

Welcome To Spooktown – Lee Ridley

[Spooky music]

ED EASTON: Ah! A real ghost!

[Footsteps on ice]

KATH HUGHES: Oh, bloody hell – oh, bloody hell!

ED: [laughs] You alright?

KATH: Sorry, yeah. No, it's just really slippery. Nearly went there.

ED: You did, didn't you?

KATH: I did.

ED: I didn't.

KATH: Alright, bragger, you've got those grippers on your shoes.

ED: They're just normal shoes. Well, yeah.

KATH: No, you –

ED: Do you mean cramp-ons for climbing?

KATH: Yeah. Yeah yeah yeah. You've got – you've stuck them on.

ED: I can't believe you're fucking riding me out like this. Telling everyone about my cramp-ons. Tell them about my ice pick as well, why don't you?

KATH: Well, it's sensible.

ED: Yeah, I guess so.

KATH: I'm the one that nearly fell, you didn't.

ED: Yeah. Do you want a cramp-on?

KATH: I don't think one will cut it.

ED: Okay. Alright. If you fall over, don't blame me.

KATH: Okay.

ED: Cramp-on sounds like a disease, doesn't it?

KATH: Cramp-on. Oh, they've got a case of cramp-on.

ED: Yeah. Oh, my granddad had cramp-ons.

KATH: Like a rash.

ED: No, like um... always seizing up.

KATH: Like a – oh, cramp-ons, yeah. Oh, the –

ED: Yeah.

KATH: Oh, the cramp-ons is playing up.

ED: Yeah.

KATH: Yeah.

ED: My granddad got it from the war. Got cramp-ons at the war.
'At the war.'

[Both laugh]

KATH: 'At the war.'

ED: Um, meet you at the war.

KATH: 'Number 1 war please'. Uh, where – where are we meeting
Lee?

ED: Woolies. Woolworths.

KATH: Woolies. Oh, lovely. Okay.

ED: Yeah, the old – the old Woolworths, yeah.

KATH: Grand.

ED: I call – I call it Woolies. I don't know whether – it's just a quirk
of mine. I call it Woolies.

KATH: I think a lot of people –

ED: Don't know whether anyone else –

KATH: No, that's – I would argue that's not your thing, Ed.

ED: [laughs] Imagine. No, I think – I think I'm the only one that calls it Woolies. I just like to shorten stuff. It's kind of a quirk of mine.

KATH: Mhm, sure sure sure.

ED: Have you had any nightmares this week, Kath?

KATH: Yeah. Yeah, I had one where, um, our mutual friend Kiri was there. And, um, she wanted a gin and tonic. And I was like, 'yes please, I'd love a gin and tonic.' She was like, 'go get the tonic.' Um, tonic was in the woods. Guarded by a – like a man-sized swan.

ED: Oh.

KATH: And they can break your arm when they're normal sized.

ED: Yeah.

KATH: So –

ED: What can they – break your spine like Bane.

KATH: Yeah. I think just break everything. Break the lot.

ED: Break the lot?

KATH: Break the lot.

ED: Job lot?

KATH: Job lot, yeah.

ED: Job lot of broken bones, yeah.

KATH: Yeah, so I just couldn't get the tonic. And I thought I'd really let – let Kiri down. It wasn't nice. Uh, and myself because I did want a gin and tonic as well, I won't lie.

ED: Did you tell her about the swan?

KATH: I don't – I don't think I got to the end. I think the lasting memory of the nightmare is fighting with the swan for the tonic.

ED: Oh, you fought? You did? You went for it?

KATH: I tried. I really wanted the tonic.

ED: Yeah. I think I'd go, 'oh, there's a man-sized swan there, I guess I can't get the tonic.' Rather than like, 'okay, roll my sleeves up.'

KATH: No, I had a go. I had a go. How about you? Any nightmares?

ED: Uh, sort of, yeah. Yeah. I bought a lot of nice silk blazers during lockdown and I just haven't – I can't wear them. Haven't had a chance – haven't had the opportunity to wear them.

KATH: Oh.

ED: Maybe I'll start wearing them for this. That would be nice.

KATH: Yeah.

ED: Well that nightmare's just flipped right around.

KATH: Oh nice, yeah. Nice to see you make an effort as well.
Good. Good. Yeah.

ED: Yeah. Pop a blazer on, fight a swan.

KATH: Job done.

ED: Job done. Job –

KATH: Job done, my mistake.

ED: Job done. [laughs] Um, there he is. There's Lee!

KATH: Oh, lovely.

[Spooky music]

ED: Hello, Lee!

KATH: Hey, Lee!

LEE RIDLEY: Hello, you two.

ED: Loving this Woolworths. Loving meeting outside a
Woolworths. My perfect date.

KATH: Yeah.

LEE: It was better in the old days, before the incident.

KATH: Oh, wow.

ED: [laughs] Oh!

