

[Transcript] Morbid / Episode 484: The Alleged Smurl Family Haunting pt 2

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Mike Williams set off on a hunting trip into the swamps of North Florida where it was thought he met a gruesome fate in the jaws of hungry alligators, except that's not what happened at all.

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You guys went ham sandwich and ordered so many lunar dials in the pre-sale there.

I was like, oh my god, you became entire ham hoagies.

What's a ham hoagie?

What is that?

Isn't it like a sub?

But somewhere else there.

From where you call them hoagies?

A sub is a hoagie?

Yeah.

I thought I was going to say a sub is a soggy.

Well, I don't know.

All I know is that the motherfucking lunar dial is going to be available on the Wondery Shop starting August 1st.

www.wonderyshop.com and that's starting August 1st.

But if you're not one for the internet, that's fine, because you can go out into the world.

This is my favorite part.

And you can go to some of my fucking favorite places.

Hell yeah.

Target.

Target.

Noble.

Barnes and Noble.

And Amazon starting August 1st.

And you can buy it there, baby.

Play the game.

Play it.

Play it so hard.

Go get it.

Lunar dial.

A bunch of hoagies starting in August.

August.

Hey weirdos, I'm Alina.

I'm Ash.

And this is Morbid.

Look at you following my leader.

That's me.

Leader.

That's me.

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You're a leader.

I'm a follower.

No, I'm a leader.

You're a leader.

I'm a follower.

Yeah, literally not at all.

Actually, I feel like we're both leaders.

Yeah, I would like to think that.

No, I'm just like ballin' in my own court.

Absolutely.

As you should.

Yeah.

You know?

Yeah.

Don't ball in other people's courts.

Literally don't ball in other people's courts.

Don't do that.

Get on your own court.

Guys, this has nothing to do with what we are just talking about right now.

But we didn't have a plan going into this for like a small talk.

But I think I just dropped some good wisdom on you.

I think you did because usually we have like some points we want to hit and then we just let it go from there.

Yeah.

We had nothing when we went into this.

We were just, I'm flying off the seat of my pants, but I thought about it and Halloween stuff is out right now.

Halloween?

And I got to tell you, we're almost in August and I feel like my soul is coming alive.

It's like a weakening.

Because I feel spooky season is upon us.

Actually, the other night I went outside like probably, I don't know, like eight or nine o'clock and I smelled the air and I said to myself, that smelled a little bit like full.

I said that to Drew and he just looked at me like, what the fuck is wrong with you?

He's like, it's July.

I was like, not where I'm from.

Not in my soul.

Not in this court.

Not in my heart.

No.

It's not July in my heart.

Although I'm getting a little bit like, not really, but I'm getting like kind of sad because I gardened for the first time this year.

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Like you saw my garden the other day.

I did.

It's pretty bad.

She's fucking thriving.

She is.

I feel like I'm going to be a little so sad when I can't garden anymore.

I don't feel that way, but I will feel bad for you.

Yeah.

I'll empathize with you.

Well, I can still garden.

What?

I'm sorry.

I was correcting my own.

I was like, I won't empathize.

I'll sympathize.

I will not.

But I will sympathize.

I'll give you a little sympathy.

Yeah.

No, I think obviously you can still garden in the fall, but then like when the winter hits,

I'll be so happy during the holidays, but then I'll just be like, my garden is gone.

I mean, I'm looking forward to that song that you're going to create.

Just sing it to you when I come in.

That single that you're going to drop in the winter.

That's what I'm excited about.

It's called ball in your own court.

But you know what else is happening right now?

Um, pub day, pub day, pub day.

It's paperback pub day for the butcher and the rent and you can go get it anywhere you get books.

And also it has a sneak peek of the sequel.

That's right.

It has a fucking chapter from the sequel.

Yeah.

So you can get started before anybody else reading the sequel.

Except me.

Get on it.

I read it.

Get on it.

Not the whole sequel, but I did read some chunks.

Yeah.

This bitch is a scary girl.

What did I say to you the other day?

And I said, put that on a quote on the front of it.

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Why didn't we write it down?

I think I said, oh, I said, so I said being in her inner orbit truly scares me.

Dot, dot, dot.

And she's my sister.

Yeah.

And I thought that was a great quote.

Yeah.

It was something like that.

I think it was a little bit better.

I liked it.

But either way, it's fun to have another pub day.

Yeah.

Pub days are fun.

You guys have been fucking amazing buying the book and buying the paperback and just giving me all kinds of like support and just like support.

Ra.

You know, and I appreciate it.

Do you like it?

You want Huraz?

I feel the Huraz.

I like that.

Like they really give it to, and I love you guys for that.

Huraz.

You know, Huraz.

Who fucking Huraz?

Yeah.

So go get that paperback.

Paperbook.

Go back, you know.

Paperback book even if you feel.

Get that as well.

And guess what?

By the time you listen to this, Alina will have gone into targets across not the whole state or even half of it.

She's going to go into target though, and she's going to sign some books.

So if you're lucky enough to go into a target that Alina signed the book in, you could buy that sign.

You could have that book.

It works like that.

That's what happened to me.

I've never gone and bought a book that like the author signed.

So I feel like that's a special moment.

Oh, I'd be excited for authors that I love, but it's wild to me that people feel that way about my signature.

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I was going to say, I appreciate your, this is a crazy sentence, you're an author that people love.

Yeah.

That still hasn't sunk in there.

Still has not sunk in there.

I have just, just to end our little chat in the beginning so we can get to the case.

I never end our chat.

Don't end our chat.

Keep going.

No, I was just going to say, guys, go read The Troop by Nick Cutter.

