**Blessed Be the Man**

**by Mark Nixon**

[[*MUSIC: SHADOWS AT THE DOOR THEME. LOW, SLOW GUITAR INTO SLOW PIANO NOTES WITH SUSTAINED STRINGS IN THE BACKGROUND. DIES OUT AS MARK BEGINS TALKING, THEN GENTLE GUITAR NOTES AND SUSTAINED STRINGS RESUME.*]]

**MARK NIXON:** Welcome to season two of *Shadows at the Door: The Podcast.* If this is your first time joining us, we purvey ghostly tales in the form of audio drama and follow up with spirited debate and discussion. We’re absolutely thrilled to be back, releasing episode one a little early to entertain listeners during a no doubt long weekend indoors.

Episode one features the return of our popular protagonist, Professor Troughton. The good professor first appeared in season one, episode one and again in episode nine. And while you may enjoy this story more if you’ve previously listened to those episodes, it is by no means imperative. The professor finds himself defending the pursuit of paranormal knowledge in a tale written by myself, which I’ve called “Blessed Be the Man.” What’s more, this episode is our first full cast drama and features special guest star Professor Elemental. Join us after the story for more information.

But for now, it brings me great pleasure to once again ask you to gather around the fire, pour yourself some tea, so that we may begin.

[[*MUSIC: DIES OUT.*]]

[Timestamp: 2:10]

[[*MUSIC: BRASH, ELECTRONIC CHORDS.*]]

[SFX: RADIO STATION IDENTIFIER IS THE RADIO HOST SAYING “SUFFOLK TALKS” WITH A LOT OF ECHO OVER A DRIVING BEAT.]]

**RADIO HOST:** And if you’re just joining us, we’re continuing the second half of our debate, *Diligent Discourse*, and I am indeed joined in studio by two learned gentlemen. With me still are Professors Geoffrey Troughton and Sean Hill from the Universities of Warwick and Bristol, respectively, welcome back gentlemen. Now, Professor Troughton, you’ve been somewhat on the fence about the existence of ghosts, going so far in a recent article to say [PAPER RUSTLES.] and I’ll quote you directly here if I may–

**TROUGHTON:** Please.

**RADIO HOST:** [READING FROM THE PAPER] “Perhaps some truths, truths that may be far grander and more incomprehensible than we can possibly imagine, are simply too revolutionary for us to fully accept.”

**TROUGHTON:** Yes.

**RADIO HOST:** So what did you mean by that?

**TROUGHTON:** Well, exactly what it says. The Universe doesn’t owe us condolence or consolation. It does not owe us a nice warm feeling inside. And yet we’re all desperate for exactly that! So much so that when evidence appears to the contrary of our terrestrial understanding, we’re too quick to disregard it rather than analyse it and consider the ramifications. [FINDS HIS POINT.] To simply consider that we may not have known everything.

**RADIO HOST:** Professor Hill, I see you’re shaking your head there.

**HILL:** [ALMOST DISMISSIVE.] Yeah, I’ve heard these sorts of arguments before. The problem that we have here—what we so often have—is that so-called ‘evidence’ in question is usually simply delusional or anecdotal in nature.

**RADIO HOST:** Right—

**TROUGHTON:** [INTERRUPTING, BUT CALM.] But a delusion, by definition, is something that people believe in *despite* a total lack of evidence, and what I’ve put forward is that simply perhaps we should reconsider what we have previously disregarded.

**HILL:** Which brings me back to my point. Look, I’m not calling anyone a liar. We all suffer from false memories. We have what appear to be memories quite clearly in our heads for things that didn’t even actually happen. [BEGINS TO RAMBLE.] I-it’s one of the areas of research that we’re really interested in at Bristol actually and—

**TROUGHTON:** [INTERRUPTING.] I’m well aware of false memories, Professor.

**HILL:** [CLEARS THROAT AND STUTTERS.] Ye-yeah, I-I’m sure you are. But perhaps your objectivity has been clouded by [LOOKS FOR THE WORD.] faith?

**TROUGHTON:** [SLIGHTLY ANNOYED.] No, I’m not talking about faith and I think you know that, Professor. Faith is an excuse to evade the need to think, to evaluate evidence. Which is the opposite of what I’m suggesting.

**HILL:** [POLITELY ON THE ATTACK.] So what exactly *are* you suggesting, Professor? How do we separate highly convincing hallucinations from alleged real life events without explanation?

**RADIO HOST:** [AFTER A LONG PAUSE.] Professor Troughton?

**TROUGHTON:** [FLATLY.] I feel I’m being cornered on what was initially a thought exercise…

**HILL:** [QUICK RETORT.] A thought exercise *you* published in *New Scientist*…

**TROUGHTON:** [QUIETLY.] I’ll point out there were favourable responses to that. [BACK TO NORMAL.] But if you were to pin me down on this, I’d suggest a psychological evaluation of the individual or individuals reporting the sighting followed by an Occam’s Razor approach to eliminating all other explanations. Then and only then do I feel we could begin to explore the possibility of the supernatural. [BACKS AWAY FROM HIS OWN POINT.] But better minds than mine would need to advise on those steps; my field is history, after all.

**HILL:** [EARNEST.] Ok so, psychological evaluation: now we’re in my field. Why is it you think most—oh, I don’t know—alien abductions are reported by working class, lonely people in low income, middle America with typically low education?

**TROUGHTON:** Oh, that’s one hell of a generalisation—

**HILL:** [DEFENSIVE] I’m just talking about statistics, Professor.

**TROUGHTON:** Besides, I’m not talking about aliens.

**HILL:** Quite right, you’re talking about ghosts.

**TROUGHTON:** [SIGHS.] By using these words you’re seeking to undermine my argument by making it appear outlandish. Perhaps you’re going to quiz me next on the Loch Ness Monster? Or the Jersey Devil? At this point I’d like to point out that I’m not arguing for the existence of the supernatural per say, I’m simply advocating receptiveness, much like Jung before me.

**HILL:** Fair enough. I’ll return to my previous point, which was that most sightings of the supernatural or the unexplained are usually by those less balanced—

**RADIO HOST:** [INTERRUPTING] Oh, ouch.

**HILL:** [TRYING TO IGNORE THE HOST, WITH SOME ANNOYANCE.] Or-o-or those, uh, under a great deal of stress. [HESITATING, THEN CONTINUING DELICATELY.] And, Professor with the greatest respect, I understand that these new opinions of yours came soon after you suffered both a physical assault and the loss of a friend and colleague within the same year.

**RADIO HOST:** [AWKWARDLY AFTER AN UNCOMFORTABLE SILENCE.] Anything to retort, Professor Troughton?

**TROUGHTON:** Yes, thank you for bringing that up.

**HILL:** [WITH REGRET.] Well look, I-I’m sorry but it is relevant. I dare say I might have similar experiences after going through the same. Most of us have had experiences which have verged on hallucinations, even.

**TROUGHTON:** [UNCOMFORTABLE.] You’re quite right. I’ve long considered my experiences and I wouldn’t be so frequently risking my reputation had I not carefully considered all the factors. [PAUSE.] I understand the mind’s ability to deceive, I really do. However, if something is true, no amount of wishful thinking will change it. And that’s where I find myself: faced with an inconvenient truth, looking for answers like any good scholar.

**RADIO HOST:** What do you say to that, Professor Hill? Looks like all Professor Troughton is asking us is to keep an open mind.

**HILL:** [LAUGHING.] Well, I’m all for keeping an open mind, but I don’t want to keep it so open that my brain drops out!

**TROUGHTON:** [DRYLY.] Charming.

**HILL:** Let me put things another way. Professor, you lecture History, yes?

**TROUGHTON:** Specialising in the Tudor period, yes.

**HILL:** But in your wider studies, how many religions have you seen come and go? How many gods disproven, witches falsely accused?

**TROUGHTON:** And yet amongst all that, the sighting of spirits has prevailed. Almost all cultures report sightings or belief in ghosts. It’s even spiked in certain periods and yes, there are many rational explanations but among all the falsehoods and fakes could be genuine sightings. [SIGH.] I don’t know what else to tell you, Professor. I wish I had better answers for you besides anecdotal evidence or ‘what if’ scenarios. [AMUSED NOISE.] I’m probably not as entertaining a guest as the show had hoped.

**RADIO HOST:** [WITH A LAUGH.] Nonsense! Although listeners will be pleased to hear we have an actual medium coming onto the show next Thursday to channel a spirit right here, live, in the studio!

**TROUGHTON:** What?

**HILL:** [UNDER BREATH.] Good grief.

[[*MUSIC: UPBEAT JAZZY MUSIC COMES IN BEHIND THE RADIO HOST.*]]

**RADIO HOST:** [IGNORING THEM.] That’s it for today, guys. My thanks to Professors Troughton and Hill for joining me on *DILIGENT DISCOURSE*!

**TROUGHTON:** [AWKWARDLY.] Um, thank you.

**RADIO HOST:** Thanks again guys, real pleasure. Here’s our runner. He’ll show you where to go.

[SFX: CHAIRS ROLL AS TROUGHTON AND HILL STAND AND A DOOR OPENS.]

**TROUGHTON:** Ok.

**RADIO FLOOR RUNNER:** This way, please!

**HILL:** After you!

[SFX: THEY BEGIN WALKING AWAY.]

**RADIO HOST:** [MUFFLED.] Right, thanks!

[SFX: THE DOOR CLOSES AND THE MUSIC BECOMES MUFFLED. EVERYONE’S VOICES ECHO OVER THE BUZZ OF ELECTRIC LIGHTS.]

**RADIO FLOOR RUNNER:** Just around the corner here.

**HILL:** [SIGHS AFTER A PAUSE.] First radio show was it?

**TROUGHTON:** On this topic, yes. Otherwise no.

**HILL:** Well, it was certainly interesting.

**TROUGHTON:** Hm, quite.

**RADIO FLOOR RUNNER:** Right here we are. Thanks again. Exit is just here, the way you came in. Oh, and there’s a member of the public waiting to see you, Professor Troughton.

**TROUGHTON:** Me?

**RADIO FLOOR RUNNER:** [HUMS IN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.] Think they have something to sign, they’ve been quite persistent.

**TROUGHTON:** Ok, thank you.

**HILL:** [SWALLOWING SOME PRIDE AND SPEAKING LESS FORCEFULLY.] Thank you. Look… I apologise if I overstepped the mark in there. I didn’t mean to bring that unpleasantness up. You know how can debates can be…

**TROUGHTON:** Well, yes—

**HILL:** Then it’s settled, excellent!

[SFX: THEY SHAKE HANDS.]

**HILL:** Ah ha! Firm handshake! Right then, I’m off—Ah, four thirty, I mean that’s technically evening, is it not? Perhaps a glass of wine! [BEGINS TO WALK AWAY.] Best of luck, Professor!

