

Welcome To Spooktown – Sunil Patel

[Spooky music]

[Rain and thunder sounds]

ED EASTON: Oh! A real ghost!

[Footsteps]

KATH HUGHES: Where are we meeting Sunil?

ED: At the old, abandoned leisure centre.

KATH: Oh yeah.

ED: Yeah. The one with the pool.

KATH: Yes, yeah. Shut down ages ago, that, didn't it?

ED: In the 80s, I think.

KATH: I think something like that.

ED: I don't know though.

KATH: Yeah.

ED: We're meeting Sunil there and he's going to tell us a story about that. Should be exciting.

KATH: Yeah, great.

ED: Have you, um, have you had any nightmares this week?

KATH: Oh, sure.

[Ed laughs]

KATH: Um, one where I was in a car and it was just me thank god. I wasn't driving though, so I don't know how that works. It must've been set in the future. And then just nearly got t-boned at a junction.

ED: Ah.

KATH: By a lorry.

ED: Didn't, though?

KATH: Didn't. But felt like I nearly did in a nightmare.

ED: That's not that bad for a nightmare. Not getting t-boned, yeah.

KATH: Do you reckon? Actually no, it's a good one, isn't it?

ED: It's alright. I'd chalk that up as a dream.

KATH: Do you know what? I had a nice dream last night.

ED: Yeah?

KATH: Yeah. I take that back. It was a lovely dream.

ED: I've had so many dreams where I've not been t-boned.

KATH: God. Maybe I'm having more dreams than nightmares and didn't realise. Uh, how about you? Any nightmares?

ED: Yeah, one massive one.

KATH: Oh gosh.

ED: Two words pushed together into one word.

KATH: Mhm.

ED: [beep] Genuinely feckless, like honestly really feckless. They come over to install [beep] on – what was it – Tuesday, and then the guy was like, ‘ugh, you only can’ – someone’s like, ‘ugh, I can’t do it because of this’ and you’re like, ‘well, I could just move that.’ And they’re like, ‘and also this.’

KATH: Oh yeah.

ED: ‘Why can’t you just fix that?’ And they’re like – what else is wrong? Just like didn’t want to do the job. And said he’d come back on Thursday. And then it was like, ‘I never said that! You said you’d ring him! I didn’t say that at all!’ But I’d rung – in the meantime I’d rung [beep] and like, ‘yeah, he’s coming back on Thursday. Yeah, I’ll pop all those details in for you.’ Absolutely fucking – genuinely like – and all the reviews have been very bad, but I was like, ‘come on guys, you’re just being – you’re just being’ – but all the reviews were right. So basically, what I’m saying is fuck [beep] [beep].

KATH: More like carpet wrong.

[Truck brakes and stops]

KATH: Is that – is that Sunil?

ED: What, holding a mug?

KATH: Mhm.

ED: Oh yeah, no it is, yeah.

KATH: Yeah.

ED: Yeah. God, it's big, isn't it? It's a big building.

KATH: Yeah, it is.

ED: Can you see that in the window?

KATH: Huh. There's something in there. What is that?

ED: Hi Sunil!

[Spooky music]

ED: Hello Sunil.

SUNIL PATEL: Hello.

ED: Welcome, uh, Welcome to Spooktown.

SUNIL: Thanks very much. Uh, thanks for inviting me down.

ED: No, not at all. Thanks for inviting us to this abandoned leisure centre.

SUNIL: Yeah, it's pretty good, isn't it? I think it's, um – I quite like these sorts of buildings. These old 60s, spooky – I think they're quite spooky when they're abandoned, aren't they? A bit weird.

KATH: Yeah.

ED: Very spooky, I'd say. Wouldn't mind popping a night light in every corner.

[All laugh]

ED: Just making it seem a bit better. How are you? How was your – how was your journey to Spooktown? Did you get here alright?

SUNIL: Um, it was nice. Yeah, it was a series of, um, buses. Uh, which I'm not used to. Just not used to buses. Yeah, it's been fun, thanks. A lot of nice countryside.

ED: Yeah.

SUNIL: Uh, yeah. Yeah yeah yeah. Is that – where it is? In the countryside? We're in the countryside.

ED: It is now.

KATH: Yeah.

ED: It is now you've said that.

SUNIL: Is it different every time, or – ?

[All laugh]

ED: No. No, I think it just sort of – it builds as we talk. So you've said it's in the countryside and now it's very much in the countryside.

KATH: That's where it is, yeah.

SUNIL: Fucking hell, alright. Build your own adventure, okay.

ED: Exactly. Yeah, exactly.

SUNIL: Yeah yeah yeah.

ED: And you can only get here via – what was it – 30 buses?

SUNIL: A number of buses.

ED: A nondescript number of buses, but –

SUNIL: All single deckers. Single decker minibuses made by LDV, so they're pretty old. Uh, but they're still going. Still used on the, uh, these – these rural routes.

