LARGER PORTIONS OF THE WHISKY AND TAKES THEM BACK.]

**TROUGHTON:** So he… died?

**MOHINDER:** Oh, yeah.

[SFX: MOHINDER FINISHES POURING, THEN WALKS BACK OVER AND HANDS A GLASS TO TROUGHTON.]

**MOHINDER:** Here.

**TROUGHTON:** Thanks. And he remained… tethered?

**MOHINDER:** Yeah. For all of his tattoos, spells, runes, prayers… It seemed some of them had done the trick. I soon realised he hadn’t fully passed. [HE ENDS WITH A BREATHY LAUGH.]

**TROUGHTON:** The ritual?

**MOHINDER:** We’d planned it. [SLIGHTLY MORE ANIMATED.] I got the tattoo. A link to him. And all I had to do was… light the way. A-and-and don’t ask me what it is about the candle; something connected to older times perhaps. I mean, I’ve yet to see a ghost haunt an energy saving lightbulb. [LAUGHING, A BIT MANIC.] But I realised that once lit, it seemed to open a door for him. [DROPPING TO A WHISPER.] He couldn’t speak. Oh, no, he couldn’t speak, but he’d stay with me, silent.

**TROUGHTON:** Every time?

**MOHINDER:** [AT HIS NORMAL VOLUME.] As long as it was dark… Oh, Pr-Professor, y-you-you haven’t-you haven’t drunk your drink.

**TROUGHTON:** [SUB VERBAL NOISE OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND HE DOWNS IT. WITH THE LARGER PORTION COMES MORE OF A BURN THAT HE REACTS TO.] That was a bigger portion…

**MOHINDER:** Well, you shouldn’t rush.

**TROUGHTON:** [STARTING TO SHOW VERY SLIGHT EFFECTS OF THE ALCOHOL.] But if he stayed with you? Peacefully. Then why does he…?

**MOHINDER:** [AMUSED.] That’s the really sad bit. I-it’s been… it’s been, what? Fourteen years? And it’s already too much for him. [GETS CLOSER TO TROUGHTON. HE’S AMUSED BY OWN THEORIES.] He wants to die.

**TROUGHTON:** But he did?

**MOHINDER:** Not all the way. Not true death. Whatever life he has now. [STOPS AND IS AMUSED BY HIS USE OF THE WORD.] Life. [NORMAL] It’s something he doesn’t want. He likes the dark. He craves it. Because… Y’know, be-because I-I think there, there he can be as close to death as he possibly can. [SHORT PAUSE.] Now when we summon him? It’s a taunt. Yeah, we’re-we’re tau-we’re taunting him. A reminder.

**TROUGHTON:** Of?

**MOHINDER:** [IN AN AMUSED WHISPER.] Of his existence. [INTIMATELY.] And he has just enough ability to make sure you don’t call him again…

**TROUGHTON:** [TROUGHTON LOOKS FOR A CHANGE IN TOPIC TO ESCAPE THE INTENSITY.] You, uh, you haven't touched your drink.

**MOHINDER:** [COY.] Oh, yeah, th-that’s right. [TAKES A SIP WITH A LAUGH AND A SOUND OF ENJOYMENT.]

**TROUGHTON:** [WITH SOME ANGER.] This all begs the question, of course: why have you encouraged others to get the tattoo?

**MOHINDER:** There is a reason for that.

**TROUGHTON:** Oh, yes? It must be a rather good explanation.

**MOHINDER:** I’ll do better than explain. [LAUGHING, IN A LOW VOICE.] I’ll demonstrate.

**TROUGHTON:** What, now?

**MOHINDER:** That is why we’re here, isn’t it? [A PAUSE AS HE LEANS OVER THE COUCH.] So?

[SFX: MOHINDER LEANS OVER AND OPENS A DRAWER AND REMOVES A CANDLE, THEN CLOSES THE DRAWER AGAIN.]

**TROUGHTON:** [RESOLVED.] A candle.

**MOHINDER:** Yeah. So, what do you think? [WITH A BREATH OF AMUSED ANTICIPATION.]

[SFX: THE SOUNDS OF MOHINDER’S TOWNHOUSE FADES AWAY. IT FADES BACK IN WITH THE SOUND OF FOOTSTEPS AS MOHINDER PULLS THE CURTAINS CLOSED AND TURNS OFF THE LIGHTS. HE WALKS BACK TO THE COUCH.]

**TROUGHTON:** Well, I definitely can’t see a thing.

**MOHINDER:** [IN CONTROL.] As it should be. Now, go ahead.

[SFX: TROUGHTON STRIKES A LIGHTER AND HOLDS IT TO THE CANDLE.]

**TROUGHTON:** [BEING BRAVE.] There we are…

**MOHINDER:** [PLEASED.] Good. Now put it down.

**TROUGHTON:** Put it down?

**MOHINDER:** Yes. On the coffee table.

**TROUGHTON:** I thought the idea was to hold it close to your face.

[[*MUSIC: AN ECHOING BEAT COMES IN BEHIND MOHINDER’S INSTRUCTION TO PUT IT DOWN. IT CONTINUES GETTING LOUDER THROUGH THE SCENE.*]]

**MOHINDER:** As long as you’re facing it, it’s the same principle. Now put it down.

[SFX: TROUGHTON PUTS THE CANDLE DOWN WITH A SIGH. AS MOHINDER STARTS TALKING, BOMGARD’S BREATH CAN BE HEARD.]

**MOHINDER:** Now we– [CUTS OFF EXCITEDLY AS HE HEARS THE BREATHING.] Ah, he’s here.

[SFX: ANOTHER LONG EXHALE.]

**TROUGHTON:** [QUIET] So he is. [MOHINDER LAUGHS BREATHILY IN EXCITEMENT.] So w-what did you need to demonstrate?

[SFX: A LONG EXHALE FROM BOMGARD.]

**MOHINDER:** [LOW.] It’s beautiful.

**TROUGHTON:** [NOT SURE IF HE HEARD CORRECTLY.] Hm?

[SFX: BOMGARD KEEPS BREATHING, EDGING SLOWLY TOWARD THEM.]

**MOHINDER:** [AN EXCITED WHISPER.] That’s what they all missed. It’s a privilege to be a part of this.

**TROUGHTON:** [INTERRUPTING.] Mohinder–

**MOHINDER:** [SPEAKING OVER HIM, SLIGHTLY LOUDER.] They’ve done more for the world in death than they would have done otherwise.

**TROUGHTON:** Mohinder!

**MOHINDER:** Don’t you see? This is the answer to all our questions! The big question!

[SFX: BOMGARD’S BREATHING IS VERY CLOSE NOW.]