KATH: Okay. I mean, thought the incident was just that it shut down. But apparently not.

LEE: I'm still traumatised.

ED: Oh!

KATH: Oh my god, okay.

ED: There was an incident involving you? Very interesting. So, uh, Lee, thank you so much for –

KATH: Oh! [scraping ice]

ED: Sorry, Kath's fallen. Are you okay, Kath? It's kind of weirdly icy just outside this Woolies.

[Kath laughs]

ED: Let's help – let's help you back up, Kath.

KATH: Oh, thank you.

ED: Are you okay?

KATH: God, sorry. I just – yeah, caught some – some ice, I think. Yeah. Sorry, yeah. I'm fine though.

ED: Another incident. Unbelievable.

KATH: I know. God, that's –

ED: That's two –

KATH: Is it?

ED: That's two incidents outside this Woolies now. Absolute shocker. Uh, so thank you so much for inviting us to this Woolies, obviously. Um, we're really excited to hear about your story. But first we've got a couple of q's. Open brackets – questions. So in total, questions is the – close brackets. Um –

KATH: Oh, thank god. I thought you weren't going to close the brackets.

ED: Yeah, imagine if this whole podcast was inside the brackets.

LEE: Very clever.

ED: [laughs] Thank you.

KATH: Don't encourage him, Lee.

ED: Uh, do – in brackets – encourage me. Close brackets. First question from me: how was your journey here?

LEE: Well, I got here in the end. The taxi driver nearly took me to Swindon because of the stupid autocorrect on my iPad. I'll be honest, I'm not sure which would've been worse. And the place isn't exactly very accessible either. Half of these buildings need to have a good hard look at the Disability Discrimination Act. It's worse than Edinburgh. And I don't know why you insisted on meeting here, anyway. You know I haven't been back since the incident.

KATH: Oh my god, what is the incident? Jesus! Well, thanks for –

ED: [laughs] Swindon!

KATH: Yeah. Yeah, sorry about the Swindon cock-up.

ED: We actually – we actually, um, we've got another series called Welcome to Swindon, which is, uh, it's almost exactly the same as this but it is based in Swindon. So do, uh, listen to that on wherever you listen to your podcasts.

KATH: Yeah yeah, do check that out.

ED: Welcome to Swindon. [laughs]

LEE: They probably still have an actual Woolworths.

KATH: Yeah.

ED: [laughs] The Swindon where Woolworths, C&A, um... what are the other –

KATH: Is there – is Ethel Austin's still going?

ED: Is it?

KATH: I don't know, you know.

ED: Blockbuster?

KATH: Yeah.

ED: Great, well I'm glad you managed to get a taxi here. And we're really sorry about the, um, accessibility issues.

KATH: Yeah, that is bad. We've done nothing to, um, notify anyone about it either. So –

ED: Yeah. 'For evil to exist, good men need do nothing but' – you know that quote? Whatever that quote is.

KATH: Yeah, that quote. Yeah yeah yeah. Basically, we've – we've done nothing and we should've.

LEE: I think that's what it embraces as well.

KATH: Yeah.

ED: We didn't – but we didn't say anything. Um, got a quick second question for you, Lee. Um, I'm sorry to ask, but how many ghosts have you seen this week?

LEE: Sadly I've seen none this week. I'm very much a Fox Mulder kind of guy. I want to believe but have no proof whatsoever. I currently live in a converted mental hospital, which explains a lot. So this place is bound to be haunted. I'm just too scared to do any research in case I shit myself in the middle of the night.

[Kath and Ed laugh]

KATH: That's a really valid reason not to want to do research, I think. So that's fair enough.

ED: Yeah.

KATH: I think with where you live, there's definitely something knocking about. So I think maybe you have seen something –

ED: Interesting, yeah.

KATH: And then you've gone, 'no no no, it's not' –

ED: Interesting.

LEE: It's when I start hearing the screams that I'm moving out. Changing the address on all my bills is too annoying to move yet.

ED: Love that you, uh, called – basically went, 'I'm a bit of a Fox Mulder myself.

KATH: Yeah.

[All laugh]

ED: Handsome, smart FBI agent, you know. Shit my pants. All the big hitters.

KATH: Yeah.

[Spooky music]

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

LEE: I'm from Newcastle, but that's not the scary part. There's a radio programme on up here called 'Night Owls' presented by Alan Robson. Anyway, every Halloween they broadcast a ghost hunt from somewhere in the North East. And when I was about 14, I decided to go on it. Basically it was just a load of people

freezing their arses off in an old pub for the night. At the time, I did get scared by some of the noises I heard. In hindsight, it was probably just Alan Robson making ghost noises to try to get more listeners to his show, though.

[Kath and Ed laugh]

KATH: Yeah, that is the scariest thing.

ED: The scariest thing that's happened to you is a bad ghost tour.

[Spooky music]

KATH: The Thing, the Swamp Thing, the girl from 'The Ring'. Shag, marry, kill.