**TROUGHTON:** [WANTING THIS TO BE OVER.] And same to you, safe travels.

**HILL:** [FROM FURTHER DOWN THE CORRIDOR, ATTEMPTING TO CHARM PARKINS.] Good evening, madam.

**PARKINS:** [WITH A POLITE BUT FAKE CHUCKLE.] Good evening.

**HILL:** [NAILED IT!] Indeed, indeed…

[SFX: HILL’S FOOTSTEPS CONTINUE AWAY, ENDING WITH A CLOSED DOOR AS HE LEAVES.]

**RADIO FLOOR RUNNER:** Thanks for waiting, miss. Right, I’ll leave you to it. Hope to have you back another time, Professor.

[SFX: THE RUNNER LEAVES IN A HURRY.]

**TROUGHTON:** [UNDER HIS BREATH.] That’ll be the day.

[SFX: DR. ROSLYN PARKINS APPROACHES, FOOTSTEPS ECHOING. FROM DOWN THE HALL, A PHONE RINGS.]

**PARKINS:** Professor Troughton?

**TROUGHTON:** Ah, hello.

**PARKINS:** I was hoping you’d sign my book?

**TROUGHTON:** [PLEASANTLY SURPRISED.] Oh, it’d be my pleasure. [HE OPENS THE BOOK AND READS THE TITLE.] ’Roses by Other Names’, this takes me back. I hope you haven’t put yourself out in coming down, I was in the local Waterstones a few months ago

**PARKINS:** Oh, no, not at all! Um, I was just listening to the show out there, actually. I thought he was rather harsh…

**TROUGHTON:** Oh, I’m quite used to that by now. So, who am I signing this to?

**PARKINS:** [COMPLETELY SERIOUS.] Underscore Spooky Doc.

**TROUGHTON:** [AFTER A LONG PAUSE TO REDIRECT HIS BRAIN.] Hm? [SEARCHING FOR CONTEXT.] Underscore Spoo—Oh! [PARKINS LAUGHS.] Doctor Parkins! [LAUGHING.] From Twitter! How sly!

**PARKINS:** [HAPPY SIGH.] I couldn’t help myself!

**TROUGHTON:** But I thought we were meeting tomorrow?

**PARKINS:** But please, do sign the book. Honestly, I love your work. The Tudor period has never been so entertaining.

[SFX: TROUGHTON SIGNS THE BOOK.]

**TROUGHTON:** And…done.

[SFX: HE CLOSES THE BOOK AND HANDS IT BACK.]

**PARKINS:** Thank you very much.

**TROUGHTON:** So why are you here? I had us down for ten in the morning.

**PARKINS:** Well, I thought you’d like to see the site before we get into the nitty gritty tomorrow.

**TROUGHTON:** It’ll be dark before long, do you think there’ll be much benefit?

**PARKINS:** There’s something to be said for atmosphere, and I don’t think you’ll get the alone time once you’re surrounded by the other academics.

**TROUGHTON:** Quite right. Should we depart now?

**PARKINS:** Yeah, did you drive?

**TROUGHTON:** No, Uber.

[SFX: THEY START WALKING DOWN THE CORRIDOR.]

**PARKINS:** Great, I can save you the fare.

[SFX: THE CORRIDOR SOUNDS FADE OUT AND THE SOUNDS OF PARKINS’ CAR FADE IN. A SIREN PASSES THEM.]

**TROUGHTON:** So I wasn’t really expecting to see the site before I had opportunity to review your notes in full. We’re looking at early 18th century, aren’t we?

**PARKINS:** Very early. Uh, 1701, it looks like.

**TROUGHTON:** Precise.

**PARKINS:** Well, I’ve been able to ascertain a lot from the Parish records. The remains found are almost certainly those of one Martha Good.

**TROUGHTON:** Oh?

**PARKINS:** It seems Martha and her husband, uh, moved to the area from Manchester — they lived just near here, just by an old oak tree.

**TROUGHTON:** An oak tree? That detail’s in the records?

**PARKINS:** Well, that’s just it. Just as they arrived, it was noticed that a pine tree had started to grow from the trunk of the oak, Um, a tree within a tree effectively.

**TROUGHTON:** [IMPRESSED.] Hm…

**PARKINS:** Well, if that tickles your interest, you can imagine what the locals were like.

**TROUGHTON:** Strangers come to town and a strange new tree grows?

[SFX: A LOUD VEHICLE PASSES THEM.]

**PARKINS:** And all during a bad season for farming. [DRAWING IT OUT.] They. Lost. Their. Shit.

**TROUGHTON:** …Oh dear.

**PARKINS:** Exactly. And back then there was a belief that witches could turn into elder trees–never mind that this was a pine tree! It’s so stupid… Anyway, the records describe a neighbour who tried to fell the tree to no avail, but as he cut into a branch, it bled.

**TROUGHTON:** Of course it did.

**PARKINS:** Tell me about it. So, because Martha was allegedly seen the next day with a bandaged arm, it was all enough to have the poor woman executed for witchcraft.

**TROUGHTON:** [AFTER A PAUSE, IN WHICH A HONKING HORN IS HEARD.] Poor woman.

**PARKINS:** Oh, she was one of scores of women put to death around here at the time.

[SFX: PARKINS USES THE BLINKERP/,. A LOUD MOTOR PASSES THEM.]

**TROUGHTON:** Hardly surprising. Why have justice when you have superstitious conjecture?

**PARKINS:** Exactly. So the official line is that you’re here to help us identify burial rituals and the like.

**TROUGHTON:** Burial rituals? I thought her remains were found at the roots of a tree?

**PARKINS:** *The* tree, yes.

**TROUGHTON:** They buried her under the Oak-Pine Tree?

**PARKINS:** I suppose they found it fitting somehow. Twisted logic, really. Have you come across anything like this in your findings?

**TROUGHTON:** Tree burials? Not to my knowledge, though this isn’t the sort of insight of mine you’re after now, is it?

**PARKINS:** No, but that’s no secret. Your reputation precedes you, Professor. Some of the students have figured out why you’ve taken interest.

**TROUGHTON:** But you invited me.

**PARKINS:** An invitation that didn’t avoid scrutiny, I’m sorry to say. There were more local experts I could have asked, some within the university even. But my department, my rules. Besides, [SOMBRE.] you were the natural choice to ask after—well, after it all went down.

**TROUGHTON:** [ALSO SOMBRE.] Yes… Have you seen or heard anything since?

**PARKINS:** [PAUSES.] No. Not for a while.

**TROUGHTON:** And you think I will?

**PARKINS:** I’ll be entirely honest. I don’t want you to see anything.

**TROUGHTON:** But that’s not what you said online.

[SFX: PARKINS TURNS HER BLINKER ON FOR A MOMENT.]

**PARKINS:** We’re here…

[SFX: THE CAR SLOWS AND PARKS. PARKINS TAKES A DEEP BREATH AND APPLIES THE HANDBRAKE.]

**TROUGHTON:** Well?

**PARKINS:** [SIGH.] I want you to disprove it.

**TROUGHTON:** But you know as well as I—

**PARKINS:** [INTERRUPTING.] I know, I know. But… If there is anything close to an expert, it’s you. It’s hard to argue against what you’ve seen, even if you are arguing against yourself on the radio.

**TROUGHTON:** I’m still not entirely sure myself. I just know I’m unsatisfied by my current level of understanding.

**PARKINS:** Well, I believe in you, I mean. [SMALL LAUGH.] Christ, if it were me I’d be screaming that ghosts were real from the rooftops.

**TROUGHTON:** [DEADPAN.] I’m sure the university would enjoy that.

**PARKINS:** [WITH A HUMOURLESS LAUGH.] Oh, you have no idea. That’s why we’re here now, really, off the record.

**TROUGHTON:** You know, it can be very dangerous for me to be off the record on this topic.

**PARKINS:** I didn’t drag you to Suffolk for trepidation, Professor.

**TROUGHTON:** Geoffrey, please.

**PARKINS:** [AMUSED.] Oh, oh, ok! Then you get to call me Roslyn.

**TROUGHTON:** Roslyn it is.

[SFX: THEY UNFASTEN THEIR SEATBELTS WHICH RETRACT WITH A WHIRR. THEY LEAVE THE CAR, INTO A SOUNDSCAPE OF WIND IN THE TREES AND SINGING BIRDS.]

**PARKINS:** This is it.

**TROUGHTON:** So this is the churchyard…

**PARKINS:** This is it.

[SFX: TROUGHTON STEPS ON A FEW CRUNCHY LEAVES.]

[[*MUSIC: GENTLE GUITAR NOTES. GRADUALLY SUSTAINED STRINGS CAN BE HEARD UNDER THEM.*]]

**TROUGHTON:** It’s truly autumn now, isn’t it?

**PARKINS:** Mm-hm. And it’ll be dark before you know it.

**TROUGHTON:** Right, then. Let’s take a look.

[SFX: THEY BEGIN TO WALK OVER THE LEAVES. A CAR PASSES IN THE BACKGROUND.]

**TROUGHTON:** You know, for all my apprehension, this is almost exciting.

**PARKINS:** Yeah?

**TROUGHTON:** Well, here we are, two academics pushing the limits of our understanding. Pioneers, as it were.

**PARKINS:** [WITH A LAUGH.] Yeah. That’s a very grand way to describe two fools ghost hunting in a graveyard.

**TROUGHTON:** [SUPPRESSING A LAUGH.] Very good.

[SFX: THEY WALK IN SILENCE FOR A BIT LONGER.]

**TROUGHTON:** [SLIGHT GASP.] Oh… This is the tree?

**PARKINS:** Strangely beautiful, isn’t it?

**TROUGHTON:** That’s an understatement. I’ve never seen anything like it! The oak must be at least 15 metres on its own and-and the pine must be what, another twelve?

**PARKINS:** Your guess is as good as mine.

[SFX: TROUGHTON WALKS CLOSER.]

**TROUGHTON:** [FASCINATED.] A tree within a tree… I-I can’t believe it’s still here. [WITH DISAPPOINTMENT.] Oh, oh, and here we have the excavations.

[SFX: TROUGHTON GRUNTS AS HE SQUATS, SHIFTING SOME SOIL WITH HIS HAND.]

**TROUGHTON:** And, uh, the remains were here? Within the roots?

**PARKINS:** [UNCOMFORTABLE.] It was like the roots had wrapped around them. Uh, trapped them, even.

**TROUGHTON:** Mm-hm.

**PARKINS:** They were quite difficult to remove without damage.

[SFX: TROUGHTON CONSIDERS THIS AND STANDS WITH A SMALL SOUND OF EXERTION.]