**TROUGHTON:** [FIRMLY.] I’m blowing the candle out.

**MOHINDER:** [ALMOST GRUNTING.] N-no!

[SFX: THERE IS A SCUFFLE. MOHINDER GETS HIS HAND OVER TROUGHTON’S MOUTH, MUFFLING HIM AS HE YELLS. MOHINDER BREATHES EXCITEDLY.]

**TROUGHTON:** [MOSTLY INAUDIBLE, WITH A HAND OVER HIS MOUTH.] What? Get off! [HE STRUGGLES FOR 10 SECONDS, ALL TOLD.]

**MOHINDER:** [HISSING IN TROUGHTON’S EAR AND FIGHTING TO HOLD HIM AS HE STRUGGLES.] This is what you wanted, Troughton.

[[*MUSIC: A HIGH, SUSTAINED NOTE COMES IN OVER THE TOP OF THE PULSING BEAT.*]]

**BOMGARD:** [VERY CLOSE NOW THE BREATHING QUICKENS, SOMEHOW ANGRY.]

[[*MUSIC: THE MUSIC GETS LOUDER AND ADDS A BRASSY MIDDLE NOTE.*]]

**MOHINDER:** [STILL HISSING IN TROUGHTON’S EAR] This is what you wanted. This is my gift to you. Even in your last moments: certainty.

**BOMGARD:** [BLOWS OUT THE CANDLE.]

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

**TROUGHTON:** [BREAKING FREE AND TAKING HUGE GULPS OF AIR.] What happened?

**MOHINDER:** [CATCHING HIS BREATH BUT LAUGHING A BIT.] It’s done. He’s blown out the candle. Just– [SOMETHING CATCHES IN HIS THROAT. HE CHOKES SLIGHTLY AND CLEARS HIS THROAT. THEN BREATHLESSLY] Just-just give it a m– [HE CHOKES. HE CAN’T BREATHE. THEN SPEAKS BREATHLESSLY.] What? [CHOKE.] What h– [CHOKES, WHEEZES.] What ha–

**TROUGHTON:** [TAKES NO PLEASURE IN THIS.] I visited the tattoo parlour again. Doctor Shoulder helped me identify a protective measure. [PULLS DOWN HIS SHIRT.] See?

[SFX: MOHINDER FALLS TO THE FLOOR WITH A LOUD THUD.]

**MOHINDER:** [HIS LAST FEW DYING MOMENTS AS HE LOSES ALL AIR. HE TRIES TO SPEAK BUT CAN’T.]

**TROUGHTON:** [SOLEMN.] I suppose, if Bomgard can’t kill me… He’ll kill whoever else is here. I’m sorry.

**MOHINDER:** [TRYING BUT UNABLE TO GET A FULL BREATH.] Help me… [HE DIES WITH A LAST, CHOKED GASP.]

**TROUGHTON:** I really am sorry.

[SFX: MOHINDER’S TOWNHOUSE FADES AWAY. LAURENS’ OFFICE COMES IN.]

**LAURENS:** Good lord…

**TROUGHTON:** To put it mildly.

**LAURENS:** That’s an astonishing story.

**TROUGHTON:** [HASTILY ADDING.] Of which you’re bound to doctor-patient confidentiality. I wasn’t directly the cause of any harm… So you’re, uh, still bound, morally and legally, as I understand.

**LAURENS:** You’re not wrong! But I expected you to do your homework.

**TROUGHTON:** Quite so.

**LAURENS:** I mean, if you were prepared for Doctor Mohinder… So where’s this newer tattoo, exactly?

**TROUGHTON:** [SOME EMBARRASSMENT.] On my chest, unfortunately. It’s-it’s rather large…

**LAURENS:** …May I see?

**TROUGHTON:** Is it important?

**LAURENS:** [GOOD NATURED.] In all honesty, I’m simply curious.

**TROUGHTON:** Mm-kay, let me just…

[SFX: TROUGHTON UNBUTTONS HIS SHIRT WITH A SIGH.]

**LAURENS:** Oh yes, so it is. Wow. That is detailed.

**TROUGHTON:** More vyaz, yes. It’s an old slavic prayer of protection. Doctor Shoulder was very helpful in the end, despite her misgivings. You know, I don’t think she realised she saved my life. Perhaps I should drop her an email? [SLIGHT LAUGH.] Although how does one write an email like that?

**LAURENS:** [IGNORING THE QUESTION.] So this new design, you passed on this information to the others?

**TROUGHTON:** Hm? Oh, absolutely. Lydia and Amy booked in with the artist the following day, and I spoke to the artist also. I’ve even set up a website, if you can believe it, just in case some poor soul looks for answers. [THIS HAS BEEN BOTHERING HIM A LITTLE WHILE.] You know, I hope you’ll excuse me, but I’ve noticed a tattoo of yours along your wrist there.

**LAURENS:** [DISMISSIVE] Oh, this? Oh, yes, I have a fair few myself, yes…

**TROUGHTON:** [PUSHING THE MATTER.] Is that… Is that vyaz?

**LAURENS:** [HE LAUGHS INDULGENTLY.] Yes, I suppose it is. It’s not as good a job as yours, I imagine…

**TROUGHTON:** As mine?

**LAURENS:** …but that’s what happens when you squeeze such a complex design onto a smaller area.

**TROUGHTON:** I’m sorry, it’s the same design?

**LAURENS:** [CHEERFUL.] I should think so, yes!

**TROUGHTON:** [TOTALLY CONFUSED.] How?

**LAURENS:** [AMUSED BY TROUGHTON’S CONFUSION.] Well, Doctor Mohinder of course!

**TROUGHTON:** What?

[[*MUSIC: LONG, DRONING LOW NOTES BEGIN THAT ALMOST FEEL LIKE A PASSING VEHICLE AT FIRST.*]]

**LAURENS:** Oh, come now, Geoffrey. Lydia and Amy told you themselves! They put the word out about Dani and for those of us with our ear to the ground, well! It was simply a matter of following the threads. [BEMUSED.] You did the same, effectively.

**TROUGHTON:** [CONFUSED AND ANGRY.] I’m sorry, you’re telling me that you met Doctor Mohinder before I did?

**LAURENS:** Yes.

[[*MUSIC: VIBRATING HIGHER SUSTAINED NOTES COME IN ABOVE.*]]

**TROUGHTON:** Out of what, curiosity?

**LAURENS:** [BEMUSED, ALMOST PATRONISING.] It’s a little more complex than that, Geoffrey, but yes. If that’s how you’d like to put it.