LEE: I need some context first. So, what does the girl from 'The Ring' look like? I'd google it, but I'm scared of what results would come up.

KATH: Okay.

ED: Um –

KATH: Girl from 'The Ring.' Uh, sort of – very pale, um –

ED: Goth.

KATH: Goth.

ED: Yeah.

KATH: Yeah.

ED: Fit goth.

KATH: Fit goth. Long hair. Can't really see her face, I'll be honest. She's often, uh, crawling toward you with her hair in her face. Needs a haircut.

ED: Sort of like Electric Light Orchestra style gown, little nutty –

KATH: Mhm.

ED: So outdoorsy. Um –

KATH: Yeah.

LEE: My next question is how would I physically shag the Swamp Thing?

KATH: Okay, good question. Um –

ED: Um, I – is it rude for me to say the normal way? I imagine –

[All laugh]

KATH: The standard way, I suppose.

ED: Because is it sort of just made out of swamp business?

KATH: Well he was – he was a bloke at one point.

ED: Was he?

KATH: I think so. I think it was an experiment gone wrong, wasn't it? The Swamp Thing.

ED: I've never actually read it. Or seen it.

KATH: Neither have I.

LEE: If I'm honest, I've thought about this too much.

ED: No, you thought – you thought about it the right amount. This is exactly the kind of scrutiny we need.

KATH: You're the only person that's come back with – with questions.

ED: Yeah.

KATH: You've really dissected it.

ED: I like it. Um –

KATH: Yeah.

ED: The – very quickly, the girl from 'The Ring' is of age. So she is sort of – probably in her 20s?

KATH: Yes.

ED: Um, so that's – just to clarify that. The Swamp Thing, I imagine if it's made out of swamp stuff, you could stick it in wherever you want. What can I say? I'm a Casanova at heart, Kath.

LEE: And finally, what form would The Thing take?

KATH: Hm.

ED: I think that's the positive thing about The Thing, is it can take any form. So that's kind of your ace in the hole. Your ace in the Swamp Thing's hole.

KATH: Yeah. Yeah, because if you get – if you marry The Thing, I don't – like, you don't know what you're going to get.

ED: Great questions. [laughs] How am I going to fuck them all?

LEE: It's important to check.

ED: It is important to check. It's very important to check. How – how do I best fuck them all?

KATH: [laughs] So it's shag, shag, shag.

LEE: So I'd marry the girl from 'The Ring,' shag The Thing, kill the Swamp Thing.

ED: Yeah. I think – I think that's right.

KATH: Yeah. And I think there is a right answer as well. There is a right and a wrong answer.

ED: Yeah yeah yeah. There's always a right answer.

KATH: I think that's right.

ED: I agree. Yeah. Three ticks. Three ticks there. God, I'd love to fuck the Swamp Thing.

LEE: When's the wedding?

[Kath and Ed laugh]

KATH: That's not what this is. We're not like wedding organisers. We're not setting you up and then being like, 'right, let's – let's get the girl from "The Ring" in.'

ED: I smell a podcast there!

LEE: I thought this was the weird version of Tinder.

KATH: Yeah.

ED: To be fair, it'd have to be – it'd have to be a Zoom wedding. Because you can't – it's Covid, isn't it? So you can't have a proper one. But then her one defining feature is that she can crawl through screens.

KATH: Yeah. So –

ED: So it's not even Covid safe.

KATH: Yeah, it's not Covid safe at all.

ED: I'm – I'm afraid you're going to have to wait until she's been vaccinated. And, um, is she low risk?

KATH: I don't know.

ED: She lives in a well. That sounds high risk to me.

KATH: Yeah.

ED: Might be April. Might be April by the time you do it. I'll tell you what, Lee. I'll look – you tell us your story about this Woolies, and I'll look into the – I'll look into whether you can get married before the end of the year.

LEE: Great.

[Spooky music]

LEE: Before I begin my story, I couldn't believe it when you contacted me about this. I thought it had been long enough for me to lose any connection with what happened. The case went cold years ago. I bet the police don't know that you're talking to me. I know that you want to hear what really happened that day. What I never told the police that questioned us. Well, the memory does fade over time. So you shouldn't expect an accurate account. But I'll try my best. I need to do it for little Sophie's sake.

It all happened while I was working in Woolworths. [muzak plays] I was younger. I'd taken a summer job to save a bit of money to go travelling. As you know, Woolworth's used to be right in the middle of Spooktown High Street. In fact, the pound shop has taken over part of the premises now. If I'm honest, the pay was shit. But you got as many bags of pick n' mix sweets as you wanted. And that was good enough for me.