ED: Straight into it. How many ghosts have you seen this week?

SUNIL: How many ghosts have I see? I've actually not seen any in real life this week.

ED: Oh!

SUNIL: But ever since sort of thinking about Spooktown and researching it, I have had a couple of dreams – not nightmares – just dreams about ghosts. I don't like to call them nightmares, uh, sort of just been – I've had occasional dreams where someone has been a ghost.

ED: But it's been very sort of –

SUNIL: It's been very casual. It's been a very, 'oh, you're a ghost. Okay, alright, thanks. Uh, well I'll go next door.'

[All laugh]

SUNIL: It's been those sorts of dreams, yeah.

ED: Light dinner party chat. 'So what do you do for a living?' 'Oh, I'm dead.' 'Oh, okay.' 'And how's it been during the lockdown?' 'Oh, okay.'

SUNIL: That's exactly it. I think it's best to treat ghosts like they're normal people.

ED: That's really nice. Like the way you would talk to a child.

SUNIL: Well, yes. That sort of thing, yeah. Yeah yeah yeah.

KATH: Yeah yeah yeah. Yeah, that's really – that's really kind.

SUNIL: Yeah.

ED: What's the scariest thing that's ever happened to you?

SUNIL: Scariest thing that's ever happened to me? I guess, um, I've never really had anything supernatural happen to me that I can remember. I think mainly – I've had, um, a head-on car crash. That's about it.

ED: Very spooky. Ooh.

KATH: Oh, right.

SUNIL: Not really – I don't really take these things very – like if anything spooky or like terrifying happens to me, I don't realise it's spooky or scary until someone tells me. Like in the moment I'm like, 'oh that's – well that's just happening.' And then, you know, afterwards, someone's like, 'well that, you know, that's weird. And I'm like, 'should I write it down? I'll write it down.' Write it down and tell people. It's always the way that you fear – you build it up in your head and then if it does ever happen it's

nowhere near as scary as the – whatever's in your head, right?
So –

ED: So if you see a ghost, you'll be like, 'oh, that's fine.'

SUNIL: 'Oh, thank god. I thought it would be worse.'

KATH: 'Oh, thank god.' Yeah.

ED: I'm really scared of breaking a bone because I've never done it.

KATH: I have broken a bone and I don't want to do it again.

SUNIL: Which one have you broken?

KATH: Wrist. Yeah, it was real dumb as well. I – I jumped off a swing.

SUNIL: How old were you?

KATH: Like 25.

[All laugh]

ED: In a cast, oh no.

KATH: Like 7. And I stood up on the swing and was like, 'this is going to be so cool if I jump off.'

ED: Oh, yeah yeah yeah.

KATH: And I did and obviously landed horribly. And, uh, broke my wrist.

SUNIL: Yeah. Best time to fall over is when you're young, isn't it?
It's, um, less sort of –

KATH: Yeah.

SUNIL: Like if I fell over now, it would take some weeks to get over it.

ED: Yeah, take a couple of minutes just to get back up.

SUNIL: Right, I mean a big fall at this age is a lot. It's a lot.

[All laugh]

ED: So that's like your scariest potential? It's just a bit of a fall? A tumble?

SUNIL: I do – I'm very scared about falling over in public.
Definitely, yeah.

ED: For the embarrassment, or – ?

SUNIL: It's the embarrassment and it's like, if you fall over someone's going to sort of half help you and it's going to be pathetic. It's sort of – it's worse – it's worse having someone help you get up when they haven't really got the strength in them to get you up than it is just getting up yourself, isn't it?

KATH: Yeah.

SUNIL: And it's like –

KATH: Yeah.

SUNIL: Just someone just standing over you going, 'you've fallen over.' 'Yeah, I know. I know.'

KATH: Putting an umbrella over you.

[All laugh]

SUNIL: I had a big fall in, um, 2016. And um, I told some people about the big fall, uh, like I just slipped on a – on a grate. A metal grate. And I went down. And I slipped and I went bang, just down on my back. And this woman came over to me and she went, 'you've just fallen.' And I just said to her, 'I've had a big fall!'

[All laugh]

SUNIL: And I told people I'd had a big fall and loads of my male friends were like, 'oh, yeah, I actually haven't told anyone, but I had a big fall as well. I actually had a big fall recently and nobody helped me.' And I went, 'well, this is a real subculture, this one.' The Big Fall Club. Good idea for a podcast, maybe. But anyway –

ED: Yeah. You say 'big fall' like people say the Great Depression.

SUNIL: It's affected me that much, yeah. Really big.

ED: It's taken years to recover.

SUNIL: I had to spend a lot of money to get out. Just buy myself some cream.

[Spooky music]

ED: Kath, do you have any questions that you'd like to ask before we, uh –

KATH: Oh, sure. Yeah yeah yeah. So. Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.

SUNIL: Yeah.

KATH: Dracula.