**TROUGHTON:** And you just so happened to then become my therapist?

**LAURENS:** Now, that really would be improbable, wouldn’t it? No, I made sure my recommendation fell into Tasha’s hands and I allowed her to do what she does best: badger you. [SLIGHT LAUGH.]

[[*MUSIC: MIDDLE DISTORTED NOTES ARE ADDED TO THE MIX.*]]

[SFX: TROUGHTON STANDS.]

**TROUGHTON:** [VERY CONFUSED, ANGRY.] That’s-that’s illegal, surely?

**LAURENS:** [CHEERFUL.] Well, it’s a-it’s a grey area, I’ll admit. Certainly an ethical transgression but I think we’ve found each other helpful enough to justify it, wouldn’t you say? Are you alright Geoffrey? You look rather pale.

**TROUGHTON:** [SOUNDING MORE AND MORE STRAINED AS HE TRIES TO WALK AWAY.] I don’t think I feel– [HE FAINTS AFTER A COUPLE OF STEPS.]

[[*MUSIC: FADES AWAY.*]]

[[*MUSIC: LONG, SLOW VIOLIN NOTES PLAY THE* SHADOWS AT THE DOOR *THEME.*]]

[Timestamp: 48:17]

BEGIN DISCUSSION SECTION

**DAVID:** So you gotta feel sorry for for anyone who gets a writer who is so sadistic that they will leave it on a cliffhanger and then not answer it for a few weeks. Oh, hello, everyone.

**MARK:** Always leave your audience wanting more, David.

**DAVID:** Welcome everyone to season three of *Shadows at the Door*, and I am joined as always by the writer/editor/producer/general dog's body, Mr. Mark Nixon.

**MARK:** Thank you, David. I am truly everything, everywhere, all at once.

**DAVID:** Apart from me.

**MARK:** I could never replace you, David.

**DAVID:** You have certainly tried.

**MARK:** Well, I think listeners will be excited to hear that in the season finale, I will be playing Professor Troughton!

**DAVID:** I knew it! I shouldn't have signed all of that paperwork.

**MARK:** Now I've just got AI David. [IN A VERY ROBOTIC, STACCATO VOICE.] Oh, look. A ghost. Oh, no.

**DAVID:** But yes, how good is it to be back, Mark?

**MARK:** It feels wonderful to be back, David. We've worked so hard.

**DAVID:** Yes, *you* have.

**MARK:** Okay. I'll take it. Yeah. Thank you. I guess we'll... I'll get into my platitudes later, but it just… Thank you so much for being with us everybody, and we can't wait to hear what you thought of the story that you have just listened to.

**DAVID:** Yes. And, of course, everything else that we have coming up. And we've… It feels like we've been trailing all of these big names for months now, but what a way to start a season than with Sacha Dhawan.

**MARK:** Yeah. The first thing I really ever saw Sacha in was an adaptation of M.R. James’ “The Tractate Middoth”–I think it was 2013[[2]](#footnote-2) or something–and he's just fantastic in it and great, but surreal, to have now worked with him in one of our productions. It's, you know, fantastic. It's, like, there's not really many other words for it.

**DAVID:** Absolutely, it's amazing. And I know we'll probably get into this a little bit later, but hearing his breathing in my headphones was, um, was quite something, especially when he was grappling with Professor Troughton.

**MARK:** I really hope he's not listening.

**DAVID:** I hope he is. Hello, Sasha. Thank you very much.

**MARK:** Yeah, thanks, Sasha. Don't mind David. Sorry, mate. Yeah, I'll be honest. So, I'll just get straight into it. So that scene was deliberately written with what I thought was a hint of sexual tension.

**DAVID:** I think someone must have knocked the arm when that tension was being put into the mix because it… I think there was a healthy dollop in there.

**MARK:** I'd rather we didn't use the word dollop, but… So, and then, when I was recording, it was Sacha. Sacha asked me to read the part of Troughton, which was bizarre. Obviously, you know, much professional. But, recording it, and I was just thinking, [IN A LOUD STAGE WHISPER.] “This is quite horny, isn't it?” Like, what have I done? And then Sacha ad-libbed a bit. Like, Sasha grabs Troughton and was like, “Shut up.” I was like: “Jesus Christ.” I mean, we're writers,t's our job to make dialogue sound ad-libbed, but that one was ab-libbed!

**DAVID:** It definitely worked.

**MARK:** I didn't tell him to put any sexual tension in, like, the bit where you're both drinking. I was actually talking to my partner about Troughton necking the drink and she said, “Oh, but…” And, like, he's like, a connoisseur of certain drinks, but yeah, he's not drinking it for pleasure. He's getting some [DAVID INTERJECTS WITH “DUTCH COURAGE.”]. Yeah.

**DAVID:** Yeah. On that score, I just want to say how personally offended I was that I had to act downing a sixteen-year-old Macallan. Just no. No, no, no. How… No. It offended my sensibilities.

**MARK:** Did it not help that you were flirting with death in that scene? Troughton didn't know how effective his second tattoo was gonna be.

**DAVID:** Wow.

**MARK:** By the way, I think we need to address the most unlikely thing that happened in this story. Is that Troughton got, what, not one but two walk-in appointments for a tattoo?

**DAVID:** Now this is something that is fully within your purview and I have no…

**MARK:** Well, it's just most artists are booked for months and they'll open their books, like, and you've gotta get it there quick. But, you know, for–in my mind, the artist is working on his designs for other clients when Troughton walks in. Which is why he’s stood at the desk available for him.

**DAVID:** Ah, okay.

**MARK:** And then I think he fitted Troughton in because the idea of tattooing… Like, where I write in the character description, “thinks he can spot a Tory a mile away”? Because Troughton would give off Tory vibes.

**DAVID:** He certainly would. Yes.

**MARK:** And, yeah. And I, look, like, when I was writing the story and I really wanted to do something with tattoos. I've flirted with that idea in another story before and I thought I really need to sink my teeth into it. And I thought, “God, wouldn't it be ridiculous if Troughton had to get a tattoo. It's happening.” There's no other word for it, but “delicious” to hear you, as Troughton, get this tattoo. And also, you know, for the fan art, now, Troughton got some tattoos, as well as scars, that you're gonna have to account for. So…

**DAVID:** I really do feel for poor Geoffrey. For, just, what you've made him go through over the last two seasons.

**MARK:** [HEAVY SIGH.] Yeah. Soz, mate. Poor, poor Geoffrey.

**DAVID:** Poor Geoffrey. And with that, lovely pronunciation there, the “soz, mate.” It's, like, let us address the elephant in the room. The fact that it was set on home territory.