This particular branch of Woolworths was massive. Apparently it used to be an old factory, but it had closed down. It was probably all Margaret Thatcher's fault. And it was now one of the busiest shops in Spooktown. You entered through one of the creaky automatic doors. [people talking] The inside was a lot bigger than it would appear from the outside. In a way that was slightly uncanny. The walls spread out far to each side and the ceiling

arched high overhead. In the centre of the building, two escalators led down to the basement [escalator sounds] and up to the second floor. It was my first day on the job and I was on shelf stacking duty. I can't remember the exact date, but I do remember that Gail Porter was on the cover of that month's FHM Magazine. I know this because it took longer than usual to stack them on the shelf because I kept having to go to the toilet. [toilet flushes]

As I got on with my work, I noticed how tall the shelves were. They had a strange design. Taller and with thicker sides. Perhaps leftover from the building's industrial days. The top shelf was difficult for even a tall adult to reach. For a brief moment, I felt disconcerted as I looked at the wall of shelves in front of me and couldn't immediately recall the direct way back to the front. It wasn't difficult to get lost within the aisles, but you could always find your way back after a few tries.

The layout of the basement in the shop was even worse. [machines buzzing] This level was really quite big. I was fairly sure that the back of the basement was further away than the entrance to the supermarket could be. It was like the basement extended underground beyond the front of the store. That was a peculiar layout for a store to have. And it gave off a rather discomforting feeling. I considered that it might have something to do with how the building started as a factory. Eager to get out of this place, I quickly restocked the Love Eggs and made my way back upstairs. A bit later on that morning, when I was putting the prices on the boxes of Hungry Hippos, [clicking] a woman came over to ask for some assistance.

[woman's voice] 'Can you help me?' she said. And yes, you're right, she did sound a lot like Siri. 'I seem to have lost my daughter. She's 8 and called Sophie.'

'Does she have a phone?' I asked.

'Yes, but she isn't answering. I just left her for a moment to look at a new Henry Hoover.' Sensing the panic in the woman's voice, I tried to calm her down while me and the other staff went on the hunt for the missing little girl. We put an announcement out on the tannoy asking Sophie to ring her mum as soon as possible. After what felt like forever, the woman's mobile phone finally rang. [phone rings]

[woman's voice] 'Sophie? Where are you?'

[child's voice] 'I went down to the basement to look for a new Polly Pocket, but now I'm lost. Help me, Mummy.'

Feeling very relieved, I took the phone from her mum and tried to guide Sophie back to the escalator. Despite being the new guy, it should have been easy to do. However, Sophie was too short to see the exit signs over the big shelves and my directions were sketchy at best. 'What can you see?' I asked Sophie as she wandered around.

[child's voice] 'Well, there's some funny shaped Kinder Surprise eggs.' In an instant, I knew she meant the Love Eggs. And that she was close to the exit. I told her to turn left, then right, then left, and then she'd finally be free.

After a few minutes, Sophie exclaimed, 'I can see the exit sign.' And the rest of us breathed a sigh of relief. But that proved to be

very short lived. 'No, wait. There's no door. It's simply disappeared.' Sophie started to weep. We thought she was joking and just being a typical kid.

So her mum started to shout, 'stop fucking around and get your ass up here!' Suddenly we heard some very loud crackling on the phone and no one knew what it was. [phone crackles]

[child's voice] 'Mummy, please help me. I'm getting very scared.'

[woman's voice] 'Can you see anyone around you?'

[child's voice] 'Not a soul.'

I thought this was very odd. Woolworth's was busy. The new Grand Theft Auto had just been released. Everyone in Spooktown was out to get their hands on a copy. Then there was other weird noises down the line. Buzzes and beeps. Screeches and scrapes. [phone beeps] Like someone was trying to look at porn on the internet in 1998. [dial-up internet sounds] I couldn't think of anything to say. I just waited for whatever happened next. Sophie's next response came in a sudden burst of clarity.

[child's voice] 'Hey, I think I can see someone.'

'Where are they?' I asked.

Then her mum urged, 'go to them and ask for help.' But Sophie's reply gave me the creeps.

[child's voice] 'People shopping in different aisles. They look kind of funny. They look like shadow people. I'm going to talk to them.'

‘Wait. No, don’t. Sophie, stop!’ I shouted down the phone. The distorted crackling and clicking noises grew unbearably loud, rising to a swell.

‘Shadow people. Talk. Ask for help.’ Sophie’s voice was unconcerned, even through the distortion.

‘Oh god. No, stop.’ I said despairingly.

‘Hello, shadow person,’ said Sophie in a quivering voice. Then all of a sudden came the most evil voice I have ever heard.

[low voice] ‘Hello, little girl. I bet you wish you’d done your shopping in Sports Direct instead. Don’t worry, you’re mine now.’

And then I heard the most evil laugh.

[low voice] ‘Hahahahahaha.’