SUNIL: Right.

KATH: The Mummy. Shag marry kill.

SUNIL: Right, let me write them down.

[All laugh]

SUNIL: Uh, Mummy. Sorry, what was the last one?

KATH: Uh, Mummy was the last one.

SUNIL: Oh, sorry.

KATH: So it's Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.

SUNIL: Yeah.

KATH: Dracula, or the Mummy.

SUNIL: Dracula, that's it.

ED: And that's – yeah, that's the Mummy as in, you know, the Egyptian mummy, not the old mother.

KATH: Not, yeah.

SUNIL: Let me just make a note of that on my paper. 'Not my mother.'

KATH: A little annotation note.

SUNIL: So the Mummy in the film 'The Mummy'. Um, that's a – that is an old king. That's like a pharaoh, isn't it?

ED: It's dead.

SUNIL: Dead, is it?

KATH: Yeah. Dead wrapped in – wrapped in cloth.

SUNIL: Okay, so shag marry kill. Okay. I think I'd kill Dracula, just because that would be quite a feat.

KATH: Okay.

SUNIL: I think that's quite a special thing to have done.

ED: Oh, nice.

SUNIL: Kill Dracula.

KATH: Yeah.

SUNIL: Marry Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. Because it would just be exciting, wouldn't it? No days would be the same. And obviously shag the Mummy. Shag the Mummy.

ED: Did you say obviously?

SUNIL: Obviously shag the Mummy.

ED: Oh, because it's the last one left. Not –

SUNIL: Yeah, because it's the last one left. Not because I really, really wanted to shag the Mummy.

ED: I'm glad you asked this actually, because I've been meaning to shag the Mummy for a while now. Do you know what? Before this, I was like 100% shag Jekyll and Hyde, because it's more bang for your buck.

SUNIL: Oh.

ED: Kill the Mummy because it's already dead. Easy to get rid of the body. Marry Dracula because of the money. But you've – you've turned me around.

SUNIL: Oh, I think you've now changed my mind.

ED: Oh.

[All laugh]

SUNIL: No, I just thought it would be sad to marry Dracula. It would be sad for Dracula because like Dracula would just watch you die because he can live forever.

ED: That's really thoughtful.

SUNIL: Just want to spare his feelings, really.

KATH: Yeah.

SUNIL: By killing him.

ED: Uh, lovely, right. So we're here at this abandoned, um, leisure centre.

SUNIL: Leisure centre, yeah.

ED: 60s I believe you said. So quite like, um –

SUNIL: That's right, yeah yeah yeah. It wasn't around – yeah, it wasn't around long before it got shut down, yeah.

ED: Oh fuck. Um, and you say you've got – you've got a story that happened here?

SUNIL: Yeah, I mean, you know, I'm doing this as a tour guide, really. I don't know any of the people involved because they've since fled the town. Uh, sadly.

KATH: Okay.

SUNIL: Yeah. Um, and just left the swimming pool business entirely.

ED: Yeah.

SUNIL: It was really not for them after what happened, uh. What happened at the leisure centre.

ED: It is a business, isn't it? It's a business.

SUNIL: I mean, you must treat it as a business if you are to make a living. I mean it's not a hobby. It's not a pastime.

KATH: Yeah, I think that's –

SUNIL: There's a lot of – there's a lot to do. You've got to keep all the chemicals in balance, uh, you've got to lock up. Uh, you've got to stop children from drowning. So –

KATH: Yeah.

SUNIL: Yeah. Yeah.

KATH: Yeah, it's a big one, that.

SUNIL: It is a big one. Uh, you know, I'm not saying that that happens a lot, but when it does it really does affect people enough for them to just get out of the game. Entirely get out of the game, sadly.

ED: Sure, sure. Sure, sure, sure.

[Spooky music]

SUNIL: But, um, this all started, as far as I gather, a couple of – a couple of lifeguards at the swimming pool. [Splashing, children playing, upbeat music] Um, one of them came in one morning and she said to the other one, she said, 'ah, terrible, terrible nightmare last night.'

And he said, 'ah, what was that?'

And she went, 'I dreamt I was at the pool and there was a kid dived in and he went under for ages. And I thought, "ah, he's drowning, I've got to get him."' And she so she jumped in. 'And yeah, in the dream, and then I went down. I couldn't see him anywhere. And then I thought, "oh no, I'm drowning now. I'm drowning.'" So I tried to swim back out.

I turned back up and as I was turning back up, [splashing] the child grabbed my leg and started pulling me under. And I managed to – I kicked him loose, let him die, and came up. And I saved myself. And that was a terrible nightmare to have. Because obviously you failed at your job, you've killed a child, and you've

almost drowned. You know, terrible dream to have as a lifeguard.'

KATH: Mhm.

SUNIL: Mm. And, you know, the other lifeguard, the head lifeguard, was like, 'oh no, that's terrible. Terrible dream. But these things happen in this profession. You do catastrophise the worst things, you know.'