**MARK:** Yeah. I've set some stories in Northumberland before, and I'll be honest, David, this story is kind of me atoning. Because I have… I was raised to not have much of an accent. And I was praised for not having an accent. So, as I’ve grown up, I have kind of associated it a good thing to not have much of an accent. Now, as I've gotten older still, I definitely have an accent now.

**DAVID:** Oh, yes.

**MARK:** I know that I've been guilty of making jokes about the Geordie accent and I stand by some of them. You know, I think it could be quite a warm, and nice accent, but I thought I really wanna not only set it in Newcastle, but I wanna have characters with strong Geordie accents, who are not a joke. You know, like, who with… David, who is the most famous Geordie you can think of.

**DAVID:** Oh, it’s Ant and Dec. It's the ones that spring to mind. Yeah.

**MARK:** Exactly. So, I just wanted to kind of, like, just have some Geordies who just, like, were part of the story and were not jokes. Yeah, so, and it was lovely to just work with some local actors. And I knew where every scene was set. I was like, oh, yeah, they're in the Lit & Phil, which is this gorgeous private library in Newcastle and at one point Troughton is in… He's around Grey’s Monument, where there's a preacher. And…

**DAVID:** I recognize the voice of that preacher, for some reason. Would you like to tell us more?

**MARK:** ‘Jesus died for our’… That’s Yorkshire? I can’t even do it. That's the thing, I was just trying to act it, I was like okay, don't, like, don’t overdue the accent.

**DAVID:** Go on, overdo the accent, go on.

**MARK:** [OVERDOING THE ACCENT.] Why no! [BACK TO HIS VOICE AFTER A LAUGH.] But I mean, I don't know how often you're in Newcastle City Centre today, but there is nearly always someone with a megaphone around Grey's Monument and it's either them talking about a delicate political issue, a racist, or a priest.

**DAVID:** Or all three.

**MARK:** Or all three. And I thought, I'll go for the least offensive one. But that's kind of like anyone who's been to Newcastle will hopefully know exactly what I'm talking about, like, in that scene. It's not just there for a little bit of, like, comic relief. It's meant to make the place seem a little bit more Newcastle-y. And of course, David, when I say Grey's Monument, in Newcastle, that is Earl Grey. Like, the guy who brought Earl Grey to Britain was a Geordie and, I believe, an abolitionist.

**DAVID:** Right. Yes. And in fact, Earl Grey was responsible for designing the police station, which is now the Prison & Police Museum in Ripon. There you go. A little bit of an amateur architecturalist.

**MARK:** Well, when you're rich, you could do whatever the fuck you like, can't you?

**DAVID:** Absolutely, yes. ‘Hooray!’ Swan around. ‘Yeah, I think I'll design a police station here, bring some tea here, possibly abolish slavery’ but...

**MARK:** I think he was, like, in India when he encountered the tea? Like, ‘what's this? Oh, it’s delicious? I think I'll bring it back home, give it my own name.’

**DAVID:** Yep.

**MARK:** Just sell it on. Well, you may have been an abolitionist, Earl Grey, but you are certainly an appropriator.

**DAVID:** Of course. Anything for a profit, it's wherever the money goes. Follow the money! All the time.

[[*MUSIC: SHORT MUSICAL PHRASE AS A TRANSITION.*]]

**MARK:** So David, the first thing that came to mind with the story is that I wanted to put Troughton in therapy. When you have an omniscient narrator talking to us, my unnecessary fascination is ‘who are they talking to?’ Like, [IN A CREEPY, RASPY AMERICAN VOICE.] [[*MUSIC: QUIETLY CREEPY RHODES PIANO NOTES SNEAK IN THE BACKGROUND WHENEVER MARK IS TELLING THIS STORY.*]] ‘I once knew a man who played the violin outside my house.’

**DAVID:** Go on, I'm interested.

**MARK:** [BACK IN HIS NORMAL VOICE.] I'm gonna write that story now. [IN THE RASPY VOICE.] ‘He was called the Fiddler. And he would fiddle at 2 AM outside my house every night. And I would watch.’

**DAVID:** That's what you get for being in [FUZZ TO REDACT WHAT HE SAID.].

**MARK:** No one has a violin in this village.

**DAVID:** I think it was more the fiddling at 2 AM.

**MARK:** [IN A NORTHERN ACCENT.] ‘Alright, love? It's me, The Fiddler.’ [BACK TO NORMAL.] Anyway... So, I'm always interested who are they talking to? And I know, like, we kind of accept that they're just kind of just happy to tell us a story, But, like, I always love playing with that kind of framing device. And I just really wanted to put Troughton in therapy, ever since he kind of said to Tasha that he tried it. And it wasn't for him. And I have this idea of him doing therapy just to prove everyone that he doesn't need therapy.

**DAVID:** Yep. Fair enough. I mean, there are, of course, a lot of different types of therapy and different therapies will work better for different people. Yeah. For him to try at once and then say, well it's not for him. It might well be that he didn't find the right one.

**MARK:** Yeah.

**DAVID:** I thought it worked very well. Yes. Very well indeed. And as you say, it certainly gives context for Troughton to narrate. The fact that it's supposed to be a safe space and there is the confidentiality means that there is… While there is a guarded nature about Troughton, he is still more open than he would be if he was just talking to someone in a coffee shop.

**MARK:** Yeah, yeah. And it's, like, a nice opportunity for Troughton to tell us, like, the lore of this universe, like how ghosts exist. And, of course, David, you helped me. Like, I always knew in my head how it works, but I didn't know how to make it. And you kinda help me write the pseudoscience.

**DAVID:** It's not pseudoscience.

**MARK:** No. The pseudoscience of how ghosts exist, David, come on.

**DAVID:** Oh, right, yes. No, no, it’s–

**MARK:** It’s definitely a pseudoscience because I fucking made it up.

**DAVID:** I think you have drawn on the law of the universe there because there are plenty of people that have posited the same thing and you've just probably tapped into that.

**MARK:** Are you accusing me of intellectual theft?

**DAVID:** No! I'm accusing you of being tuned in to the zeitgeist.

**MARK:** Okay. [UNDER HIS BREATH.] That's not the response I was looking for. But okay. [HE KEEPS MUMBLING A BIT UNDER DAVID’S LAUGHTER.]