**TROUGHTON:** The night of your sighting–this was after the bones were moved?

**PARKINS:** The next evening.

**TROUGHTON:** [UNDER HIS BREATH.] ‘Cursed be he who moves my bones…’

**PARKINS:** Sorry?

**TROUGHTON:** Beg your pardon, uh, Shakespeare’s grave: ‘Blessed be the man that spares these stones, and cursed be he that moves my bones…’

**PARKINS:** [LESS CONFIDENT THAN USUAL] But why would she want to stay in an unmarked grave, under a tree?

**TROUGHTON:** If I may speculate openly?

**PARKINS:** Please.

[SFX: TROUGHTON SHIFTS HIS FEET.]

**TROUGHTON:** I dare say you’re looking for logic where there isn’t any. Or rather, if there is an intelligence at work, you’re looking for benevolence when there could only be malevolence.

**PARKINS:** I’m not sure I follow.

**TROUGHTON:** Perhaps after the initial great injustice was committed, there was simply anger. Anger seeking to lash out. [ALMOST TO HIMSELF.] And now the remains have been disturbed…. [BACK TO HIS NORMAL TONE.] But we’re jumping ahead. It’s-it’s getting dark; I expect you want us to stay and keep watch, as it were?

**PARKINS:** [WITH A DEEP BREATH.] Yeah.

**TROUGHTON:** And I trust you brought a flask?

**PARKINS:** Ah, um, no. But there’s a Costa Coffee not far from here. Wa-want me to nip in the car and-and get us something?

**TROUGHTON:** That would be lovely.

**PARKINS:** Uh, tea?

**TROUGHTON:** [PLAYFUL] Um, no, uh, hot chocolate.

**PARKINS:** Mm-hm. Daring! W-will you be ok on your own?

**TROUGHTON:** Of course, see you soon.

[SFX: PARKINS BEGINS TO WALK TOWARD THE CAR.]

**PARKINS:** [FROM A DISTANCE.] Won’t be long!

[SFX: PARKINS’ FOOTSTEPS SLOWLY FADE. THE BREEZE AND BIRD CALLS CONTINUE IN THE BACKGROUND.]

**TROUGHTON:** Hm…

[SFX: THE PREVIOUS BACKGROUND SOUND FADES OUT. NIGHT SOUNDS FADE BACK IN: AN OWL HOOTS INTERMITTENTLY. TROUGHTON SHIVERS.]

[[*MUSIC: LOW, PULSING NOTES FROM A RHODES PIANO. GRADUALLY, HIGHER NOTES BEGIN TO JOIN IN.*]]

**TROUGHTON:** You know, there comes a point when a man realises he is simply stood in the dark waiting for something that in all likelihood may not occur.

**PARKINS:** How’s your hot chocolate?

**TROUGHTON:** [HE SIPS.] It’s hot. [INHALE.] And chocolatey.

**PARKINS:** Mm, I think the chocolate has congealed in the bottom of mine…

**TROUGHTON:** So… Shall we discuss your sighting?

**PARKINS:** I’d rather not.

[SFX: A FOX BARKS AND PARKINS REACTS WITH SHOCK.]

**TROUGHTON:** It’s just a fox.

**PARKINS:** I know that. I’m just on edge, that’s all.

[SFX: THE FOX CONTINUES BARKING.]

**PARKINS:** See? I’m ok.

**TROUGHTON:** It’s fine. You should have seen some of the states I’ve been in this year.

**PARKINS:** That bad?

**TROUGHTON:** I still struggle, as a matter of fact.

**PARKINS:** I’m sorry.

**TROUGHTON:** Thank you. The university covers my therapy, actually. Though I do feel intensely patronised at times. [AFTER A PAUSE.] Well, uh, let’s move on, shall we? [AFTER ANOTHER PAUSE.] So, your sighting… Let’s-let’s treat this as exposure therapy, shall we?

**PARKINS:** [RESIGNED.] Well, [THINKS FOR A MOMENT.] I didn’t see anything, as such. I… I heard something.

**TROUGHTON:** What did you hear?

**PARKINS:** [QUIETER, DISTRESSED.] I heard the trees. I heard the branches bend and creak, like they were about to snap. But… there was no wind. I know how this sounds, but it was like they were alive. The whole area came alive and-and seemed to-to bear down on me.

**TROUGHTON:** This was after the rest of the team had gone home?

**PARKINS:** That’s right. After the discovery, we set up, removed the bones, and I was last on the scene. And that’s when everything came alive. This is why I was vague online, i-it’s so bloody hard to describe. There was no ghost as such, no singular presence. Just the trees, watching. And then they started to re-reach—

[SFX: TREES BEGIN TO RUSTLE.]

**PARKINS:** [ANGRY AND SCARED] Okay, what is that?

**TROUGHTON:** Likely the fox or a cat, Roslyn. There are reasonable explanations, you know this.

**PARKINS:** You’re right. [FRUSTRATED.] Arg! I’m sorry!

**TROUGHTON:** Oh, don’t be! Please. Fear is good, fear keeps us alert. You heard on the radio earlier, we have to remove the obvious before we look at any other explanations. Process of elimination. I’m ready to believe as much as you do but all I hear right now is the natural sounds of the environment.

**PARKINS:** Ok. I mean… Do you feel watched right now?

**TROUGHTON:** [AFTER A MOMENT.] Do you?

**PARKINS:** Yes. Ever since the first moment. Especially now, near these fucking trees. I wouldn’t even be here if you weren’t with me. You don’t feel it?

**TROUGHTON:** I haven’t stopped feeling watched in some time… And I’m trying ever so hard not to let my imagination get the better of me right now. Let’s continue, because we both know you won’t be able to speak this freely in front of your peers tomorrow.

**PARKINS:** [BRAVELY.] Ok.

**TROUGHTON:** So, you said this presence followed you? Something physical?

**PARKINS:** In a-in a manner of speaking. There’s a tree by my house. For the last few nights—calm nights I hasten to add—it’s been knocking on my bedroom window. And no, it doesn’t usually do this. It’s too far from the window!

**TROUGHTON:** This is literally the first time it’s done this?

**PARKINS:** Yes.

[SFX: RUSTLING BEGINS IN THE BACKGROUND, ALMOST LIKE FOOTSTEPS.]

**PARKINS:** Tell me you heard that.

**TROUGHTON:** I did.

**PARKINS:** [SOFTLY.] Then going by your logic, I’d say somebody is with us.

[SFX: MORE ‘FOOTSTEPS.’]

**TROUGHTON:** So it would seem. [LOUDER.] Hello?

[SFX: THE TREE CREAKS.]

**TROUGHTON:** [CALLING OUT AGAIN.] Hello?

[SFX: JUST BIRD CALLS.]

**PARKINS:** Um… Kids out for a drink, maybe?

**TROUGHTON:** Something like that…

**TROUGHTON:** [LOUDER.] Is someone there?

[SFX: THE TREES CREAK IN THE BREEZE.]

**TROUGHTON:** Let me use the torch function on my phone…

[SFX: HE FUMBLES, FINDING HIS PHONE AND UNLOCKING IT.]

**TROUGHTON:** Ah, there we are. It’s bright enough…

[SFX: HE SCANS THE TREES FOR A MOMENT. HIS FOOTSTEPS CAN BE HEARD OVER THE CALLING BIRDS.]

**PARKINS:** Keep scanning.

[SFX: SLIGHT CREAKING CONTINUES FOR SEVERAL SECONDS FOLLOWED BY A SUDDEN, LOUD RUSTLE.]

**PARKINS:** Shit!

**TROUGHTON:** What?

**PARKINS:** [GASPS.] There!

**TROUGHTON:** I don’t see anything.

**PARKINS:** [MANIC.] I saw something right there! Move your light back! No, no, further left. There!

[SFX: AS THEY LOOK, THEIR FOOTSTEPS CAN BE HEARD IN THE LEAVES.]

**TROUGHTON:** [INCREDULOUS.] I don’t see anything.

**PARKINS:** I know. But there was someone there!

**TROUGHTON:** Man? Woman?

**PARKINS:** I couldn’t tell!

**TROUGHTON:** [CONCERN RISING.] Are you quite sure?

**PARKINS:** [MORE PANICKED.] Yes! [RAPID BREATHS.] No. I-I don’t know! I haven’t slept in days, ok?

**TROUGHTON:** I’m entirely open to the possibility that you just saw someone. Either our imaginations are getting the better of us or, well— If something is here with us then it has a choice: Come out, show itself. Or keep hiding.

[SFX: THE WIND CONTINUES THROUGH THE TREES FOR A FEW SECONDS.]

**TROUGHTON:** [QUIETLY.] Is this how it was when you were first here?

**PARKINS:** More or less.

[SFX: TROUGHTON LOCKS HIS PHONE.]

**TROUGHTON:** [CALLING OUT AGAIN.] Is this what you want? Fear? Because you’re in luck, [HUMOURLESS LAUGH.] we are frightened!

[SFX: RUSTLING AND CREAKING INTENSIFIES.]

**PARKINS:** Troughton…

**TROUGHTON:** If you want somebody to listen, we can listen, we can help! But so far all you’ve succeeded in is scaring us! And what does that accomplish?

**PARKINS:** Troughton!

**TROUGHTON:** [ALMOST A WHISPER.] What?

**PARKINS:** [QUIETLY.] The tree. It’s moved.

**TROUGHTON:** Moved? How exactly?

**PARKINS:** It’s closer!

**TROUGHTON:** Closer?

[SFX: AS PARKINS SPEAKS, BRANCHES BEGIN CLATTERING, VERY CLOSE BY.]

**PARKINS:** The branches, they’re nearly touching you and I swear they were six feet away a second ago.

**TROUGHTON:** [QUIET BUT ALARMED.] Actually, I think you might be right…

**PARKINS:** [WITH A GASP.] Oh, fuck!

[SFX: TROUGHTON GASPS AMID THE CLATTER OF BRANCHES.]

**PARKINS:** We should go.

**TROUGHTON:** [TRYING NOT TO PANIC.] Fine. Yes. Ok!

[SFX: THEY RUN, TREES SWAYING AND SHIFTING AROUND THEM. WOOD CREAKS. PARKINS AND TROUGHTON RUN, PANTING, FOR ABOUT 1O SECONDS BEFORE THEIR FOOTSTEPS CHANGE FROM THE CRUNCHING OF LEAVES TO HARD PAVEMENT FOR ANOTHER FEW SECONDS.]

**TROUGHTON:** [A BIT OUT OF BREATH.] Do you see anything?

**PARKINS:** [ALSO OUT OF BREATH.] No, but there’s the car. Come on!

**TROUGHTON:** Wait…

[SFX: A COUPLE OF CRUNCHING FOOTSTEPS.]

**TROUGHTON:** I’m trying to see if they’re moving. I have to know!

[SFX: PARKINS OPENS THE CAR DOOR.]