So the next day they came in and he was like, 'how are you feeling today? You've had a good night sleep?'

And she went, 'oh, terrible nightmare. Terrible, the second nightmare I've had. I've had – I've had another nightmare.'

And he went, 'ah, no, what's happened this time? What's happened this time in this nightmare?'

And she went, 'well, I dreamt I was locking up the pool [keys jingling], and uh, I was in the – I was under the, uh, high dive board. And I looked around and, um, there was a – there was a dead body just floating in the water. [bubbling] And I thought, 'ugh, what's happened here? Someone's just died? Someone's dived in and just died. I'd better just call the police because I can't jump [phone ringing] – I mean that body's been there for some time now. That child's body's been in there for some time. I'd better call the police.'

[Phone ringing] So she said, 'oh, well I wouldn't dive – I wouldn't dive in to – to get it because it had been there for some time, so I called the police.' And, um, I turned away and I was just about to open the door to – to leave to call the police, when um, I looked behind me and the child was there, out of the water. And he

grabbed me by the leg and dragged me into the water, and, uh [splashing], I died in my dream.'

And the other lifeguard goes, 'well, that is absolutely terrifying. Obviously, if you die in your own dream, you know, that's terrifying. Uh, but don't worry about it too much. Maybe just take a couple of days off. Maybe just do that. And, um, the next day, the head lifeguard – it's his job to lock up [gate closing], and he was just wandering around. He was wandering around the swimming pool, just making sure the chemicals were alright and everything and locking everything like that [keys jangling].

And uh, he uh, he went to turn the alarm [beep] on but it said one of the – one of the doors in the building is open so you've got to go – he had to walk around and he was like, 'I am a bit scared now, after all the weird nightmares Holly was having. But he went around and he saw – he saw the door to the – to the main pool was open.

So he was like, 'oh, that's weird. I'm pretty sure I shut that.' And um, so he just closed it. He went upstairs [footsteps], locked up the office. Um, he was about to turn the alarm off when he heard a huge crashing sound [glass breaks] from inside the pool. And he was like, 'fuck this, I'm out of here. That's absolutely terrifying.'

And then so he ran down the stairs [footsteps], he didn't even look at the pool. He was absolutely terrified. 'I'm not going to look at the pool.' Uh, he tried – he got out the door and he had his car keys ready and he ran to the car. And the car wouldn't start [engine noises]. And he goes, 'I'm not looking behind me. I'm not looking behind me.' He got inside the car [door closes] and he turned the car on and looked in the mirror and he saw the windows into the swimming pool and there was a child just staring at him. And then suddenly the car – inside the car the

temperature dropped to below freezing, and he was like – he started – he just got out of there. He – nothing happened, it was still freezing cold in the car. And he got home. And he was like, ‘alright, I’m home now,’ you know, absolutely terrified. Went upstairs [footsteps], went into the bathroom, and um, shut the door behind him.

And he sat down. And he thought, ‘alright, god, that was absolutely terrifying.’ And then he heard, uh, steps, child’s steps running up the stairs behind him in the hallway. And he was like, ‘I don’t have a child.’ And he was just – he heard these steps. And they were running up the stairs and he was like, ‘I don’t know what to do. I don’t know what to do.’ And then they just stopped outside the bathroom. And, uh, he just sat in there and he just spent the night in there.

[All laugh]

SUNIL: And then the next morning he opened the door and there was nothing there. He was absolutely alright. And he was like, ‘I’m not going to work at the swimming pool anymore.’ And, um, that’s the end of the story.

[Spooky music]

[Rain sounds]

KATH: Woah.

ED: Fucking hell. Fucking hell. Fucking hell. And that happened here? We’re here now?

SUNIL: That’s right. Yeah yeah yeah. So shortly after – after the story got around the town, everyone’s like, ‘well I’m not going in there.’

ED: Yeah.

SUNIL: I'd rather get on a series of buses to go to the main town to go to the swimming pool there.

KATH: Yeah, that would make sense.

SUNIL: Best reaction I've got to that story, though. You just going, 'fucking hell. Fucking hell, just spent the night in the toilet, did he?'

[All laugh]

KATH: Bloody hell, that would've been a rough night.

SUNIL: Just curled up in a ball in the bath. Fucking hell.

KATH: Yeah.

ED: I find all of his behaviour very believable.

SUNIL: Yeah, thank you. Uh, well –

ED: I'll start – I'll start with that.

SUNIL: Yeah. Yeah yeah yeah. Yeah, I hope it shook you to your core.

ED: Very very believable. I think – well, actually, not all of his behaviour. One thing that I sort of didn't believe – and sorry, is that, a. what a boring colleague to just tell you about their dreams. Like holy shit.

KATH: Yep. No one wants to hear them, do they?

ED: 'Had another dream last night.' 'Okay.' You wouldn't go, 'tell me about it!'