**DAVID**: So, yeah, this whole world of the unseen is a very interesting place to have a little stop off. And, yeah, so the whole… The point in the middle about what we can see. The tiny, tiny part of the electromagnetic spectrum that we can see originally came from a statistic about the length of the Mississippi, but it made more sense ‘cause it was when I was recording it that I thought, ‘you know what, saying it about the length of the Mississippi doesn't really… It's not as helpful, or it wouldn't be the sort of thing that Troughton would say, because he's British and he's talking to someone else who is British, who would know about Land’s End, John o' Groats. And so I thought, okay. Right. Okay. Scale it down. Da, da-da, da-da, da-da. Ah, cool. It's that it's half a football field. Right. Okay. That works.’ But, yeah, there is so much that we can't see. Ninety nine point nine nine six percent of the spectrum that we don't see. However, much of the audio spectrum that we can't hear. ‘Cause we hear from, I think it's twenty to twenty thousand and of course, that decreases as we get older.

**MARK:** And just to quickly interrupt, David, it's true because when people hear Troughton in Laurens’ office, they can't see all of the fucking work that I did to get…

**DAVID:** I was going to come onto that a little bit later. ‘Cause I sort of took my headphones off and it’s like, are those cars going outside? Oh, oh, they're in here. Oh! So, I appreciated all those cars going past and all of the work you put into the external noises.

**MARK:** Oh, I see. Yeah. In Laurens’ office. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**DAVID:** But yeah, so, it's funny that it's something that that comes up when I'm doing my planetarium shows that kids will ask, ‘do you think the aliens exist?’ And my response is absolutely yes. I think it's a mathematically impossible from that point of view of, you know, here is this universe? Are we alone? No, of course we’re not. Given the sheer number of planets, et cetera out there. And it's the same with ghosts. Okay, I haven't ever seen one. But there are enough people that have that we can't dismiss it out of hand. And the work that goes into parapsychology, the amount of hurdles that anyone doing anything remotely parapsychological have to jump through, or jump over, is way more than any other discipline. And they do. They do jump over these hoops, but even then, journals are wary about taking in or publishing research because they don't want to be seen as unscientific when it is probably the most scientific that there is.

**MARK:** Troughton knows exactly what you're talking about, mate.

**DAVID:** Exactly. Yes. So, yeah. I think… I mean, personally, I think that there is *way* more to this universe, way more to this world, than the purely material that we are told is the only thing that's around us.

**MARK:** I mean, I'm with you on the aliens. I think mathematically, they have to exist. Like, even like, in my time of being aware of how space works to the extent that I understand it. And, like, you know, the Goldilocks Zone, like, this minute area of space that we live in that is just the right amount of heat for our planet. And then, like, I remember, like, ages ago I read that that's so rare. And then, in like, the last ten years, they keep discovering other planets in Goldilocks Zones. Like oh, shit. It's actually quite common.

**DAVID:** Yeah.

**MARK:** So I do believe aliens are so, they must exist. But, like, I don't think they're grey people that come to put their fingers in us.

**DAVID:** Well, there you go, you’ve just fallen for the CIA’s conspiracy theory line. Of ‘okay, there's an alien. Right. Let's dress someone up as an alien and talk about rectal probing and things like that.’

**MARK:** David, I'm just a silly man. And I saw an opportunity for a finger joke and I took it. I mean I… You and I've had this discussion offline as well, and I can't bring myself to. I'm too much of a sceptic and, like, I think I don't rate him, but I read this, like, interview with Brian Cox and he said ghosts can't scientifically exist because, like, they now have… I think it was to do with the hydrogen [DAVID INTERJECTS WITH “Hadron.”] collider. Beg your pardon?

**DAVID:** Hadron collider, not hydrogen collider.

**MARK:** Okay. In *that* collider, in where is it, Switzerland?

**DAVID:** Switzerland? Yeah.

**MARK:** Yeah.

**DAVID:** It's CERN.

**MARK:** I think it was somehow using that they were able to ascertain that they could look at, like, all matter. And he said, like, there's no room for anything else.

**DAVID:** Whereas I disagree with Brian Cox.

**MARK:** You've been called out, Prof!

**DAVID:** Yep.

**MARK:** If you… Like, look, Professor Brian Cox, or indeed, the Scottish actor Brian Cox, if either you want to appear in the show to argue with David, please. Email, Shadows at the Door at Gmail dot com. And we'll make it work.

**DAVID:** Yeah. Excellent. Because there is so much, so many experiments to show that we, as experimenters, can have an effect on the experiment itself.

**MARK:** In what, in terms of observation or in terms of bias?

**DAVID:** Observation certainly, but intention as well. So, there have been studies which show that if you take two experimenters running the same experiment, with the same types of equipment in two different rooms. But one where they expect the experiment to work and one where they don't. The one that expects it to work will get more positive results than the one that doesn't. So they've got essentially their own confirmation bias coming out in the experiment itself.

**MARK:** But that of course, works both ways though and to completely break this down into a more simplistic thing, people who go ghost hunting with cameras and stuff like that, they see an orb of light and they think it's a ghost. When it's probably just a bit of dust or something like that. And because they don't want to have wasted their time and money.

**DAVID:** No. No, no. That's true. Okay, fair enough. But if we bring it back to our experimenters, they are there, purely just to do the experiment. And this is being done where they swap the equipment over, swap rooms over, et cetera. But the results keep coming out, and it's not a matter of, you know, wanting to make sure that you haven't done the wrong thing or you haven't wasted your time. This is genuine results that are showing that the intention of the experimenter has an effect on the results. [DAVID STARTS COUGHING.] Just excuse me.

**MARK:** It's the CIA, David. They've come to silence you.

**DAVID:** It is, it is, augh! Epstein didn't kill himself. Gotta get it out.

**MARK:** That’s staying in.

[[*MUSIC: ELECTRONIC, PERCUSSIVE LINE FROM THE SHADOWS AT THE DOOR THEME.*]]

**MARK:** Troughton’s journey has gone from convinced disbeliever to, like, someone who is now actively arguing this point. To the extent that he has now left his prestigious job. And he's taking a big gamble. But now I'm going to test Troughton in the next story by introducing him to something that is so preposterous. It will truly test him, like he has never been tested before.

**DAVID:** Excellent.

**MARK:** And I am so excited for everyone to hear this episode because it is bonkers.

**DAVID:** That is definitely one word for.

**MARK:** And yeah, I mean, you've recorded it, David. I think we've done all right.

**DAVID:** I think we have. Yes. I think you've done well. Yes. And of course, that one has a cast of many, many, many. But let's get back to the cast of “Where Queer Things Him Befell.” So obviously, we had a non-native accent in there.

**MARK:** This story began because of the etymology of one particular word in Russian. It is... So sorry for our Russian listeners, or indeed anyone familiar with it[[3]](#footnote-3). But in Russian, other countries are described, like, they sound like, you know Canada is, like, Kanada[[4]](#footnote-4). And Englishman is an anglichan[[5]](#footnote-5).