**PARKINS:** Get in!

**TROUGHTON:** Just another few seconds…

[SFX: THE CAR STARTS. PARKINS GIVES A COUPLE OF SHORT HONKS FOLLOWED BY A LONGER ONE WHEN TROUGHTON DOESN’T MOVE.]

**TROUGHTON:** Ok!

[SFX: THE SOUND OF THE WIND FADES.]

[SFX: PARKINS AND TROUGHTON ARE IN THE CAR ON THE WAY BACK TO PARKINS’ PLACE. PARKINS TAKES A DEEP BREATH.]

**TROUGHTON:** [AWKWARD.] How are you now?

**PARKINS:** [EXHAUSTED.] I’m tired, Geoffrey.

**TROUGHTON:** I can imagine.

**PARKINS:** [SHORT LAUGH.] I suppose you can. [DEFEATED SIGH.] ] I’m just so fucking tired. Did you see anything, at the end?

**TROUGHTON:** [EARNEST.] I don’t know. The wind had picked up, they were moving for certain but unnaturally? I-I-I couldn’t say. It’s possible we both overreacted. It’s also possible we… We didn’t.

**PARKINS:** [FRUSTRATED.] No further forward… I’ve been on edge like this for days now.

**TROUGHTON:** [FIRMLY.] I think either way, you need some sleep.

**PARKINS:** That, we agree on. I can’t bear to sleep in my own house though. That fucking tree.

**TROUGHTON:** Why don’t you come stay at the hotel with me?

**PARKINS:** [WITH A SHORT LAUGH. SHE’S TRYING TO SOUND SCANDALISED, BUT IS TOO EXHAUSTED TO MANAGE IT.] Ooh, professor!

**TROUGHTON:** [CAUGHT OFF GUARD.] Not—like that. Honestly, I-I-I could get a second room or—

**PARKINS:** That’s kind but no. I couldn’t make you do that.

**TROUGHTON:** Perhaps I should come to yours? Sleep on your couch, perhaps?

**PARKINS:** Tell you what, if you stay in the house until I fall asleep. I’ll reimburse you for the Uber tomorrow. You don’t want to stay on my couch, believe me, and the door’s on a latch so…

**TROUGHTON:** [GENTLER.] Ok, consider it done.

[SFX: PARKINS TURNS ON THE BLINKER AND THEN TURNS.]

[SFX: THERE’S A PAUSE AS THE TWO STRUGGLE FOR CONVERSATION. TROUGHTON CLEARS HIS THROAT.]

**PARKINS:** It’s not far.

**TROUGHTON:** So… [HESITATING.] You saw the tree move, behind me?

**PARKINS:** Well, I saw it was closer after I’d turned away.

**TROUGHTON:** [NEUTRAL.] Ok.

**PARKINS:** [FRUSTRATED.] At one point I thought I saw a few of them m-move, not swaying in the breeze but actually reach out. But I can’t be certain if it was just the Pine-Oak tree or-or a few of them or even all of them! Look, can we not talk about it? Leave it till tomorrow?

[SFX: PARKINS TURNS ON THE BLINKER AGAIN.]

**TROUGHTON:** I understand what it’s like, to be doubted.

**PARKINS:** [WITH A DEEP BREATH.] I know.

**TROUGHTON:** I just have to be sure. To be absolutely, to be completely, utterly sure. Otherwise I’ll be chasing every sighting of [DISGUSTED] orbs at British Heritage sights or having a sit in at, ugh, Borley Rectory for Christ’s sake…

**PARKINS:** [SAD LAUGH.] Professor Troughton: Ghost Hunter

**TROUGHTON:** [LAUGHS] Please… But you heard how Professor Hill spoke to me, Roslyn. I’m only ever going to encounter more of that in my career. Soon Warwick would become too embarrassed and I could find my position untenable. I need a solid sighting that can’t be explained away with an allusion to my mental health.

**PARKINS:** That’s why I reached out…

**TROUGHTON:** I know, I don’t mean to make you feel belittled. If you saw have many invitations I’ve received since I started writing about this, well… [SIGH.] But I came to you. Because I respected your work, your mind, your reputation.

**PARKINS:** And because you were desperate to feature on *Suffolk Talks*.

**TROUGHTON:** [WITH HUMOUR.] Oh, of course!

[SFX: THEY BOTH LAUGH. ANOTHER AWKWARD PAUSE.]

**PARKINS:** Christ. I hope I can sleep tonight

**TROUGHTON:** I hope so.

[SFX: PARKINS TURNS ON THE BLINKER AGAIN. THEN IT AND THE CAR SOUNDS FADE AWAY.]

[SFX: PARKINS TAKES A FEW STEPS TOWARDS A CANDLE AND LIGHTS IT. A CLOCK GENTLY TICKS IN THE BACKGROUND.]

**PARKINS:** I’m treating you, Geoffrey. This candle cost me £14.

**TROUGHTON:** [INCREDULOUS.] £14?

**PARKINS:** Wait until you smell it, though. Give it a second

**TROUGHTON:** [WITH A DEEP BREATH THROUGH HIS NOSE.] Ok, that is rather nice. What is that—bergamot?

**PARKINS:** No. Um… Pomegranate Noir, apparently.

**TROUGHTON:** [CHUCKLING.] Ok.

[SFX: PARKINS WALKS ACROSS THE HARD FLOOR WITH ECHOING FOOTSTEPS.]

**PARKINS:** You sure about staying a while?

**TROUGHTON:** I am. Let myself out once you’re sound asleep. Actually, how will I know? I don’t exactly want to peek.

**PARKINS:** [WITH A SHORT LAUGH.] Believe me, you’ll know.

**TROUGHTON:** [STIFLED CHUCKLE.] Right. [BEAT.] Look, I don’t mean to be rude but you really do look tired, Roslyn.

**PARKINS:** I know. If you don’t mind, I’m going to go up. I suspect I may even have a clearer head in the morning. Who knows? [A FEW MORE FOOTSTEPS.] There’s Netflix on the TV if you fancy it.

**TROUGHTON:** Oh, no thanks, I have some notes to record.

**PARKINS:** Ok. Can I get you another cup of tea or anything?

**TROUGHTON:** [FORCEFULLY.] Roslyn. Please, go to bed.

**PARKINS:** Alright, that’s me told.

[SFX: SHE WALKS TO THE DOOR.]

**PARKINS:** I really appreciate this, Geoffrey. I feel a lot better with you here.

**TROUGHTON:** What dark days we live in. A single woman feeling better for a man she has met on the internet lurking downstairs in the dark.

**PARKINS:** To be fair, I have read both your books.

**TROUGHTON:** [COY.] Ah, well, there we have it. Basically family.

**PARKINS:** [WARM.] Hm… Good night, Geoffrey.

**TROUGHTON:** [ALSO WARM.] Good night.

[SFX: PARKINS CLOSES THE DOOR AND WALKS UPSTAIRS. WE HEAR HER FOOTSTEPS WHILE TROUGHTON CONTINUES.]

[[*MUSIC: GENTLE, ISOLATED RHODES PIANO NOTES SOUND IN THE BACKGROUND.*]]

**TROUGHTON:** Right then…

[SFX: TROUGHTON SHIFTS AND UNLOCKS HIS PHONE. TAPS ARE HEARD AS HE TYPES SOMETHING INTO IT. A CLICK INDICATES HE’S HIT “RECORD.”]

**TROUGHTON:** [CLEARING HIS THROAT AND CLEARLY ENUNCIATING INTO THE PHONE.] Test, test. Eleven. Benevolent. Elephants.

[[*MUSIC: BUSY, DISCORDANT STRINGS BRING A SENSE OF UNEASE OVER THE PIANO.*]]

[SFX: TROUGHTON STOPS RECORDING AND PLAYS THE SAMPLE BACK. BOTH ACTIONS ARE ACCOMPANIED BY THE SAME CLICK. SOME MUFFLED FOOTSTEPS ARE HEARD FROM UPSTAIRS.]

**TROUGHTON:** [OVER TOP OF THE END OF THE RECORDING.] Ok.

[SFX: BEHIND TROUGHTON’S WORDS, THE THUDDING STEPS OF PARKINS GOING TO BED ARE HEARD.]

[[*MUSIC: LOW, HUMMING NOTES SOUND FROM TIME TO TIME.*]]

**TROUGHTON:** [SPEAKING INTO THE PHONE.] I’ve always made the distinction that the difference between the work I have been exploring and blind faith is that mine is evidence based, anecdotal though it may be. Today has proven to be inconclusive. There has been no solid evidence; the details of the day I’ll get into shortly, but for now I want to record my initial feelings to document how easily emotions, imagination, suggestion can influence a rational mind. And review, once my mind is clear. I’m also a survivor of trauma, which would very well compromise the neutrality of this research, as has been suggested by others as recently as today (note: decline all further offers from *Suffolk Talks*). So is this all simply confirmation bias? Yet when the trauma itself is the gateway, the catalyst of this research, then I do feel assured. [SIGH.] I feel as conflicted as Hamlet, and yet we all know exactly how his indecision affected him…

[SFX: TROUGHTON GIVES A LOUD, EXAGGERATED SIGH. HE GETS UP TO PACE A BIT.]

[[*MUSIC: HIGHER PITCHED REPEATED HUMS SOUND IN EBBS AND FLOWS OF VOLUME.*]]

**TROUGHTON:** [SPEAKING INTO THE PHONE.] And yet, despite the rational explanations I’ve offered, despite Parkins’ admission that she is dangerously sleep deprived, despite everything, I now stand with eyes fixed on trees across the road, dancing in the wind. [BEAT.] Is it the wind? Or is it something else?

[SFX: THERE IS A TAPPING ON GLASS UPSTAIRS.]

**TROUGHTON:** [SPEAKING INTO THE PHONE.] Tomorrow I get to review the site during the day, perhaps the movement of the trees will seem less sinister in the light of day and the presence of others.

[SFX: THE TAPPING GROWS IN INSISTENCE.]

**TROUGHTON:** [ANNOYED.] Oh, what is that?

[SFX: TROUGHTON STOPS RECORDING, WALKS TO THE DOOR, AND OPENS IT.]

**TROUGHTON:** Roslyn? [AFTER A MOMENT, A LITTLE LOUDER.] Roslyn, is everything ok? [TO HIMSELF.] Must be fast asleep, poor woman. I suppose I’ll give it fifteen minutes or so and call my lift.

[SFX: TROUGHTON CLOSES THE DOOR AND WALKS BACK TO THE COUCH. THE TAPPING BEGINS AGAIN.]

**TROUGHTON:** Now where was I?

[SFX: THERE IS A SMASHING OF GLASS AND A HUGE CLATTER AS THE BEDROOM WINDOW IS BROKEN.]