KATH: Oh god.

SUNIL: She was coming in tired, you know? She had to explain like, 'listen, I'm shaken up, you know?' If you'd had a bad nightmare, you'd tell someone – about work, you'd tell someone, right?

ED: Yeah, but I – definitely, you would tell someone. But I don't think the person who's listening would be like, 'ah great, tell me about your dream again.'

SUNIL: Yeah yeah yeah.

KATH: And also take some time off.

ED: That's the bit that I was getting to, is –

SUNIL: Oh is it? The – yeah.

ED: Well, you've had two nightmares now, take a couple of days off. Obviously full pay.

SUNIL: Go home and sleep.

ED: You look after yourself.

[All laugh]

ED: That's the best thing for you to do right now. Hop back in, see what happens! Let's get to the bottom of this rabbit hole.

SUNIL: Go – yeah. Get back on the ride. Yeah, okay. Yeah yeah, I understand.

ED: So she was having nightmares about this ghost child?

SUNIL: Yes, yeah. that's – yeah.

ED: She took a couple of personal days because of her nightmares about this ghost child that was grabbing her, uh, ankle. And then –

SUNIL: Yeah.

ED: It turned out to be true because the other colleague saw the child in the swimming pool. Does that mean her dreams weren't dreams? They really happened to her?

SUNIL: That's right. They were – no, it was the ghost manifesting itself in her dreams first and then coming for him.

ED: Oh.

KATH: So just sort of letting her know that, 'ah, I'm going to – I'm going to do this at some point, but just not to you. Don't worry. Just don't come in for a couple of days. Say you've had a nightmare. He'll let you have some time off.'

ED: Just let – yeah, just let him know.

KATH: 'He'll be there on his own and then I can do my thing.'

ED: Sort of like when the IRA said that there was a bomb in Manchester.

KATH: Yeah.

ED: Yeah.

SUNIL: It's very clever when you think about it. Very clever child ghost.

KATH: Yeah.

ED: It was a dream for – it was a dream for the woman. Nightmare for the woman, but it was, uh, it really happened to him? Or was it also a dream for him?

SUNIL: It was a reality for the, uh, head lifeguard, yeah. And I do understand how problematic it is that I've chosen that the head lifeguard was a man now, uh, and the assistant lifeguard is a woman. Uh, I wish I could go back and change it. Hm.

ED: It's interesting because you did – you started – there's a little bit where you went 'he, she,' and you did – you changed it live. And I was like, 'that's great that he's done that.' But now we've had the full story.

SUNIL: Did I?

ED: Yeah.

[Spooky music]

ED: We're going to keep digging into it.

SUNIL: Yeah yeah, please.

ED: We've got the car – the car got cold.

SUNIL: Yeah.

ED: Was that – I mean, that – winter’s closing in. Was it anything to do with that? Or –

SUNIL: I think it was the spirit inside the car with him, because he transported – he basically took the spirit home with him.

ED: So the spirit doesn’t – does need transport?

SUNIL: Does need some form of transport. Um, cannot rely on the local buses.

ED: Okay.

SUNIL: Needs to be driven.

[All laugh]

SUNIL: Yeah.

ED: Okay, so the – the ghost got a ride with, um, the male head lifeguard?

SUNIL: The – yeah, yeah.

ED: Back to his house.

SUNIL: Yeah.

ED: Um, ran up the stairs. Love the speed. Love that the child is running.

SUNIL: Yeah, because it’s scarier when they run, isn’t it? When you hear a child’s footsteps running?

ED: Yeah.

KATH: But the kid just sort of hangs back in the car while he, uh, went for a bath? And then decided to come in?

SUNIL: Sort of followed him in, got his bearings, uh, saw the lifeguard go upstairs and then thought, 'shall I? Give it – give it 30 seconds and then maybe pop upstairs.'

ED: So wait, because I missed this. Did the lifeguard go home, have a full bath?

SUNIL: He didn't have a full bath. He went up to the bathroom, uh –

KATH: I'm just – I'm filling in the gaps.

ED: Yeah. You're thinking what you would do after a day at work.

SUNIL: Yeah yeah yeah, after a day of being chased by – out of work by a ghost, you go straight – straight for a bath, I think. Relax in there.

KATH: Yeah.

SUNIL: Uh, he popped upstairs, you know, straight to the bathroom. Sort of maybe, you know, takes a look in the mirror. Bit of a safe space, the bathroom, I feel.

ED: Yeah.

SUNIL: Um, and then the, um, the ghost thought, 'oh, I wonder what he's doing up there? I'll run up there and just stand outside.'

ED: Yeah. I feel like a lifeguard wouldn't have a bath. They'd have a shower. A bath's a bit of a busman's holiday for a lifeguard, isn't it?

SUNIL: Well, no, because I thought like –

KATH: That's a good point.

SUNIL: Because there's lots of showers at the leisure centre. Sometimes it's nice to be – to have your own bath.