At that moment there was a burst of loud, crackling static. [static] Then the call disconnected. [phone busy signal] Maybe I should have gone down to the basement to see what I could do, but I wasn’t thinking straight. I ran from Woolworths, sweating with fear. I packed my bags that night and left Spooktown for good. I knew I could never talk of this again, so I decided just to never talk again. It was easier that way. The truth is that I didn’t lose my voice because of my disability, I was just too scared to speak. Poor little Sophie was never found. And when word got out into Spooktown about the horrific incident of that day, no one shopped at Woolworths ever again. The sad demise of a retail giant as well as a sweet little girl. The end.

[Spooky music]

[Ed laughs]

KATH: Oh. Wow.

ED: Oh, yeah.

KATH: Right. I get why you've not spoken about it.

LEE: Yes, but I've felt guilty ever since.

KATH: Yeah, and you should do. Um –

ED: What? Hang on, it's not his fault.

KATH: No, but you could've mentioned it. Mentioned something.

ED: Could've brought it up, yeah. Could've brought it up.

KATH: You don't just leave.

ED: Yeah. Yeah, fair. If – if – if we are to believe this, Lee, I'm not saying we do believe it, you are – it's your fault Woolworths has shut down.

LEE: I wasn't getting paid enough for that shit.

ED: Yeah, fuck. What was – when was this? It must've been – well, it must've been when Woolworths was still about. So minimum wage would've been –

LEE: 2009. Not that I researched it.

KATH: £5.80 in 2009.

ED: £5.80? Yeah, fuck that.

KATH: Yeah, I take that back. You shouldn't feel guilty, you're fine.

ED: Listen, mate. You stack up the Love Eggs, you go home.

KATH: Yeah.

ED: You come back in in the morning, you reshuffle the Love Eggs. Do you remember that? Do you remember getting your pocket money, sprinting down to Woolworths, buying as many Love Eggs as you could?

LEE: The were trying to diversify.

ED: And yet they closed. Is that because of the Love Eggs or is that not because of the Love Eggs? Do you know what I mean? That's what happens. And then they get seen as a, uh, retail shop starts selling sex toys, it's the death knell, isn't it?

[Spooky music]

ED: I think Kath's tried to break into the Woolworths to try to find some Love Eggs.

KATH: I tried – I – I've sort of rammed the crowbar in there. And I sort of need a bit of help to sort of get some leverage going. Um, but I'm nearly – I think I'm nearly in.

LEE: Just don't go into the basement.

ED: Okay. Okay.

KATH: Well, but if we want to know whether this happened, surely that's where we've got to go.

ED: I don't want to meet no shadow people.

KATH: I don't want to meet a shadow person, but Sophie might be down there. We don't know.

ED: What, you think no one checked?

KATH: I think no one checked. I think everyone left and that's why Woolies shut down. Everyone packed their bag in the night and left.

LEE: She'll be about 26 now.

[All laugh]

KATH: Well you did say it was a big space. So she could've converted it into some sort of very posh basement apartment.

ED: Yeah.

LEE: Full of sex toys.

ED: Absolutely. Chock a block full of Love Eggs.

KATH: Can't move for them. Right, okay. I'm going to try. I'm going to have another go at getting in. Um –

ED: Okay.

KATH: Okay, give me a second.

ED: So Sophie was lost, she was looking for Polly Pockets. It sounds – it sounds pretty believable to me, all of this. I'm – I'm trying to find a crack in your armour. Um –

KATH: I'm in. I'm in by the way.

ED: Oh, great. Oh, so we can go have a mooch about. Here's –

KATH: Yeah yeah yeah.

ED: Here's the thing that I find least believable about your story, is a three storey Woolworths.

KATH: I've also written that down.

ED: Yeah. It's unbelievable. If I wasn't stood right in front of it, I wouldn't believe it.

LEE: It held the record as the biggest one.

ED: That – that stacks up.

KATH: Okay, that – yeah, that –

ED: That stacks up like a pile of eggs, that.

[All laugh]

ED: Okay, so should we – should we go in and have a – have a look?

KATH: Yeah.

ED: This is the – how you get down to the basement.

KATH: Hm.

LEE: I doubt the escalator still works, so I'll stay upstairs.

ED: Yeah, that would be – that would be wild if the – everything's still fine.

KATH: Yeah.

ED: It's just the people left but the shop's exactly the same. I mean, it is weird that the pick n' mix is still here.

KATH: Yeah, it's literally like everyone dropped everything and ran. It's really strange. The FHM's is still here. With Gail Porter.

ED: Oh god, yeah, that's Gail. She really was the best of us, I think. I'm glad to hear her name again.

KATH: Yeah.

ED: So Sophie got lost, she went downstairs, but she – she said that there wasn't a door out.

KATH: There is – I mean, if there's no exit, we are risking not being able to get out if we go down –

ED: I'd fucking hate that.

KATH: Yeah.

ED: I like you, Lee, but I don't want to spend the rest of my life in a basement with you.

LEE: But you might get to meet a middle-aged woman.

ED: Very true, yeah. Might get to meet a – what did you say? 26 year old Sophie? Should we – should we head down?