**TROUGHTON:** Jesus!

**PARKINS:** [MUFFLED FROM UPSTAIRS.] Oh, Jesus Christ! Fuck!

[SFX: TROUGHTON RUNS TO THE DOOR, OPEN IT, AND RUNS UP THE STAIRS.]

**TROUGHTON:** Roslyn!

**PARKINS:** [A LITTLE CLEARER, NOW THAT ONLY THE BEDROOM DOOR IS BETWEEN THEM.] Geoffrey!

**TROUGHTON:** I’m coming!

[SFX: TROUGHTON IS STILL RUNNING TO THE BEDROOM WHEN PARKINS SCREAMS AS SHE IS DRAGGED OUT OF HER WINDOW IN A CLATTER OF BROKEN GLASS.]

**TROUGHTON:** Roslyn!

[SFX: TROUGHTON BARGES THROUGH THE DOOR. ROSLYN HAS GONE.]

**TROUGHTON:** Good lord! Roslyn! Where the hell— [BROKEN GLASS CLATTERS AS HE MOVES THROUGH THE ROOM.] She-she’s been pulled out. Oh, Christ! I’m coming!

[SFX: TROUGHTON RUNS DOWNSTAIRS, OPENS THE FRONT DOOR, AND RUNS TO THE SIDE OF THE HOUSE WHERE HE PAUSES TO LOOK FOR PARKINS. THE WIND IS A GROWL.]

[[*MUSIC: AS TROUGHTON REACHES THE OUTDOORS, THERE ARE CRESCENDOS OF DISCORDANT SOUND THAT BEGIN TO PULSE IN AGITATION.*]]

**TROUGHTON:** [UNDER HIS BREATH AS HE SPOTS PARKINS ON THE GROUND AND BEGINS TO RUN TOWARD HER.] Please be okay, for the love of god!

**PARKINS:** [WEAK.] Geoffrey…

**TROUGHTON:** Roslyn! [RUSHING OVER WITH A SIGH OF RELIEF.] I’ve got you, I’ve got you, you’re ok. You’re just–Just some cuts and bruises.

**PARKINS:** The-the tree….

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

**PARKINS:** It-it reached in…t-took me.

**TROUGHTON:** The tree? [REPEATED VERY QUIETLY AS MOVEMENT FROM THE TREE BEGINS IN THE BACKGROUND.] The tree. [NORMAL] I have to move you, ok? I-I don’t know if you’ve broken anything, but you have to hold onto me, ok?

**PARKINS:** Ok…

**TROUGHTON:** One, two, [HEAVES.] three!

[SFX: PARKINS YELPS IN PAIN. TROUGHTON GRUNTS AS HE WALKS ROSYLN TO THE FRONT OF THE HOUSE. THE TREE RUSTLES AND CREAKS BEHIND THEM.]

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

[SFX: IDENTIFIER FOR SUFFOLK TALKS, COMPLETE WITH CHEESY MUSIC.]

**RADIO HOST:** It’s one thirty in the afternoon, the sun is shining and most of Suffolk is recovering from last night’s freak storm. Phone in and tell us your experiences. Is your car damaged? Cat didn’t come home? We want to hear! Ok, we’re speaking to Alan about what he saw last night! Alan?

**RADIO CALLER:** [OVER PHONE.] Yeah my neighbour was rushed into hospital last night! Nice girl, works at university. But yeah, the wind was so bad, the tree between our houses smashed into her window! She must have been caught in the branches, poor girl, and was thrown outside!

**RADIO HOST:** Wow…

**RADIO CALLER:** I know! I saw the whole thing while I was brushing my teeth! Luckily she had a gentleman visitor staying over who rushed out immediately while I called an ambulance. They’ve both just come back actually, looks like she has a broken leg! I said to my wife that tree was too big but did she listen? Like hell she did. Just like when I told her there was a storm coming. Did she listen? Go on, guess! I’ll tell you: she did not!

[SFX: AS THE CALLER BEGINS TO RAMBLE ABOUT HIS WIFE, THE AUDIO FADES.]

[[*MUSIC: SHADOWS AT THE DOOR THEME IN LOW GUITAR NOTES WITH SUSTAINED STRING HIGHLIGHTS.*]]

[Timestamp: 37:38]

BEGIN DISCUSSION SECTION

**MARK:** And that was “Blessed Be the Man,” by Mark Nixon (that’s me!). And I’m joined by… Well, it’s a bittersweet moment because I would normally say, “I’m joined by the entire cast.”

**DAVID:** Well, yes, but times change and so must we. I will always remember when the full cast was me.

**MARK:** Ah! And there you go, we have broken our record [“YES” FROM DAVID.] for a Doctor Who reference. As soon as possible.

**DAVID:** Absolutely, first words out of my mouth, Doctor Who reference.

**MARK:** Hello, David.

**DAVID:** Hello, Mark! How are you doing?

**MARK:** I’m doing–You know what, David? We’re back. I’m doing well. How are you?

**DAVID:** We are, indeed back, yes, yes. It’s good to be back, it’s good to be back as Professor Troughton who was exactly the right person to kick off the second series of *Shadows at the Door*, I reckon. He’s like putting on an old jumper, and old, sort of comfortable, you know what it’s like, but you’ve sort of filled out a bit. It’s a little bit tight, as Professor Troughton is wont to be.

**MARK:** I imagine it’s one of those vest jumpers, you know, with the V-neck. Something really uncool.

**DAVID:** Oh, yes… Yes, a sort of seventh Doctor kind of jumper.

**MARK:** Yes, yes.

**DAVID:** If anyone has a seventh Doctor jumper, I would really, really love a seventh Doctor jumper. But anyway.

**MARK:** They’re about £50, David.

**DAVID:** I know! I know. And all of the KoFi money goes to you, so I can’t afford these things.

**MARK:** You need an OnlyFans account, David, where…

**DAVID:** You’ve already got all of the audio for the OnlyFans account.

**MARK:** What David doesn’t know is there’s an episode coming up written by Hannah Butler and there’s literally going to be about two pages of various grunting that you need to do. For reasons I won’t say, to not spoil the story.

**DAVID:** What… Oh, okay, okay, mm-hm. You’re really going to be selling that to that extra CD, aren’t you?

**MARK:** “Sounds of Ault: X-rated Version.”

**DAVID:** But yes, as you say, we are back. It is very, very good to be back. It’s been far too long, but life does have a habit of getting in the way. So…

**MARK:** It does. I mean, there’s our normal lives and our jobs and our commitments and our families, and then there’s being international superstars, David? Would you know anything about that?

**DAVID:** Wow, yeah. I guess… And then there’s sort of what I’ve been doing. So, yes, in October and in September through to the beginning of November was the NoSleep tour across the US and Canada and then in January was the NoSleep tour across the UK and Europe. And that was all a lot of fun, getting to meet a load of *Shadows at the Door* listeners, which was really, really good, really fun people, really appreciated the podcast. So, yes, very, very good.

**MARK:** And David would treat me each time. And it was just lovely.

**DAVID:** Yeah. It’s like, ‘I’ve met another listener, here’s another picture with me! Ah!’

[[*MUSIC: SHORT PHRASE OF THE SHADOWS AT THE DOOR THEME ON GUITAR AS A TRANSITION.*]]

**MARK:** And this is, of course, not only is it a special episode, David, because it’s episode one of season two, but it’s our first “full”–and I believe everyone can hear me doing the quotation marks–it’s our first “full cast” episode.

**DAVID:** Indeed, yes, I’m not able to fill everything out as once I could.

**MARK:** Oh, David.

**DAVID:** Yeah, yeah, but what’s really, really fun, for me as an aficionado, I am really pleased that we are able to get a super special guest onto the podcast. Probably one of the first times of actually being in a horror fiction podcast, a ghost story podcast. Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Mark Nixon.

**MARK:** [LAUGHING.] Jesus. What an anticlimax. [MUFFLED ANNOUNCER VOICE.] ‘He has come all the way from County Durham! It’s Mark! Nixon!’

**DAVID:** But there are some good people from County Durham. Some very, very good people. Like Matt Baker! He’s from County Durham.

**MARK:** He is indeed.

**DAVID:** He was on *Blue Peter*.

**MARK:** I had a French teacher that used to mention that she taught him all the time. [IN A YORKSHIRE ACCENT FOR THE QUOTE.] “You’ll never say ‘salut’ better than Matt Baker did!” Yeah, but…

**DAVID:** Now you’ve just got me thinking of William Hague now.

**MARK:** Did I sound like William Hague?

**DAVID:** Yeah, when you said [YORKSHIRE ACCENT.] “‘salut!’ You’ll never say ‘salut’ like I’m gonna say ‘Benghazi.”

**MARK:** You know, they used to call him the “Fighting Foetus.” [DAVID LAUGHS.] He was the Fighting Foetus and Iain Duncan Smith was “The Quiet Man.”

**DAVID:** Oh, god, yes.

**MARK:** William Hague, I believe, was a vampire. But enough about unelected Tory leaders of the Conservative Party.

**DAVID:** Yes.

**MARK:** You know, I actually dipped my toes into voice acting when I was about 16.

**DAVID:** [SPLUTTERS.] What?

**MARK:** When I was a kid, I used to get really bullied for my accent because my parents were really strict on accents and so I actually spoke with pretty much RP from a kid. And I had big sticking out ears, so I used to get called ‘Prince Charles’ all the time. But when I was getting into my teens, I didn’t quite sound as northern as I do now and I don’t know, everyone just kept telling me to do voice acting so I did it and I did a voice reel. And I had actually got a gig doing the traffic reports for a radio station in Newcastle. [LOUD, LONG ‘OH’ FROM DAVID.] Yeah, but I had to drop it, David, because I entered an exciting career in part time work in Matalan.

**DAVID:** In Matalan?

**MARK:** Yes.

**DAVID:** You chose Matalan over the star of the airwaves [GETTING DRAMATIC.] that would be ‘Traffic and Travel with Mark Nixon.’

**MARK:** Well, it was an hour’s commute there and back and it wasn’t paid and Matalan was paying me and I remember this: £3.30 an hour.

**DAVID:** Three? Whoah.

**MARK:** To fold polo shirts. And as I was folding those polo shirts, I said, “just you wait, one day I’ll be reminiscing on this 15 years later on my very own podcast.”

**DAVID:** Sixteen years.

**MARK:** Sorry?

**DAVID:** Sixteen years.

**MARK:** Ah, shit.

**DAVID:** Half your life ago.

**MARK:** Oh, oh, my god. Moving swiftly on from my impending death. Yeah, I just, you guys kind of were asking me to, I thought I’d try it. It’s not a very challenging role, is it? Radio host of *Suffolk Talks*. It’s a bit Matt Baker, as David says, it’s a bit Matt Berry. So, it’s just… Yeah. It’s a bit of fun. And if nobody protests too much, I’ll do it again.