ED: Right.

KATH: Why – why was the ghost just sort of knocking about outside the bathroom? Why didn't he come in? Or were they just respecting privacy, or –

SUNIL: The door's shut.

ED: Uh huh.

[All laugh]

KATH: That's that then.

ED: Come on, Kath. He explained this. The door was shut.

SUNIL: Yeah, sorry. Because it can make it into people's dreams, uh, and stuff like that. But it cannot get through a door, unfortunately.

ED: No.

SUNIL: Very sad. Uh, haven't quite figured out how it got from when he looked around and saw it at the leisure centre to in his car, but –

ED: It's sounding more and more just like a child.

SUNIL: Hm, yeah.

ED: It sounds like a child trapped in a swimming pool who managed to escape.

SUNIL: It's a metaphor for fatherhood.

[All laugh]

SUNIL: 'He just kept chasing me around. He kept following me.'

ED: I thought they aren't allowed in the bathroom.

SUNIL: They're not allowed in the bathroom when you're in there, yes.

ED: Because the door's closed.

SUNIL: Yeah, maybe, you know, this story's sort of secondhand, you know, thirdhand, you know. But maybe it's, um, just a lifeguard who's scared of being a father and sort of turned into a mess, we don't know. But –

ED: But it was the – it was the woman's dream to have a child. Is that what you're saying?

SUNIL: Maybe.

ED: Maybe. [laughs] The whispering 'maybe'.

SUNIL: I didn't want to say 'maybe,' and it just came out as a whisper. Uh –

[All laugh]

ED: Okay. Um, I started – well, you finished the story and I was like, 'wow, this is 100% going into Spooktown lore.'

SUNIL: Yeah.

ED: And now, like –

SUNIL: What percentage are we at now?

ED: 10%.

SUNIL: 10%?

KATH: It has dropped, yeah.

ED: 10% and falling. A negligent lifeguard uh, refused to interact with a scared child. It's –

SUNIL: Yeah. Yeah.

ED: You can take the brackets out of the title for starters. And everything in it.

SUNIL: But what about the fact that like that story affected everyone in Spooktown so much they stopped going to the baths at the leisure centre now, because of that?

ED: Interesting perspective, yeah.

KATH: That is interesting. But I mean, it could have shut down for many reasons, you know?

SUNIL: No lifeguards.

ED: No lifeguards.

KATH: No lifeguards. Verrucas. Can they shut down a pool?

SUNIL: I think briefly, yeah. Um, so, you know, it did happen. I promise.

[All laugh]

ED: Sold!

KATH: I mean, back up to 100% going in.

[Spooky music]

SUNIL: How many – just out of interest, how many of these stories have made it into Spooktown?

ED: 4 out of 5 so far.

SUNIL: Who failed?

ED: Stuart Laws.

SUNIL: He makes everything up.

[All laugh]

SUNIL: You knew that. He had form. I think that's why you didn't let it in.

ED: Yeah. Straight away we were like, 'uh,' – whereas with yours, we were really sold on it until you started explaining it.

SUNIL: You must never probe too deeply, you know? That's the problem.

ED: What was the child dressed as?

SUNIL: Uh, swimming pants. Swimming – I panicked, I panicked.

[All laugh]

SUNIL: I was like, 'what's he going to' – three-piece suit. Three-piece.

ED: Well swimming pants makes more sense because he drowned there. It would be fucking wild if he was in a three-piece suit. No wonder he drowned. Have you tried swimming in a suit?

SUNIL: Heavy tweed dragging him under. It's his fault. It's his fault, he shouldn't have done it. Um...

ED: Brogues tugging on his feet.

SUNIL: Uh, yeah. He was wearing, uh, swimming pants. Swimming pants.

ED: Pants?

SUNIL: Yeah, like it was the 80s, isn't it? Don't know when he died. Maybe it was the 70s when he died, but they'd wear pants then. Do you know what? I'm sweating a bit under this questioning. It's –

ED: Very sorry, just trying to – just trying to work out whether the story's true or not.

SUNIL: No, you're absolutely right to. But it really does – it's testing, and I do respect that people have made it through this. Yeah.

ED: What is it? It's an 80% success rate so far.

SUNIL: Which means that 8 out of 10 times you'll just accept whatever they say, right?

ED: Yeah. That's exactly what –

SUNIL: Just a question.

ED: Yeah, that's the math of it. Maths.

SUNIL: Um –

ED: Can you and do you want to try and just hammer home that this was a ghost? And not just a lost child a negligent lifeguard was ignoring?

SUNIL: Yeah. It was – it was 100% a ghost because it appeared in the woman's dreams, which is what ghosts can do – in the female lifeguard's dreams. He appeared in that. Um –

ED: I've had dreams of human beings. That doesn't mean they're ghosts.

SUNIL: That's true.

KATH: That's a very good point, Ed.