KATH: Yeah, okay.

LEE: I'll come down if you hold my hand.

KATH: We can do that.

ED: Do you want to hold his hand or should – well, let's both hold.

KATH: Let's both –

ED: A hand each.

KATH: Yeah. Let's go down like a wall of three.

ED: A wall of three, I love that.

KATH: I'll have to sort of sit on the edge of the escalator, though. Because I can't – so if I sort of sit on one handle, Ed sits on the other, we'll hold your hand and then we'll slide down –

ED: What an image! A terrifying image.

KATH: Well, we're doing it. Alright, here you go.

[Spooky music]

[Escalator sounds]

ED: Okay.

KATH: Ah.

ED: Oh! Oh wow. Oh. Okay, so it's just Love Eggs. There's like nothing else down here.

KATH: Floor to ceiling. Bloody hell.

ED: Lee, you did a great job.

LEE: The manager insisted.

[All laugh]

ED: Another strike against Woolies closing down, there. The – the manager is a deviant. Okay.

KATH: So I can see how –

ED: Okay, it seems pretty normal to me.

KATH: Yeah. It doesn't seem – it doesn't seem –

ED: Apart from –

KATH: The obvious. The Love Eggs, yes.

ED: The LEs.

KATH: But how did she get lost down here? Because I mean, you –

ED: It's big.

KATH: It's big, but you can barely – you genuinely can't move for Love Eggs down here. So she – so –

ED: Yeah, but she was like tiny, wasn't she? So she can't see above all of this like we can. Like Lee said, she couldn't see the fire exit sign.

KATH: Was she definitely down – I mean, you said you spoke to her on the phone. Was she definitely down here? Was she just somewhere else?

ED: Great question.

LEE: It was her mother who said she was down here, but maybe she'd gone away with her dad.

ED: Oh.

KATH: Oh.

ED: See, yeah. It was just the mother. It was just the mother that said it. So is this like a cover-up? Is this like a JonBenét Ramsey style cover-up?

KATH: Oh my god.

ED: Like the mother's killed the daughter.

KATH: Oh god.

ED: That's actually – that's actually scarier than just being trapped down here for... 22 years?

KATH: Yeah. I have – I have written down specifically, 'polite girl, rude Mum, bad man American.'

ED: [laughs] Bad Man American's my rap name.

KATH: There is a weird energy down here.

ED: Yeah.

KATH: But – but yeah, I'm – do you have – does anyone have signal down here? Could she have even have been on the phone?

ED: I don't have signal but we – we don't know what, um, her service provider was. So –

KATH: That's true.

ED: I mean, back then with – they were all different, weren't they? Orange was one?

KATH: Orange was one.

ED: Orange was one.

KATH: T-Mobile was one.

LEE: Virgin.

KATH: Virgin.

ED: Virgin. Virgin. Always funny. Can't believe he got away with that.

KATH: Yeah, wild, isn't it? He's made millions off that.

ED: It's like calling it Willies. Willies mobile.

[Kath and Ed laugh]

ED: Bum Bum mobile. Yeah, that's probably why I've got no reception down here.

KATH: Bum Bum Wednesdays.

ED: [laughs] Bum Bum Wednesdays! Oh god.

KATH: I've no doubt that something's happened here, but I am – I'm not sure it's exactly as it – as it seems.

ED: You're calling Lee a liar?

KATH: Well you did say at the top, Lee, that your memory's faded and it might not be accurate. So you legit called yourself a liar at the top.

LEE: Maybe the police know more now.

KATH: Maybe.

ED: Yeah. Yeah, I guess we should've checked in with the police. Whether they like found a body down here or something. Um, instead of just ragging it down here as quickly as possible. Um –

KATH: That's true.

ED: Well, let's – let's – let's head back upstairs and I can phone the police and just sort of make a general enquiry. How does that sound? If we –

KATH: Yeah, as long as you're happy with that, Lee.

ED: Um, I'm just going to –

KATH: Because I mean, you did flee the area, so –

LEE: Leave my name out of it.

ED: Okay, yeah. Fair. Um, so I'll just get – I'm going to head back up now. Oh – well, the door's – the door's not there.

KATH: What do you mean, the door's not there?

ED: The door is now not there. And is a wall.

KATH: Oh god.

LEE: Don't be silly.

KATH: Can you see the door?

LEE: But it was there before.

ED: Well yeah, we came through it, didn't we? Yeah.

KATH: Yeah, it was. Uh, okay. Well that's an issue.

LEE: I'm not good in closed spaces.

ED: It's a good job this basement's massive then, isn't it?

KATH: It's massive.

ED: I guess it's enclosed with Love Eggs, so it does feel a little claustro.

KATH: A little bit, yeah. Yeah, you're right actually, yeah.

ED: And it's a – it's a good point, Lee. I'm not a fan down here. It stinks. Um, Kath, can you just crowbar where the door used to be? And we'll just, uh –

KATH: Yeah, okay.