**DAVID:** Yes! Yes!

**MARK:** And one day I may even come close to David Ault. But I also did a… I recorded a sonnet for the Unbound, uh, is it a production company or…

**DAVID:** [BEGINNING OVER MARK.] You did, yes. Unbound Theatre. Which is based in Aylesbury, which is where Erika is, it’s where I met Erika, ‘cause I used to live down there. And, yes, they are doing all of Shakespeare’s sonnets. All 154 of them.

**MARK:** Yeah, and you’ve done a few, haven’t you, David? ‘Cause of course you have.

**DAVID:** I have, yes, I have. I’ve done six of them so far.

**MARK:** Well, they’ve asked me to do some more and there’s like five sonnets where he’s talking to someone who he finds absolutely repulsive and I love them. I just… “In faith, I don’t love thee with thine eyes, for they in thee a thousand errors note.”

**DAVID:** I know, Mark, you’re just picturing me, aren’t you, as you say all of that.

**MARK:** I don’t know, the person who he’s describing in this sonnet is so impossibly vile. But I want to do some homework ‘cause I know there’s a few where a lot of scholars believe he’s actually talking to a man. I mean, he is in the early ones, because he’s on about, he’s convincing him to have a child, isn’t he. And then, but there are some where I think there’s, for some reason, I know that there’s 52 scholars that have published papers on thinking that Dickens–Dickens?–saying that Shakespeare was a bit gay.

**DAVID:** Bisexuality is a thing, Mark. I hope you’re not going for bi erasure here.

**MARK:** [LAUGHING.] Oh, Christ. ‘Cause I get very militant on Bi Visibility Day, as well.

**DAVID:** It’s very nice to be able to highlight that for you, Mark.

**MARK:** Thank you, yes.

**DAVID:** You’re welcome.

**MARK:** But yeah, anyway, I just think ‘a bit gay’ sounds funnier sometimes. But…

**DAVID:** You think being gay is funny?

**MARK:** Oh, shut up. You know, speaking of Shakespeare, David…

**DAVID:** Yes.

**MARK:** “Blessed Be the Man…”

**DAVID:** Yes.

**MARK:** We dropped some Shakespeare references in our story this week, because we’re a very high brow podcast.

**DAVID:** We are indeed, absolutely.

**MARK:** And I think it was you who gave me the inspiration because I think there was a discussion in season one, and perhaps someone who may remember it better than me can tweet at me and let me know, but I think, David, it was you who told me the “blessed be he who…” oh, what is it… “blessed be he who…?” [LONG GROAN FROM DAVID.] “Minds these stones?”

**DAVID:** Yes…

**MARK:** “And cursed be he who moves these bones.”

**DAVID:** Yes.

**MARK:** But the plot twist, David, is they did an x-ray on Shakespeare’s grave, I believe in–At the turn of the millennium. Just to see what his skeleton looked like, I suppose. I don’t know why. But maybe they thought there’d be a quill in his hand or something. But they found that the skull is missing.

**DAVID:** No!

**MARK:** Yes! So somewhere, someone had Shakespeare’s skull on their mantlepiece. You know, maybe it was someone whose wife he had seduced.

**DAVID:** Or it could just be a fan, you know.

**MARK:** Or a fan.

**DAVID:** Who knows, in 150 years’ time, maybe someone’s got Mark Nixon’s skull on their mantlepiece.

**MARK:** Oh, I would definitely haunt that skull.

**DAVID:** But we never know, that’s the thing. So!

**MARK:** And then, like, the haunting, that person would be like, “hang on, this haunting is very Shirley Jackson.” I’m like, “look! It’s hard to be original when you’re a ghost, okay? Now if you don’t mind, I’m gonna slam this door a little bit more. And move your keys.”

**DAVID:** [LAUGHING.] Yes. [SPOOKY VOICE.] Woo… [BACK TO NORMAL.] So, talking of Matt Berry, who is this Matt Berry? Why did you choose to channel him?

**MARK:** Oh, god. I used to be able to do a good impression of Matt Berry. I don’t know what happened to my throat, but I can’t do it any more and Matt Berry… He just–I really enjoy… He plays the same thing all the time. He plays, like, a somewhat incompetent misogynistic sexist and, to varying degrees of intelligence… So he was Mr. Reynholm in *The IT Crowd* and then he was Toast in *Toast of London* where he plays a voice artist which I absolutely love and I want David to watch it because it’s just all the adventures of an actor and… Because he’s an actor and he’s ashamed of being a voice artist. [DISAPPOINTED GASP FROM DAVID.] And yet that’s where he gets most of his income from.

**DAVID:** Tut tut.

**MATT BERRY (RECORDING):** “The smooth taste of Red Carpet Cigarettes is coming to the Democratic Republic of Congo. Everybody knows that cigarettes are good for you! Red Carpet Cigarettes: once you smoke one, you’ll want more. And more. And more…” [CONTINUES ECHOING AS IT FADES INTO THE BACKGROUND.]

**MARK:** And he’s also been in… Oh, and of course, a lot of people will know Matt Berry from *What We Do in the Shadows*, the TV show where they have, like, a mockumentary of vampires and it’s really funny. I just, I dunno, I think Matt Berry’s got a great voice and I try and do the bad impression when we have the radio ident for [ANNOUNCER VOICE.] *Suffolk Talks*! [BACK TO NORMAL.] Just a bit of an indulgence there.

**DAVID:** But I think you were more excited for the other person that we had got onto the show.

**MARK:** I mean, as excited as I was to hear my own voice, it was…

**DAVID:** You were super excited to welcome Gemma Amor(!) onto the podcast.

**MARK:** Yeah, Gemma’s a phenomenal writer and you will hear more of her work in this season of *Shadows at the Door*. And as we discussed on the hiatus episode, Gemma is also an actor and it was just a thrill to have her play Parkins, which, as many of you will not be surprised to hear, that name is, of course, a reference to the story, “Oh, Whistle, and I’ll Come to You, My Lad,” with Professor Parkin. I just put an “s” on it.

**DAVID:** Ooh, look at you.

**MARK:** ‘Cause, you know, I’m a rebel. Yeah, and then, of course, we have our special guest Professor Elemental, Paul Alborough, and this… And I think that’ll mean a lot to a niche group of people. Because, for those of you unaware, Paul, or Professor Elemental, is an artist, a singer, like a rapper, of chap-hop, and I’ll let Paul explain in his own words what that is soon, but basically, it’s like if hip-hop had been invented by Victorians. And it’s very wholesome, it’s rapping about being British. I mean, not the colonisation, but the, like…

**DAVID:** Being able to queue, and…

**MARK:** Well, yeah. Like…

**DAVID:** Knowing how to use a kettle.

**MARK:** Yeah, well, there’s a whole song, “Cup of Brown Joy,” where he raps about having a cup of tea and what pursuits he’ll do to get tea, what strength he likes the tea, and there’s “Everything Stops for Tea”…

**DAVID:** Ah, yes.

**MARK:** And even in this diss track where he’s attacking another chap-hop artist–this Mr B the Gentleman Rhymer–he’s very polite. He’s like, [RP ACCENT.] ‘I don’t like your tweed, sir. And you have a granddad’s moustache.’ [NORMAL.] And all that kind of thing. But what I was saying to David before we started recording is in these troubled times, where we’re all facing challenges right now, that to me is a really nice pleasure for me to listen to such upbeat and wholesome music. ‘Cause there’s often behind the silliness, there’s messages of kindness and Paul, he’s just a really nice guy and he brings a lot of pleasure into so many peoples’ lives. And then I found out that he’s really into horror. Despite this nice image, ‘cause he released this collection of horror stories called *Tales of Wrong* that I was really pleased to get a copy of and he’s done it under the Professor Elemental label and I was reading it and at first, I was like, okay, this is a bit of a gateway into horror for people who aren’t that familiar with horror. Because, as David will attest, I am somewhat of a horror snob.

**DAVID:** Well, you are the editor of a horror publishing house. So, that kind of comes with the territory.

**MARK:** And, yeah, but at the same time, I read more and more and it was very much like H.G. Wells and there’s a story about Spring-

heeled Jack, which we’ll talk about in a moment where… Yeah, and I just really enjoyed it and it’s beautifully illustrated and we’ll put a link to where you can get a copy in the podcast notes. But it’s absolutely… It was just a cracking, back to basics collection of bizarre and esoteric horror.

**DAVID:** Fantastic. Yeah.

**MARK:** Yeah. Back before Christmas, I think we’re talking November–or was it even early December?–Professor Elemental came and did a gig in Newcastle and we’d been talking and I met him before the gig for a bit of a chat, which I will play seamlessly right now.

[[*MUSIC: SHORT PHRASE OF THE SHADOWS AT THE DOOR THEME ON GUITAR AS A TRANSITION.*]]

[Timestamp: 53:41]

[SFX: VOICES HERE HAVE A BIT OF ECHO.]

**MARK:** Hello! This is Mark Nixon, sadly sans David Ault, for I am joined by Professor Elemental himself, Paul Alborough.

**PAUL:** Hello! Nice to be here in this strange, empty room. Well, not obviously not empty, we’re in it, but other than that. This podcast is taking place in a deserted sort of meeting room in a spooky hotel and it feels like we’re going to get murdered at any point.

**MARK:** So, Paul, I often drop references of your work into our podcast, but for those of the uninitiated, can you explain what on earth chap-hop is?

**PAUL:** Yes. It is hip-hop in a stupid hat, basically. I often try to explain it to people like, imagine a Venn diagram where you’ve got Radio 4’s *Just a Minute* on one side and the Wu-Tang Clan on the other side, and the tiny little bit where they intersect, very tiny bit, that’s basically where chap-hop is. So it’s basically very English form of hip-hop, a kind of, like, parody of the middle classes of the posh, cosier sides of England with a slightly anarchic underside.

**MARK:** So, it kind of begs the question, then, why horror? David and I have already been discussing *Tales of Wrong*. It doesn’t seem the natural leap, but obviously you are a big fan.

**PAUL:** That’s all it comes down. It’s just being a nerd and being, you know, in total control. Like, the good thing about being relatively small artist is you can do whatever you like! And I increasingly, as the Professor goes on, because he’s such a strong character, you can focus a lot of creative stuff through him. It’s like having a lens to focus stuff through. So if there’s any kind of writers or artists listening, the problem isn’t sometimes not having enough ideas, it’s having too many ideas. But because I’ve got this one character that I have to put everything sort of through, it kind of, like, focuses it like a laser beam. And I just love horror. Like, I love it so much. There’s kind of pillars of sort of comic books, hip-hop, and horror. And horror is kind of the one that I in some ways love the most ‘cause it’s still universally reviled and difficult to talk about at polite dinner parties, isn’t it? It’s not an easy thing to say that you like without people going, ‘oh, something’s a bit up with that.’