**DAVID:** Right.

**MARK:** But a German is… oh, god, I’m rusty. A German is Nemets[[6]](#footnote-6).

**DAVID:** Okay.

**MARK:** And that doesn't sound anything like Germany. And it's because Germans were the first foreigners that Russians met. And the Germans didn't speak their language. So they didn't know… They, I think, they called them, I think, ‘silent ones,’ because they just weren't talking. And now, to this day, Nemets doesn't mean silent, it means German. And this is just… It was an interesting… Like, I think they have a different word for silent now.

This was an interesting bit of trivia that I experienced. And I thought, ‘oh, that could be cool.’ And then I had this idea of this fucking German ghost. And it was becoming way too contrived. I was bending over backwards to try and fit this bit of trivia into a bit of this, so it didn't work out. But then, I've always wanted to kind of play with the idea of tattoos and stuff. And so when one is thinking of a spooky tattoo, you’re probably gonna think of like, a Nordic rune. And something that many of us are guilty of, especially me, is making Nordic rooms mystical. They're just letters. But they look cool.

**DAVID:** They do indeed.

**MARK:** And they're kind of mysterious even though they're not. So, you know, James is certainly guilty of this. I've been guilty of this, and I did a story that appeared on NoSleep that kind of combined runes with, like, ancient Hebrew. And I thought, ‘okay, well, I don't wanna do that again, so…’ And then I was, like, ‘oh, Slavic.’ And then I was looking at Slavic runes, and then I learned Slavic runes aren't a thing, neo-Nazis have made them up. Because, if, indeed, if there's one lesson in life, David, it's that Nazis ruin everything. And then, because I was looking at all of these Nordic runes and I was, like, they all look like swastikas. It's unusual how many of them are swastikas. I said, ‘ah, that's why.’ And I was talking to Erebus Odora, who acted in this episode, and we were talking about vyaz, the calligraphy, and it's just… It's beautiful stuff. And she and I were talking about that. It was just really interesting how it became this, and then I was looking at real examples of prayers in vyaz, and I said, ‘oh, brilliant.’ And then I just had this idea of it being a single band around the arm because a banded forearm is something that is quite a common tattoo. Yeah, and it's just this story was meant to be something completely different and it just evolved into some entirely. And it was so fun that I could just put it in the framing device of the therapy session. But yes. It was wonderful to have Erebus Odora in the prediction because she's been doing a lot of… She's been helping us with our t-shirt designs. And creating some excellent artwork.

**DAVID:** Yeah, They're amazing artwork, yes.

**MARK:** Also, some expected, some not expected.

**DAVID:** Yeah, that’s true. She is a wonderful wonderful human being.

**MARK:** Yes. Absolutely wonderful.

**DAVID:** [STAGE WHISPER.] We love you, Doc!

**MARK:** And you can hear Erebus Odora in “The Boar Knight” singing a rock song as Baba Yaga.

**DAVID:** Yes. [CORRECTING MARK TO PUT THE EMPHASIS ON THE LAST A OF “YAGA.”] Baba Yag-A.

**MARK:** Beg your pardon. Oh, right, that's it! I've got a bone to pick with you, Ault. You've just corrected me on my pronunciation of Baba Yaga.

**DAVID:** Yep. Baba Yaga.

**MARK:** [IN A GEORDIE ACCENT.] Baba Yaga, man!

**DAVID:** [ALSO IN A GEORDIE ACCENT.] Ha-Way!.

**MARK:** [HIS NORMAL ACCENT.] That sounds like something a bloody mutated turtle would say. ‘Baba Yaga.’ Like a Geordie… [BEGINS SINGING.] ‘Teenage Mutant Geordie Turtles.’ [BACK TO NORMAL.] Anyway, damn it. I slipped into a silly Geordie accent. Anyway, so, in this episode, David, Geoffrey is doing a talk on the letters between Ivan [PRONOUNCED I-VAN, NOT EYE-VAN.] the Terrible and Elizabeth the First. And David recorded it. And I said, ‘David, you're pronouncing Ivan wrong.’ And do you wanna continue this story, David?

**DAVID:** No, no, no Please, you carry on.

**MARK:** And David said, ‘well, you know, that's… If you’re Russian, you'd would pronounce it Ivan [SHORT I.], but in England, we call it Ivan [LONG I.].’ I was like ‘yeah, but, like, if you are an academic and you're on this topic, you’re gonna wanna pronounce it the way that everyone knows.’ David said, ‘well, would Troughton do that?’ And I’m like, ‘yes, he would. He's a snob.’ So I asked David to re-record it, much to David’s chagrin. And then I was then putting the scene together, and I noticed that Erebus Odora was pronouncing it Ivan [SHORT I.], I beg your pardon, Ivan [LONG I.]. I was like, aw, shit. I'm gonna have to swallow this one.

**DAVID:** [SMUG.] Because I noticed that as well when I was listening through it.

**MARK:** Yeah. Did you notice that Geoffrey then said Ivan [LONG I.]?

**DAVID:** Yes. I did.

**MARK:** I left in the original Ivan [LONG I.] cut. I *can* release the Ivan [SHORT I.] cut.

**DAVID:** But yes, I did actually have a little smile to myself when I heard Geoffrey say ‘Ivan’ [LONG I.].

**MARK:** Smug git.

**DAVID:** [SMUGLY.] Yep.

[[*MUSIC: SOFT GUITAR NOTES FOR TRANSITION.*]]

**MARK:** Yeah, it's ‘cause I'm actually using a lot of licensed music in this season.

**DAVID:** Well, I was listening… It was quite interesting to hear all of that, like, who was it that was on the radio or on the speakers when Troughton entered the house share?

[[*MUSIC: AS DAVID SPEAKS, THE MUSIC FROM THE HOUSE SHARE COMES IN QUIETLY BEHIND HIM.*]]

**MARK:** Yeah, so that was actually some Russian hip-hop.

**DAVID:** Russian hip-hop. Right.

[[*MUSIC: THE MUSIC GETS LOUDER FOR A FEW SECONDS, THEN FADES BACK TO BE QUIETLY PLAYING BEHIND MARK.*]]

**MARK:** They were, you know, they're Russian students, so I figured, you know, they would immerse themselves in the culture a bit. And it's something that I've considered in the past, but licensed music has always been prohibitively expensive.