ED: We'll just bash through it.

KATH: Yeah, I'll just bash through the brick. Okay.

ED: Is that alright?

KATH: Yeah yeah yeah yeah yeah. Ah!

ED: Nice.

KATH: That's done it.

ED: One! Woah!

KATH: Yeah. Woah.

ED: That's the strongest person I know.

KATH: It's, uh, it's just cardboard painted to look like brick. And that's how they've hidden the door, actually. They've just shifted it across. It's quite impressive, really.

LEE: If only Sophie knew.

KATH: Yeah. What a shame.

ED: Poor Sophie. Didn't even have the intuition to check.

KATH: To check if it wasn't painted cardboard. This is why you should always carry a crowbar.

ED: Yeah yeah yeah.

KATH: This is what I'm always saying. Always carry a crowbar.

ED: God bless your mother.

KATH: Just to check if it's cardboard.

ED: Yeah. Uh, well, I mean that's – that for me has sort of settled it. Even the fact that, you know, the door did disappear.

KATH: But we've not seen any shadowy figures. Who was she talking to? Was it her dad?

ED: Here's – if she was on, um, Bum Bum Mobile then no one.

KATH: Hm.

ED: Um –

KATH: Yeah, that's fair.

[low voice] Hi.

KATH: Did you just hear that? That's – I just heard the – I just heard the bad, bad American.

[low voice] I'm watching you.

ED: Fuck.

KATH: Oh Jesus, no.

ED: Fuck that.

KATH: Um, alright. Uh –

ED: Genuinely fuck that.

KATH: Let's get out of here, yeah. Let's get out of here now. Now guys, right? Uh, through the cardboard door.

ED: But that's, I mean, that's legit. That's legit.

KATH: Yeah, that's why I want to get out. I believe it. I believe it. I believe it all.

[low voice] You're mine now.

ED: Fuck off. Fuck off!

KATH: We solved your cardboard riddle, so you're – we're not!

ED: Let's get out – let's actually fuck out of here.

KATH: Yeah yeah yeah.

ED: Grab hold of one of Lee's hands.

KATH: Yeah, come on.

ED: I'll grab hold of the other hand. We're dragging – we're dragging him up now.

[low voice] Go to Sports Direct next time, you pussies.

[Kath and Ed laugh]

ED: Actually a very rude bad American man.

KATH: Yeah. Yeah, bad man American.

ED: Bad man American, sorry.

KATH: Very rude, actually.

[Spooky music]

[Guitar and flute music]

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[Spooky music]

ED: Uh, alright. To be – to be fair, I 100% believe it now.

KATH: Yeah.

ED: Obviously. Uh, and even if – even if I didn't, I think the idea of infanticide is scary enough to – to be in.

KATH: Yeah.

ED: Spooktown.

KATH: Yeah, that's fair.

LEE: Sorry, did I miss anything?

[Kath and Ed laugh]

ED: I forgot – I forgot that Lee had immediately left the base when – after you, uh, one-shotted the wall with your crowbar.

KATH: Yeah, yes, yes. So whose hand did we grab?

ED: Um... uh, I just grabbed my own hand.

KATH: Oh, okay.

ED: I just – I ran up – I ran up the escalator holding my own hand.

KATH: Okay, okay. I must've done the same thing, then.

ED: Yeah.

KATH: Weird.

ED: Yeah.

KATH: I do that sometimes.

ED: Um, you did miss a little bit, Lee, if I'm honest. Um, I won't go into details because I don't want to spook the f out of you again, but we believe you.

KATH: Yeah, we – we believe your story now.

ED: We believe your story, 100 p.

LEE: Good. Because I'm never coming back.

KATH: Well that's –

ED: Is that – is that about Spooktown or about the podcast? Is that – should we message your agent, or?

LEE: I have other stories to tell, but they can wait.

ED: Nice.

KATH: More incidents, okay.

ED: Nice.

KATH: Did you just keep fleeing the area and then coming back? And having another awful thing happen and then leaving again?

ED: 'I knew I shouldn't have gone back. I knew I shouldn't have gone back.'

LEE: I came to every Spooktown FC home game.

ED: Oh, nice.

KATH: Okay.

ED: Nice. Nice. I love that. 'I'm never coming back again! Apart from obviously for the matches, because I'm a fucking lad.'

Absolutely fucking boy. Um, we have a formality to – to just get out of the way, Lee. Uh, where Kath and I go and discuss whether we believe your story. Um, I think – I think we can all agree. It's a foregone conclusion.

KATH: Yeah.

ED: But do you mind if we just quickly nip and just have a chat about whether we believe you or not?

LEE: Fine.

ED: Cheers. Kath, um, should we go stand by the pick n' mix?

KATH: Yeah, yeah. Okay.

[Children's music playing]

[Footsteps]

ED: Actually I'm going to have a foam tooth.