SUNIL: That really – that was a real torpedo for me, that. Really blew me out of the water actually. I don't know how to, uh, okay. So he – definitely a ghost because it transported itself from the building when the lifeguard saw him in the rear-view mirror to inside the car in the form of a spirit. A cold spirit. Uh, and –

ED: So – okay, yeah. The one thing sort of making this slightly supernatural is how the child got –

SUNIL: Yeah, into the car from the swimming pool.

ED: From the swimming pool, looking inside, into the – into the car.

SUNIL: Yeah.

KATH: What if they're twins? Yeah, someone's in the swimming pool hammering on the window like, 'I've been locked in.' And the other one's in the car trying to warm up.

SUNIL: But there's no evidence of a child in there except it's just really cold.

KATH: So he's just in a cold car. There's literally – he doesn't see a kid. He's seen a kid in the building, locked up, got in his car and gone, 'it's chilly in here. Probably a ghost.' And driven home.

SUNIL: Got in the car and suddenly, as soon as he gets in, the temperature in the car drops.

KATH: Because he's just opened the door.

SUNIL: Yes. It's very interesting.

ED: It's very weird. But then the child – how does the child get back to the house? The child's in the car. He makes the – his spiritual element makes the car cold. And then he – and then they drive back. And then the ghost gets out of the car. And then goes into the house but then he can't – is it just bathroom doors that he can't go through? Are other doors okay?

SUNIL: Yeah. Yeah.

ED: Well that's –

SUNIL: Because he followed the –

ED: That's fine, that's good.

SUNIL: I don't know he – I don't know how spirits get about through doors and that.

ED: But it's not your job to. It's not your job to.

SUNIL: It's not my job to. But I'm just saying it happened. So you have to believe me. Yeah. Put me in.

[All laugh]

[Spooky music]

KATH: There's so many holes though.

SUNIL: I don't think there's a single hole.

ED: That's another thing. You keep on bringing out these phrases that convince me.

SUNIL: Name a single hole.

KATH: The –

SUNIL: These ghosts, they can do anything, can't they?

KATH: Apart from go through bathroom doors.

ED: Yeah, I think that's the issue. Ghosts can do anything, and this child barely does a thing.

SUNIL: Just follows the lad home, doesn't he?

ED: Yeah.

SUNIL: Yeah, well –

ED: He behaves exactly like a child. And that's what confuses me. I feel you've lost heart in this as well.

[All laugh]

SUNIL: It's because – I'm just trying to think like – if I like flesh it out a bit it might come across as contrived. I'm trying to make – you know, I'm just trying to tell you what actually happened. And if I embellish it, it'll take away from the real essence of the truth of it. Um – I think 100% a ghost. Said it again. Alright, look. It was a ghost because they'd – like he – he looked all over the building before he locked up, as you always do, okay? He was about to lock up, you know?

ED: Yes.

SUNIL: And basically, he realised another one of the doors was open. He was like, 'why is that open? That shouldn't be open, because I've just gone around to have a look around,' And so he

went over and then he heard that big crash. And he was like, 'what was that big crash?' See, there's no – the ghost made a distraction. He never saw anything break or anything blow up or anything, but he was like getting the fuck out of there.

ED: Yeah.

SUNIL: Then he looked around and saw the kid staring at him out of the window. Just staring. He wasn't like, 'let me out, I'm locked in,' as you would do if you were a child.

KATH: Okay.

SUNIL: He was just –

ED: Interesting, yeah.

SUNIL: And then he opened the door, he got in the car, and he was like, 'uh,' the car started. It's summer.

KATH: Okay. Okay, well that changes things.

SUNIL: It's summer. The temperature drops to below freezing and he goes, 'what is going on?' And he turned the heating on. Nothing. Just pegs it home. Gets home. He's like, 'uh, this is all over.' Opens the door, looks around, leaves it open for a bit. Leaves the door open for a bit and he's like, 'ah, I'm home now. It's good.' Closes it. Goes upstairs to the bathroom. Shuts the door behind him. Thinks he's fine. Hears the footsteps run up. And then he sleeps in the bathroom.

ED: Forgot about that bit.

SUNIL: Which I think is clearly a ghost. Clearly a ghost.

ED: When he saw the child in the window, was the child clearly dead and bloated from being – from having died in a swimming pool?

SUNIL: No.

ED: That's a – that's a real shame because that would've really –

KATH: Would've swung it, yeah.

SUNIL: Because ghosts don't look dead and bloated.

KATH: Oh, okay.

SUNIL: They look – they look pale. Maybe a little bit pale. But you know –

ED: Interesting, yeah yeah.

SUNIL: Just staring, you know. Spookily. Yeah.

KATH: Okay.

ED: Spookily. Just really hammer it home. Spookily.

[All laugh]

[Spooky music]

ED: Kath, what – should we have a chat?

KATH: Have a little chat? Okay.