**DAVID:** That's because you're trying to support human creators, Mark.

**MARK:** Exactly. The main website that I would go to for music all of a sudden introduced a subscription service where you could suddenly have, you know, if you were clever about it, you could really make it work for you. So I… You will be hearing a lot of, like, like royalty… music that I have the licence for to use in this. So, that is the music when Troughton goes into the students’ flat and the metal music when it goes into the…

**DAVID:** [WITH GUSTO.] Yes!

**MARK:** …tattoo two parlour. ‘Cause if there's something I hate, it’s when I have to be in pain for like, six hours, it's hearing someone go like, [LOUD ROAR.]

**DAVID:** Is it just something about tattoo artists? They never play Rachmaninoff or anything like that, do they.

**MARK:** No, they're all into heavy metal. Like, really, like, I'm quite on good terms with one of my artists, a guy called Paul Clavé, who's based in his own studio called Memento Mori in Glasgow. Fully recommended. He did my beautiful fern on my chest and a few other things, but anyway, hi, Paul. I think Paul listens.

**DAVID:** Oh, cool. Hello!

**MARK:** So… But like, Paul’s like, doing a very… He was doing a very painful part of, like, my sternum. And the music was just screaming. And I just said, ‘come on!’ I said this is just noise. It's not even music anymore. But I just think…

**DAVID:** Oh, look who's getting middle aged.

**MARK:** But I just think it's like that alternative, like, heavily tattooed, heavily pierced thing, it tends to attract you to that kind of music. But the last time I went, actually, he did put on some nicer music and he says, ‘well, you always complain.’ I was like, ‘thank you.’ But I've been to a lot of different tattoo parlours and they are always playing hot heavy metal stuff. So… But anyway, but yeah, other than that, obviously, the rest of the music that you hear is, of course, Nico Vettese. And we had a great time in this one because Niko and I have got this really good way of working together now where we're finding that we don't need to go through the process that often, we can kind of… Niko can get my intention from my instruction and and I know Niko’s just really good at kind of, like, it's a bit like a tattoo artist when you go and you go, ‘yeah, I want a peacock.’ And they go, ‘ah, but what about a peacock with a magnifying glass?’ You’re like, ‘brilliant.’ You know? You let an expert at that thing and they're gonna make it better and Nico does that. And I just said I wanted the music to sound like you were being pursued. Like a heartbeat or breathing, much like the ghost of Fraser Bomgard in this story. ‘Cause this, the whole scary bit of this is I just saw how brilliant would it be if you could hear the breathing get closer and closer.

**DAVID:** That worked very well.

**MARK:** Thank you. Did the breathing sound familiar?

**DAVID:** I was going to say, but I've not had much experience with you breathing heavily in my ear.

**MARK:** [SOFTLY.] Yet.

**DAVID:** But I kinda… yes, yet. I kinda thought, ‘I think that has a slight Geordie accent in there.’

**MARK:** What, you can hear a Geordie accent in the breathing?

**DAVID:** Slightly comedy Geordie accent in there.

**MARK:** [BREATHY, ECHOING, AND YES, WITH A GEORDIE ACCENT.] Why, aye, why aye.

**DAVID:** [SAME.] Ha-Way! Ha-Way!

**MARK:** That’s horrible. I nearly asked you to do it, but I just thought I don't know how exactly I want it to be, and I learned that if you breathe into a mic, it sounds terrible. So like, if you kinda do it from the side, it…

**DAVID:** Exactly, yes.

**MARK:** It sounds a bit better. But, yeah, anyway, so.. And then, like, when I put this episode together, I thought there's actually not a lot of opportunities for music, and I didn't wanna open on music. I wanted to open up on Laurens saying, ‘where should we begin?’ And I really wanted the episode to last about an hour, which would be like your typical length of a therapist’s appointment. So… But, no. But like I said, Niko, it was, like, one and done. Like, he sent me his demo it was terrific. So, I… hopefully when we eventually, if we eventually release the soundtrack to the season, you'll get to hear that separately. But and I was also really concerned with the fight scene ‘cause I thought I really want people hear how horny this scene is. And get a sense of what's going on and still hear the music and it just sounds phenomenal, so…

**DAVID:** It really does, yeah. And talking of Laurens, how did you get multi-award winning *Doctor Who* star, Karim Kronfli?

**MARK:** Yes. ‘Cause Karim was in *Doctor Who Redacted* and therefore part of the *Doctor Who* universe.

**DAVID:** Shakes fist.

**MARK:** It kind of frustrates me that Karim is known for… I haven't listened to *The Magnus Archives*. I'm sorry, I haven't. And like, I'm a busy man. And I had started listening to a Scottish podcast. When I put out a tweet saying, I wanna... I said, I wanna work with more non-white actors, and Karim was one of them who came forward. And I cast him as Basil and and we talked about that in “Dorian.” And I thought, ‘oh, he'll be great for this therapist character I've got.’ And then I've kind of learned that Karim’s known for playing villains. And I really hope, like, no one saw the twist coming because of that.

**DAVID:** He is an amazing actor, and it is always a joy to work with him. The first time I came across him I was playing Eli in *Otherworldlies*. I think I've probably talked about this before, so I won't go on. On with it, but it's…

**MARK:** That's the problem with our third season, we have to try and remember what we've talked about.

**DAVID:** Exactly. Yes. Yes.

**MARK:** Do you know, I was going to my hard drive the other day and I accidentally found your original recording of the goblin from “Number 13.”

**DAVID:** Oh, dear.

[SFX: MARK MAKES HIGH PITCHED, NASAL GIBBERISH NOISES.]

**MARK:** It sound like a Pokémon actually. [MORE OF THE NOISES.] And I found David the legendary carrot museum that loyal listeners will remember was the attempted walla that you recorded that didn't work out. It's now on the Patreon, David.

**DAVID:** Oh, is it?

**MARK:** You talking about carrots.

**DAVID:** Oh, good.

**MARK:** Yeah, talking about carrots for about, like, four minutes.

**DAVID:** Has anyone commented at all?

**MARK:** People were very impressed with it, actually.

**DAVID:** Oh, right? Okay. Good.

**MARK:** I think your ad-lib skills are very impressive.

**DAVID:** Well, good. So as one door closes, another one opens, as you would say in a utopian ideal.

**MARK:** And there are shadows at all those doors, David.

**DAVID:** Absolutely. So, what…

**MARK:** You see this door? [SLAPS THE DOOR.] You can fit a lot of shadows around that?

**DAVID:** What sort of stories do we have coming up? In our near future.

**MARK:** Spooky stories, David. Very spooky.

**DAVID:** Spooky stories? Do you want to tease our listeners with anything more than that?

**MARK:** Yeah, I'm all up for a good tease.

**DAVID:** I know.

**MARK:** Yeah. So there's a lot going on this season, David. We are adapting some stories and I'm very excited to show people. Some phenomenal writers coming… Like, Gemma is coming back. Which, yeah, I'm always surprised by, but pleased. Laurel Hightower, we will get into why Laurel has become part of the show towards the end of the season. But Laura a phenomenal writer and her story is just great. Jamie Flanagan… [DRAMATIC GASP FROM DAVID.]