KATH: Is there any, um... are those pink mice there?

ED: Yeah. To be fair, they're all stuck together.

KATH: I'll just eat the mound.

ED: Mound of mice. I think that's called a rat king. Sugary rat king.

KATH: I'll have the sugary rat king, please, in the shape of a pick n' mix box.

ED: Um, do you believe it?

KATH: Yeah, I mean I did – I was – I was really like, ‘well, something’s amiss here because lack of signal and stuff downstairs and like –’

ED: Mhm.

KATH: Only the mum saw her go down there. But – but Jesus. There – there was something going on.

ED: I thought the parents – I thought the parents had killed her for the longest time.

KATH: Yeah.

ED: Uh, and I thought Lee – obviously like, nice guy, doesn’t want to think the worst of people. So he’s like, ‘oh, it’s probably ghosts. They probably didn’t kill their child.’

KATH: Mhm.

ED: Whereas I, listener of serial killer podcasts –

KATH: Yeah.

ED: Am like, ‘probably killed her.’

KATH: The parents did it.

ED: Yeah.

KATH: Yeah.

ED: And then obviously go to Woolworths to try and hide it. Um, but –

KATH: Obviously.

ED: I don't know whether you heard anything down in the basement, but I shat a pant, um, so I now believe and I believe Lee 100%.

KATH: Yeah. I think I believe too. Uh, I didn't shit my pants. But, um –

ED: Oh, no, same then. Same then.

KATH: No no no. I – I know. I know you – I know you did. Um –

ED: It was just Love Eggs I shat out, but – nah, nah, nah, not having that, actually. Um, I mean it's a solid yes, isn't it? Of course. Of course this happened.

KATH: Yeah. Yes. Yeah.

ED: Should we head back and welcome Lee into the fold?

KATH: I don't think he wants to be, if I'm honest. I don't think he wants to be welcomed back to Spooktown. But –

ED: Well, we'll welcome his story. We'll welcome his story.

KATH: We'll welcome the story, yeah. And then – and then –

ED: Fill your packets with the – with the rat king.

KATH: Yeah, I can't. It's – it's too big for my pocket. That ain't going to fit.

ED: Fuck. Yeah, fair.

KATH: It's literally the size of the pick n' mick box. Pick n' mick – oh no, pick n' mix box.

ED: Yeah. There was a shop near me when I was growing up and it said, uh, it was called 'Pick or Mix', which I thought was quite – quite mean.

KATH: Hm.

ED: Anyway – [laughs] let's head – let's head back to – let's head – head back to Lee. Hi, Lee!

KATH: Hey, Lee.

ED: Uh, your – we of course believe your story because we lived it.

LEE: Now let's never speak of it again.

ED: Fair. Sold.

KATH: Yeah. No, I'm up for that.

ED: Fair, sold, and agreed.

KATH: Yeah.

ED: Uh, we – we're getting a bit of, um, cash from the council these days for making this, uh, so we've got a taxi for you on account so we can – we can just get you a taxi home if you want. Or, uh, we've got, um, Bum Bum Wednesdays so you can come and, um, catch 'Tenant' with us.

LEE: Can it go to Swindon please?

KATH: Yeah, we can make sure that typo happens. And you go to Swindon. Yeah.

ED: Yeah. We'll take – we'll take you to Swindon and we'll see you on our other podcast.

LEE: Thanks very much.

ED: Thank you.

KATH: Thanks for bringing us here.

ED: Yeah, genuinely. Thank you. That was, um, that was one of the spookiest ones.

KATH: It was fucking terrifying is what it was.

ED: Yeah. Yeah. I fucking loved that. Um, oh, here's your taxi. Well it was lovely – that was quick. [laughs] Bloody hell. That was fast. Um, that was great, wasn't it? Thank you so much for coming to – back to Spooktown to tell us that story, Lee.

KATH: Yeah, it is appreciated.

LEE: It was one minute away.

ED: It was. It was one minute away, thank god. Thank god. I'm surprised they've got Uber in Spooktown, but fair play to them. In you pop.

KATH: Yeah.

ED: Uh, lovely to see you. Thank you so much for coming and doing this. Safe journey to Swindon.

LEE: See you next time you want to shit your pants.

[Kath and Ed laugh]

KATH: And it is a want. It is a want.

ED: Yes, it is a want. Thank you so much! We'll, um, we'll see – we'll see you next time we want to shit our pants.

KATH: Thanks, Lee.

LEE: Thanks.

[Spooky music]

ED: That was nice.

KATH: Yeah. No, that was nice. Yeah.

ED: I think we're done for the day. Is there any – anyone else?

KATH: Um, oh. We're – one of the Sugababes says there's a dog with a very human face by the tennis courts, so I'm going to go and see if she needs a lift anywhere.

ED: Yeah, good shout. Mutya?

KATH: Yeah, I think so.

ED: 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.