ED: We're going to go and, uh, is it conflab?

KATH: Well, that's the word you've been using.

ED: Okay, we're going to – we'll have a chat by the slush puppy machine.

KATH: Alright, great.

ED: Over here. Bear with.

[Footsteps]

ED: So Kath, what do you think?

KATH: Um, blue raspberry.

ED: What? No, of the story. Of the story, the guy's story.

KATH: Oh, I just think – I don't think it was real. I don't think it should go in.

ED: Because there's no ghosts?

KATH: Yeah.

ED: And it was trash. It was fucking shit.

[Both laugh]

ED: Let's go back.

SUNIL: Oh, hi guys.

ED: Hello Sunil.

KATH: Hey, hey.

SUNIL: Just super – yeah, thanks for listening to that. it's really important that my story get heard.

ED: Yeah.

KATH: Thanks for telling it.

SUNIL: Hope it makes it through, you know?

ED: Um –

KATH: Oh no.

SUNIL: It's really important to me that it makes it into Spooktown lore.

ED: Kath, do you want to – right. Kath, do you want to field this one?

KATH: No, I think this is all –

ED: My turn, is it?

SUNIL: Why are you looking at me? Neither of you are looking at me.

ED: Just –

SUNIL: Yep.

ED: It's not gone in.

SUNIL: What?

ED: It's not – the story's not gone into lore.

SUNIL: Can you explain why?

KATH: I think you know.

SUNIL: I've done nothing wrong here.

[All laugh]

SUNIL: You know I'd love to hear what actually makes it through. I cannot be in the same boat as Stuart Law's. Cannot do it.

ED: We loved – we loved hanging out with you and the story.

SUNIL: Great.

KATH: He just –

[All laugh]

SUNIL: Yeah, there were too many holes in it, was it?

KATH: Just – you didn't convince us that it was a ghost.

ED: Yeah, I think it was watertight – pardon the pun. I think it was watertight but not – not that it was a ghost.

SUNIL: At what point did you –

ED: There wasn't a doubt in my mind that it was a child.

SUNIL: Where – where did you start thinking it was an actual child rather than a ghost?

ED: Uh, when he didn't do anything that a child couldn't do.

SUNIL: What, apart from like turn into a cold gas and get into a car.

KATH: We don't know that that wasn't the air con.

ED: You didn't say he turned into a cold gas.

SUNIL: Well, if you don't want to believe it.

KATH: I do.

ED: I want to believe it so badly. I want to believe it so badly. I can't even explain to you how much I want to believe it.

SUNIL: Alright, then why is the leisure centre shut?

ED: Stuff closes down. Who's using a leisure centre anymore?

KATH: Yeah.

SUNIL: Well, not – yeah.

KATH: Also, if the lifeguards did just leave, literally everyone who ran the business left, it's just going to shut down.

ED: I think if you ever listen back to this, you might go, 'oh, hang on, yeah. They might have a point here.'

SUNIL: They might. I see.

ED: Kath and Ed. Maybe you say, 'Kath and Ed', I don't know.

SUNIL: Alright, well, I'll just uh –

ED: Head back.

SUNIL: I guess I'll get a series of buses.

KATH: Yeah, enjoy the bus ride.

ED: Yeah, you should've really said because we could've just given you a lift.

SUNIL: It's alright because I've got a lot of paper tickets I need punching. Don't worry about it. It's alright, we've got about 4 hours until the bus comes, so. 4 ½ hours. I'll just wait here. This beautiful stone bus bench.

[All laugh]

SUNIL: Yeah.

ED: Well, um, we'll probably leave you to it, if that's alright.

SUNIL: You're going to head off, yeah?

KATH: Yeah, we – yeah.

ED: Do you want anything?

SUNIL: Do I want anything?

ED: Just, yeah. You've got 4 hours.

SUNIL: Uh, are there any souvenirs? Any Spooktown souvenirs or anything?

ED: Yeah yeah yeah, we've got badges.

SUNIL: A coaster. I want a coaster. I've got no coaster for this mug and um – this mug that I've got on me at Spooktown.

ED: Suddenly he brought a mug.

[All laugh]

[Spooky music]

ED: That was nice, wasn't it?

KATH: Yeah, yeah. It was nice, that.

ED: What's next?

KATH: Oh, uh, Barack Obama says he knows about a poltergeist at the Booker's Cash and Carry that leaves all the Haribo tubs at night. So go talk to him about it after this.

ED: Yeah, great.

KATH: Yeah.

[Spooky music]

This has been a Little Wander production. Music from Rhodri Viney. Local artwork from Suze Hughes. Voice by Melanie Walters. With special thanks to Beth Forrest, Steve Pickup, Sam Roberts, Henry Widdicombe, and Jo Williams. Other podcasts from Little Wander include Here to Judge and I Wish I Was An Only Child. Subscribe now on iTunes, Spotify, or wherever you get your podcasts.