**MARK:** See, this is why I say ghost stories, because you sound a little bit more refined, then.

**PAUL:** [LAUGHING.] Yes!

**MARK:** [POSH VOICE.] Well, I say…

**PAUL:** [POSH VOICE.] Oh, ghost stories, they’re rather classy. [NORMAL.] But yeah. Start talking about *The Human Centipede* or the *Serbian Film* at a polite dinner party with some new friends that…

**MARK:** And that’s it, ‘cause in your song, “We Love Horror,” you do pretend to defend the *Serbian Film*. Now, have you actually seen it?

**PAUL:** [LAUGHING.] I haven’t.

[[*MUSIC: DRIVING BEAT OF CRESPO & ELEMENTAL’S “WE LOVE HORROR.”*]]

**VOCALS:** …see the undead, delighting in the horror best left unsaid. In a polite dinner, let’s begin our next meal with a discussion of the merits of the *Serbian Film*. Oh, it’s gone quiet. I like certain things, I’m not a dirty pervert, doesn’t mean I go out murdering…

[[*MUSIC: FADES OUT.*]]

**PAUL:** There was a brilliant point for me in horror in, like, the early 2000s, ‘cause all of my mates, it was just before we started having babies and ever Wednesday we’d get together and watch horror films and they would go along with it, but I was the most passionate, so I was always, like, researching. And in the early 2000s, there were these amazing French sort of wave of extreme French cinema and there was one film called *Martyrs*. And we’d shown so many things and almost every night ended with them just going, “Paul, that was shit! I hated it!” And I’d be going, “oh, the next one’ll be good, don’t worry!” And we finally found these films that were actually quite good and then just as we were kind of unable to do it on a weekly basis, there’s all sort of younger sort of things go, and people start getting responsibilities, the last film we saw was *Martyrs*. We kind of sat after that and were, like, [POPS HIS LIPS.] “well, that’s probably enough now, isn’t it? We’ll probably leave it there, shall we?”

**MARK:** I imagine it’s now a support group?

**PAUL:** [LAUGHING.] Yeah, exactly. And I think *A Serbian Film* was just… It was sort of funny enough reading about it without having to watch it. ‘Cause think it’s a very good film, probably, it’s just, like, some things like that are quite a good sort of running joke, or…

**MARK:** So, what are your favourites? What can you recommend?

**PAUL:** My favourite horror films are probably the original *Haunting*, which I absolutely love, a film called *À l’intérieur*, it’s a French film from about 2002[[1]](#footnote-0). It’s the scariest film I’ve ever watched. I was so scared. Properly just downright terror, which you get so rarely. Normally you’re sneering at it or laughing at it or jumping at it, but just to be properly scared. And I think *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* is just a really well-made film and it’s gone so much muck and grubbiness and the story behind the filming of it, all that kind of… All the lore that goes with it, as well, I really like, so. Yeah, much as I like my, sort of, classy, sort of, supernatural stuff as well, I think I just want something unpredictable and terrifying.

**MARK:** Like a good zombie film to cleanse the palate as well, sometimes.

**PAUL:** Exactly.

**MARK:** You know, at *Shadows at the Door*, we profess to be fans of quiet horror, but then I will watch *28 Days Later* quite regular.

**PAUL:** Oh, yeah, sometimes, you know, sometimes you need a nice 4-star Michelin meal, sometimes you just want a burger. ‘I’m just going to stuff in this zombie film.’ Did you see *Borderlands*?

**MARK:** I have not seen *Borderlands*.

**PAUL:** Oh, it’s so good. Like, there are these lovely… Britain does horror quiet horror so well. *Borderlands* and *A Dark Song*, as well, have you seen that?

**MARK:** I have not seen that either!

**PAUL:** [AGHAST.] Oh, my god, man! But yeah, both of those are good, really lovely examples. And I think Britain does folk horror and does quiet horror films because we’re sort of a little more understated. We don’t go running around with chainsaws in other peoples’ faces. We kind of, you know, have a spooky church.

**MARK:** *The Witch* was interesting, because that was a very British film, ‘cause all the characters were extremely Yorkshire in it, and yeah, obviously, American. Did you see that one?

**PAUL:** Yeah, that was lovely. I really loved it.

**MARK:** [LAUGHING.] ‘Lovely.’

**PAUL:** That shows the sort of level that I’m working with, you can tell. ‘I thought *The Witch* was just quite lovely.’ No, I thought that was a great movie, really loved it, and yeah, I’ve got a real soft spot for sort of folk horror, anyway, there’s something really… *The Wicker Man* would probably be, sort of, fourth on the list of favourites because it’s just… Yeah. And again, the folklore and legends, that’s one of the things that we’ve just got in spades in the British Isles and Ireland and Scotland. There’s just so much of it.

**MARK:** And that kind of takes me on to, we both found out we have a big love of Spring-heeled Jack.

**PAUL:** Yes!

**MARK:** Which, of course, features in *Tales of Wrong*. I absolutely love when I read it that the opening line was the actual quote. When they alleged to have caught him in the street outside.

**PAUL:** Oh, I’m so glad you got that! That’s so nice. That very line was the line that scared the crap out of me. There’s this massive book in our house that was the *Reader’s Digest* book of “strange tales and amazing facts,” it was just a big encyclopaedia and most of it was really tedious and there was just a few pages and there this horrible… That sort of iconic picture of Spring-heeled Jack from a penny dreadful and the story that went along with it. And the fact that it was all so, it was the first time I’d sort of seen spooky horror themes mixed in with real life, with a bit of ambiguity about the whole thing. No one really… To this day, there still lots of theories and ideas, that’s what makes it good. How come you got into it? What piqued your interest?

**MARK:** Oh, I used to go to the local library a lot when I was a kid and I just picked up, it was like, “ghost stories for kids.” And then I moved on to “ghost stories for adults,” and I think the first one I read was “The Signalman” by Charles Dickens, which is just fantastic. And then, of course, there’s that adaptation, isn’t there.

**PAUL:** Yes…

**MARK:** And then, you know, I used to watch a lot of things *Star Trek* and I liked all the scary episodes, like the one where that black blob kills someone. Yeah, and it’s just gone from there. But, then I do get rather snobby about it.

**PAUL:** What, snobby about, like, certain kinds of horror or your love of it?

**MARK:** No, just like, certain kinds. Like, I hate jump scares. I just think it’s so cheap. And I don’t like seeing them work. Like, if we go really quiet right now and then you scream at me, I’m going to jump. And you would be a horrible person for it, and it just seems like a cheap way to scare your audience rather than building it up with suspense.

**PAUL:** Definitely. And particularly like, literally any horror film I’ve ever seen on Netflix, it’s all of the imagination stripped away. It’s all the things that make horror exciting is the unpredictability of it, rather than the, like, ‘here comes a jump scare’ or, you know, the formulaic nature of it is what ruins it, I think.

[[*MUSIC: SHORT CLIP OF “WE LOVE HORROR” TO TRANSITION. LYRICS: “WE LOVE HORROR, NOTHING QUITE LIKE IT, GOT A FRESH FLICK AND YOU’RE ALL INVITED. I KNOW IT SOUNDS NASTY, PLEASE DON’T CRY, IT’S ONLY A MOVIE, WHY NOT TRY IT? WE LOVE HORROR…”*]]

**MARK:** Going back to when you said the lore about Spring-heeled Jack, didn’t they… Didn’t people think Jack the Ripper was Spring-heeled Jack at one point, or am I making that up?

**PAUL:** No, I think that might be true. I think they were definitely similar times and a bit of a crossover there. I wrote a song that I was really proud of, because what the most likely theory after I read this book was that this horrible sort of Marquis, sort of a duke-type chap, who was apparently just a bit of a wanker and had loads of money and would just go out and scare the peasants. And that sounded like, after all of the different theories, that was the most, sort of, likely one. But that, in itself, because of the kind of level of stuff he was doing, is it stuff where it’s spooky and evil or just a really horrible rich dude going and like menacing London. And so I wrote, as so often happens with songs, I wrote it down and was like, ‘this is a masterpiece.’ And then did it, tried to do it in his character, and it was awful. Some things work on the printed page and don’t work at all as raps. And I’ve done it the other way around. ‘This rap is a masterpiece, I shall write it down for the world to… Oh, no, it’s shit now.” So things don’t always translate.

**MARK:** You are a pioneer of rap, though. Not many people–I say ‘not many people,’ there’s like, two people–that do what you do.

**PAUL:** I’d say I’m a pioneer of chap-hop specifically. I can’t say I’m a pioneer of rap, ‘cause there are, literally, millions of rappers, loads of them and loads better than me. But yeah, in a field of two, I reckon I’m at least the second best one of us. [BOTH LAUGH.] At least.

**MARK:** So, now that you’ve– as I said: dipped your toes into horror, I’m sure they’ve been soaking in that for some time–but, do you plan to do more, after *Tales of Wrong*, or…?

**PAUL:** Well, I did… There was a horror festival in Brighton and at the last minute, I said, ‘oh, can I come and do a show?’ And they said, ‘yeah, definitely.’ And I had no idea… The best way, with ideas sometimes, is to force yourself into a position where you have to create and so, it…

**MARK:** Like asking people for an interview before their gig!

**PAUL:** Exactly! Like, ‘oh, oh, yes, it’s going to happen.’ So, yeah, they did this little horror festival and about a week before the thing I still didn’t know what I was going to do, so I’ve written a standup show that is mostly just about my journey through my love of horror and how it relates to my relationship with my dad and all this kind of silliness but then tied it in with some stories from *Tales of Wrong* and some of the weirder Professor songs that just don’t work in a live setting. A lot of the time when you start talking about lopping the heads off chickens and sticking them on badges, you can lose parts of your audience. But if you’re doing a specific horror show, then it works. So it just… But it’s not a question of marrying up me as a person and the Professor as the character and trying to gel those things together. ‘Cause if it’s, like, Paul’s horror show, no one’s coming. But if the Professor, I can make it work. But you’ve got to tie it all in.

**MARK:** I think so many people are aware of the Professor Elemental label and stuff, but with regards to the inappropriateness of “Animal Magic”, I have three-year-old twins and I regularly play them “Animal Magic.” They love it!

**PAUL:** Yeah, it’s fine! Kids love it. Kids love all the weirdest stuff. Definitely.

**MARK:** In fact, I think you’ve taught them the word “retrospect.”

**PAUL:** [LAUGHING.] That’s a nice one, isn’t it? Teaching language and giving disturbing nightmares to children, since 2008.

**MARK:** But of course, we’ve got you in this episode, you’ve been in that, that was fantastic.

**PAUL:** Yes! Thank you very much.

**MARK:** And I was threatening Paul to try and get him to do one of our drunk ghost story episodes when he’s next in the north.