**DAVID:** *The* Jamie Flanagan!

**MARK:** And, like, so many cast members! Like, we went from one to, like, five, to too many in season three. The kind of quality that you've heard in this story, you're gonna be hearing for the rest of the season and we're so privileged to work with the people that we do.

**DAVID:** Absolutely.

**MARK:** And of course, if people want a very deep, deep dive in this episode, where I talk about everything, that will be part of my episode deep dive on my Patreon, which is a fantastic way to support the show. You also get access, as we've discussed before, with the ad-free version of the feed and lots of other things like sneak peeks. All of, like, the guest announcements of the season, people on patreon knew months beforehand. And I gave them little tidbits of sneaky scenes. For example, patrons got to hear your first scene with Sacha on the patreon months ago. We are a growing show and anything, you know, joking aside anything that you do to help is massively appreciated, particularly with our commitment to full episodes for free. We are intending to put a lot of specials like we always do, and we'll continue to put special stuff on the Patreon. But anything you can do to help is just massively appreciated. Thank you.

[[*MUSIC: GENTLE GUITAR NOTES PLAY THE SHADOWS AT THE DOOR THEME BEHIND THE DISCUSSION.*]]

**DAVID:** Yeah even just keep leaving it on as you go out and do whatever, just leave on your speakers, let it play. We want that sweet, sweet advertising money. So just go for it.

**MARK:** I'm sure it will be sweet.

**DAVID:** Long plays.

**MARK:** But yeah. Like, yeah. Like, if you get the Patreon feed listen to it and then listen to it again on the ad-free feed, you know.

**DAVID:** Hooray! On the ad-based feed…

**MARK:** On the ad-based feed. Thank you, David. Sorry, yes.

**DAVID:** Ad-full. Yes.

**MARK:** Well, like I say, so this is–that's it, now, guys! We're on Season three, bloody hell.

**DAVID:** Yeah, absolutely!

**MARK:** Coming at you. And keep your ears on the feed because we might even be dropping some bonus stuff.

**DAVID:** Bonus stuff!

**MARK:** Along the way.

**DAVID:** Well, thank you very much, listeners. Thank you for joining us once again and we hope that you are looking forward to everything that we have to offer you in season three and we will look forward to seeing you very soon.

**DAVID:** You've been listening to a Shadows at the Door production. Geoffrey Troughton was played by David Ault, Arthur Laurens was played by Karim Kronfli. Rajit Mohinder was played by Sacha Dhawan. Lydia Harris was played by Becky Lindsay. Amy Tuckwood was played by Hayley Mitchell. Hannah Shoulder was played by Louise Grayford. Liam Squires was played by David Fairs. Svetlana Tikhonova was played by Erebus Odora. Tara Best was played by Michelle Kelly, and Fraser Bombgard and the preacher were played by Mark Nixon. “Where Queer Things Him Befell” was written by Mark Nixon, produced with sound design, editing and direction by Mark Nixon. The original score was written and performed by Nico Vettese. Copyright held by Shadows at the Door Productions. Join us next month for another pleasing terror.

**MARK:** David, can you stop pushing an AI agenda on the show, please? You're freaking me out!

**DAVID:** [IN A ROBOTIC TONE.] Of course, no one is coming for your job. Thank you, Mark. Everything is fine.

**MARK:** [DRAMATIC SIGH.]

CAST

Professor Geoffrey Troughton David Ault

*(He/Him) Early 40s. Now reluctantly in therapy to prove a point to both his former employer and his friend (thanks, Tasha). Geoffrey is still recovering from the events at Catchlove Hall and is enjoying a newfound sense of clarity and purpose. He’s not sure how many more therapy sessions he’ll sit through, but he should at least finish telling the therapist his history…*

Arthur Laurens Karim Kronfli

*(He/Him) Late 40s/Early 50s. Southern accent. A true therapist; warm, friendly, but challenging. He’s used to handling reluctant patients and Troughton is no different.*

Rajit Mohinder Sacha Dhawan

*(He/Him) Late 30s. Manchester accent. A Religious History lecturer at Newcastle University and co-founder of The Newcastle Centre for Russian Studies. Often appearing calm and polite, if a little patronising. Dr. Mohinder carries a thinly veiled disdain for Troughton and his faux celebrity.*

Lydia Harris Becky Lindsay

*(She/Her) Late 20s. Geordie accent. A Master’s student at Newcastle University. Recently lost her housemate owing to supernatural means. Has spent weeks frustrated at this not being taken seriously, which has only ignited her already passionate disposition. Some would incorrectly call her aggressive; she would say she’s simply a pushover.*

Amy Tuckwood Hayley Mitchell

*(She/Her) Late 20s. Northeastern accent. A Master’s student at Newcastle University. Recently lost her housemate owing to supernatural means. Has spent weeks frustrated at this not being taken seriously, which has driven her into a depression. Her strength lies in her compassionate nature.*

Hannah Shoulder Louise Grayford

*(She/Her) Late 30s. Geordie accent. Anthropology lecturer at Newcastle University who has lived in Newcastle all her life. She speaks confidently owing to her profession and expertise, though unsurprisingly has often faced discrimination within academia for her working class roots.*

Liam Squires David Fairs

*(He/Him) Mid 30s. Geordie accent. A local tattoo artist. Much friendlier than he appears. Hates Tories and can spot one a mile away, or so he thinks.*

Svetlana Tikhonova Erebus Odora

*(She/Her) Early 30s. Russian accent. A foreign student at Newcastle completing her second Master’s. England still feels very foreign to her and she keeps relatively private despite her peers regularly reaching out to her.*

Tara Best Michelle Kelly

*(She/Her) Mid 20s. Yorkshire accent. A Master’s student at Newcastle University and Crossfit enthusiast. Slightly bossy to her housemates, feels excluded because she is studying a different field.*

Fraser Bomgard Mark Nixon

*A ghost lacking the ability to speak, only able to breathe audibly.*

The Preacher Mark Nixon

*A local preacher who is unfortunately in possession of a megaphone.*

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

1. “Чё за херня?” translates to “what the fuck?” [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Mark is correct - it was broadcast on BBC2 on Christmas 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Mark wishes to note that he has not practised Russian in some months. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Канада [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Mark mispronounced this - it should be “anglichanin,” or англичанин [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Немец [↑](#footnote-ref-6)