**PAUL:** Yeah, I mean, that could happen either next time I’m up here or later tonight when I grab you drunkenly, going [SLURRED.] ‘I want to tell a story, I want to tell it right now!’ So, anything could happen.

**MARK:** Oh, well, now everyone’s got their hopes up. I should probably let you go, ‘cause I think your crowd is waiting.

**PAUL:** Oh, yeah, gotta go do a show, okay. Later, thank you!

**MARK:** Thank you so much!

**PAUL:** Oh, cheers, buddy.

[[*MUSIC: SHORT CLIP OF “WE LOVE HORROR” TO TRANSITION. LYRICS: “…WE’LL STILL CALL YOU UP, COME ROUND QUICK, I’VE FOUND THINGS THAT WILL MAKE YOU SICK. AND YOU’LL JUST LOVE IT LIKE LECTOR LOVES HIS RECIPES, LIKE DOCTOR HEITER LOVES HIS VERY HUNGRY HUMAN CENTIPEDE. WE LOVE HORROR, NOTHING QUITE LIKE IT. GOT A FRESH FLICK AND YOU’RE ALL INVITED…”*]]

**MARK:** And of course, he was mobbed by fans at the end, so we weren’t able to drunkenly record a drunk ghost story as we discussed, but… Yeah, and we’ve since stayed in contact and we’ve been swapping film recommendations about once a week. But then Paul puts me to shame. I’m like, ‘oh, Paul, have you seen this well-known horror film from the ‘60s?’ and he’s like, ‘yeah, have you seen, like, this rape-revenge drama?’ And I’m like, ‘oh, oh gosh.’

**DAVID:** Yes, talk about scratching the Victorian veneer and seeing what comes out from underneath. Wow.

**MARK:** But I really need to watch this, and I should, in isolation, have more time for movies. But I’ve watched two movies in the last three weeks. And one of them was a film I’ve seen many times. But I’ve been working hard on the podcast so I haven’t had time to watch all these films. But I look forward to sitting down and watching them. But I’m not that mad on very gory films, but David and I were discussing off-mic that there are some good exceptions. So, there’s the film *Green Room*, which is one of the best uses of gore that I’ve seen, where it’s about this punk band who end up doing a gig for some neo-Nazis, the lead of which is Sir Patrick Stewart.

**DAVID:** No!

**MARK:** Yes!

**DAVID:** ‘Make it so!’

**MARK:** ‘Racial cleansing! Make it so!’ [BOTH LAUGH.] Oh, dear.

**DAVID:** ‘Make them go.’

**MARK:** Yeah, but I’ll not spoil the plot, but as you can imagine, things don’t end well. But there are these moments of gore that are quite, like, you’re like, ‘Jesus Christ!’ but it’s done so well. And it’s phenomenal. And it was one of the last films of Anton Yelchin, as well, so, for that reason, I would say watch it. But, certainly, if I’m going to randomly give you a recommendation for some reason, watch *Green Room*.

**DAVID:** Mm-hm, thank you.

**MARK:** Most definitely.

**DAVID:** Yes, ‘cause I’m not a huge fan of gore at all. I prefer the sort of psychological and sort of ghost story type horror rather than anything with too much blood and entrails and bits. Which is strange, given the number of times I’ve played people in *NoSleep* where there is blood and gore and stuff.

**MARK:** David, didn’t you do a story on tour where you were killing a cow or something like that?

**DAVID:** Yes, that’s right. On the second tour, we did “Escape the Black Farm” and yes, there was killing of animals and people and removing teeth and various other things like that and…

**MARK:** Pleasant.

**DAVID:** Yeah, that was a lot of fun. That was actually the tour where we had supporting acts. You may not know how…

**MARK:** Supporting acts?

**DAVID:** Yeah, supporting acts for a horror podcast.

**MARK:** For a horror podcast. What does that look like?

**DAVID:** Well, in various places, we would have people who had their own horror podcasts. They would come and do a short 10-20 minute sort of precis or a special for us to see. So in Los Angeles we had *Darkest Night*, they came and did… They essentially did the first story. And then we came on afterwards and did “Escape the Black Farm” and finished off. So, we had *WildClaw Theatre* in Chicago and *The White Vault* in New York City, amongst other things, so… Yeah, it’s a lot of fun.

[[*MUSIC: SHORT STINGER OF THE SHADOWS AT THE DOOR THEME ON PIANO AS A TRANSITION.*]]

**MARK:** We’ve had a bit of a favour to ask everyone, haven’t we?

**DAVID:** We have indeed, yes. We’ve had to change podcasting hosts because unfortunately the previous one, let’s put it nicely, were crap. And which means that we have…

**MARK:** We won’t name them.

**DAVID:** Which means unfortunately that we’ve lost all of our listening stats. So if you could do us a huge favour and just redownload and relisten to all of season one, that would be really, really wonderful, thank you very much.

**MARK:** [LAUGHING.] Yeah, it’s just because, you know, our sister podcasts have been, like, ‘oh yeah, we’ve reached 10,000 downloads’ or ‘look at this audience that we’re getting from the Azur Islands’ or whatever, but for some reason, I could only ever get a very limited amount of information. We could never see what stats we were making, it was… And we weren’t announcing our milestones and people must’ve assumed it was either because we’re shit or…

**DAVID:** Modest. We’re modest.

**MARK:** Or modest! Or modest!

**DAVID:** We’re British and modest, Mark.

**MARK:** Terribly British. We’ve already seen some amazing things in the statistics. I didn’t know we had listeners in Chile, for example. Hello, Chile!

**DAVID:** Hello!

**MARK:** Yeah. I knew we had quite… Actually, what was interesting was, I only ever got the top five with our last provider and it was America, the UK, Sweden, Canada, and Australia. And to me–and I know you’ve been to Stockholm and you had your superstar moment on the *NoSleep* tour–but I just didn’t realise that… I just didn’t realise, you know, like, I thought, ‘yes, all the English-speaking countries’, but yeah, Sweden. Hello, Sweden!

**DAVID:** Sweden, yes, Sweden. The Swedes are lovely, lovely people. Lots of hugs. The *NoSleep Podcast* tour finished there in Stockholm. It was a fantastic night, more than 500 people were there. Such lovely people. Some of them even came to the Copenhagen show, which was two nights before that. Yeah, just brilliant. Brilliant, brilliant, brilliant.

**MARK:** We’ll just have to get really successful and do an international *Shadows at the Door* tour.

**DAVID:** Indeed! Yes.

**MARK:** And then I’ll be like, ‘oh, David, oh, we have to go to Iceland. We’ve got five listeners there…’

**DAVID:** Oh, shucks.

**MARK:** ‘And I just want to go on a trip twice.’

**DAVID:** Yeah, that’s fine by me. Yeah, I’m good with that.

**MARK:** But. And I guess, on the subject of support. I think we really do need to acknowledge, you know, why we’re here and, you know, we’re back with a season two, and it is down to you guys! You’ve backed us, you’ve reviewed us, you’ve listened, you’ve shared us with your friends, you’ve shared us on social media, some of you who were able to even gave us money and you’ve helped so much with the production of season two. I’ve been able to feed my children. No, I’m joking, I’m joking! But, it’s been much more comfortable to do season two. And it’s, just, I think we’re so grateful, aren’t we, David, that people have been that kind.

**DAVID:** We are, we are, very much so, yes. And especially the people that have been able to do recurring payments, so every month has just been… It’s…

**MARK:** Oh, that’s been a lifesaver.

**DAVID:** We have been overwhelmed by your generosity, so thank you ever so much to everyone who has donated. And also everyone who has thought, ‘oh, well, these fellows are quite nice, I will tell my friends who like quiet horror, atmospheric ghost stories, about this podcast.’ So, yes. All rates, ratings, reviews, shares, etc. It’s what you hear from all the podcasts, but it really does make a difference and it really does warm our sorry little hearts.

**MARK:** Yeah. It really does. And what’s next for season two? So, like we said in the hiatus episode, there’s now going to be a bit of a gap before episode two. I’ll be very honest with you, episode two is pretty much ready to go. But I don’t want to keep spacing out the season. Because I’ve been a little bit, well… In season one, I wrote all of the episodes, then David recorded all of them, and then we edited all of them, and then Nico did his magic and this time, we’ve been doing it one at a time because, you know, joking aside, you know, when the muse strikes, you’ve gotta chase it. And you just want to… And I’m in that frame of mind with my writing journey now where I just want to kind of get it down, get it done, get it edited, and then it’s ready. So yeah, episode one, you’ve just heard it. Episode two is pretty much good to go. Episode five isn’t even finished being written. So, it’s going to be at least a month before you get episode two. And then we might do it once a month and, at the moment, we’re looking at a ten episode season. But, particularly if we continue to get support, there might even be… I mean, David and I, as we were setting up the mics, we were talking about another adaptation of a classic story that we both liked and there might even be room for an extra episode.

**DAVID:** But we wanted to get this episode out to you so that you had something to feast upon in these strange, strange times. But yes, we will endeavour to keep all of the audio goodness coming.

[[*MUSIC: SHORT PHRASE OF THE SHADOWS AT THE DOOR THEME ON GUITAR AS A TRANSITION.*]]

**DAVID:** Yeah, that’s all for, say, for now, that is all, but we will look forward to seeing you again soon. Mark Nixon, I let you go.

**MARK:** [SWOONING.] Oh… [NORMAL.] Right in the feels. [DAVID CACKLES.]

**DAVID:** You’ve been listening to a Shadows at the Door production. Story by Mark Nixon. Performances by David Ault, Gemma Amor, Paul Alborough, and Mark Nixon. Music by Nico Vettese. Editing by Mark Nixon. Copyright held by Shadows at the Door publishing.

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

[[*MUSIC: STRINGS STOP.*]]

CAST

Professor Geoffrey Troughton David Ault

*We’re more than familiar with the good Professor at this point. Male, early forties, and well-spoken with a confidence that avoids bossiness.*

Doctor Sean Hill Paul Alborough

*Male. Late forties, psychology lecturer from the University of Bristol. Well spoken, bordering on bombastic, and enjoys the sound of his own voice. John Bercow if he shouted a little less.*

Radio Host Mark Nixon

*Male career DJ, has forgotten how to speak properly and has a constant smooth and cheesy voice.*

Radio Floor Runner David Ault

*A young man working at the Radio. Distinct southern accent.*

Dr. Roslyn Parkins Gemma Amor

*Late thirties academic, not as prim and proper as her peers but brilliant. Well-spoken but not pompous, little time for fools. Fatigued after two days without sleep.*

Radio Caller David Ault

*Sensationalist, middle aged man with nothing better to do than to call into a semi-popular radio station. Southern accent.*

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

1. He misremembered the year - it was released in 2007. [↑](#footnote-ref-0)