She's been talking about that a lot.

It's a great book.

I highly recommend it.

It's pretty brutal.

Didn't even Stephen King say something about it?

Stephen King said it was scared.

It scared the hell out of him.

So that's what drew me to it.

I thought he was, Nick Cutter is a great writer.

I thought it was phenomenal.

I'm still chugging my way down the Paris memoir.

So I feel like we're going to be here.

Years later, you're going to be like, I'm almost done with that.

Yeah.

I'm trying to start reading for leisure again because we read a lot for work, obviously.

So I'm trying to read for leisure again, but it's not really working out for me.

It's tough to shorn it in there sometimes in the schedule, but it's important and it feels great.

It does.

Beads your mind.

Books and smells of them.

Yeah.

Are you ready to start talking about the rotten meat smell again that was going down in the Smurril House?

I am always ready to talk about the rotten meat smell that's going down in the Smurril House.

Let's go.

It's really the only way I could transition to this new conversation that we're about to have.

Yeah, there's no real segue.

We're pretty sure we're leaving most of the rotten meat smell in part one, but let's recap.

There we go.

Yeah.

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Transitions and sagus.

There you go.

Who says sagu?

And that's why we drink.

Go listen to them.

Yeah.

We say that all the time, but do it.

Go listen.

Listen.

Listen.

I lost my train of thought, but yeah.

So in part one, we were talking about the Smurril family and I think in the beginning I was telling you guys how this article dropped and this fucking newspaper and everybody was like, holy shit, this family's really going through it.

Yeah.

And then I told you about some of the things that happened.

We had a small house fire as I was telling you about a fire.

It got sinister.

It got sinister and dark-saddled.

Dork-saddled.

So go listen to part one.

What if I just did the whole story in that accent?

I think some people would stick around.

Probably.

Some people will.

A few.

The real ones would stick around.

The real ones.

The OGs.

But yeah, so we had a small house fire of our own and then when I left you guys off in part one, everybody was like, especially Janet Smurril was like, I really need to talk to everybody about this and everybody was like, I think you're cuckoo nuts bananas.

Yeah.

I don't know why I said banana like that, but I did.

Bananas.

Bananas.

Kind of like a minion.

And then Ed and Lorraine stepped on the scene.

As they do.

As they do.

As they are known to do.

So as soon as Ed and Lorraine showed up and it was clear to the Smurrils that they believed in whatever was going on in the house.

That was a huge sigh of relief for them because that is something they provide a huge sigh

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of relief.

They provide unwavering support.

Do you speak from personal experience?

I just feel like if you're going to, if you're going to have something like this happening to you, Ed and Lorraine are going to come in and they're going to go, we believe you.

They're going to say, breathe easy, baby.

Like no, no one else will probably do that or some people won't.

But like most people.

Ed and Lorraine are going to come in and they're going to be like, we believe you.

So they at least give you that.

And sometimes at the very least, they're going to bring their friend, Rosemary, who also believes in you.

Yeah.

And I, I mean, it's not real if Rosemary doesn't believe it.

So as soon as she comes in, I'm like, it's real.

Only with her baby though.

Yeah, absolutely.

Yeah.

And then, but like I said, there were, there was years and years of like slammed doors in their faces.

So they were like, okay, wow, like cool that you, you're not doubting us.

Yeah.

But at the same time, the Smurrl started noticing that having paranormal investigators in the house was actually pissing off the vibes a lot more and things started to seem like they were getting worse.

Oh no.

Oh my God.

They were getting worse.

Throw me out a window at this very moment.

I won't do that because I love you, but that was pretty rough.

It was pretty rough.

I also didn't write that.

So I don't know why I said that.

No, sometimes it just happens.

I feel bad.

Like I have to go shower or something.

A lot of times my mouth will say something in a way that I'm like, I didn't intend to say that at all.

The other day, actually, I literally just came up here and I started to talk and I was like, ah, can confirm.

And I was like, that's not what I was trying to say.

That's accurate.

I used to do that when I waitress, too.

I would just walk up to tables and not be able to talk.

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I love that.

And they were like, hey, girl, hey, girl, are you okay?

The most disturbing event that the Smurrils went through was on June 21st, 1986, after the Warrens had already started their investigation.

They'd eaten dinner together as a family, watched a little movie.

They were having a fam bam night.

Adorable.

Seemingly with no disturbances.

They put the kids to bed with no issues.

They went up to bed themselves.

They went to sleep.

It was great.

Right.

But a few hours later, after everyone else had fallen asleep, Jack, Daddy Oh, there, Jack, Jack, the dad, woke up out of a deep, deep sleep.

And he said he woke up with what felt like a violent jolt.

Oh, he said, at first, I didn't see anything at all.

I just felt this tremendous sort of panic.

I wasn't sure if I was having a nightmare or not.

Are you squeezing in one last getaway this summer?

I hope you are because you deserve it, babe.

But before you take off, protect your home with the latest innovation from Simply Safe Home Security, 24 seven, live guard protection.

It is designed to help stop crime in real time.

Now, if an intruder breaks into your home, Simply Safe Professional Monitoring agents can actually see, speak to and deter them through the new smart alarm wireless indoor camera, warning them that police are on their way to get the heck out of there.

Personally, my worst fear is a break in.

But knowing that I have Simply Safe on my back, like their cover in my back, it makes me feel so much safer in my own home.

Simply Safe Professional Monitoring agents can now warn intruders that they're being recorded and police are on their way in real time, which will obviously stop them in their tracks, hopefully.

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Bishop Gray is like no other school on the planet.
The best fencing team in the country.
Elaborate black time, run enough drugs to sustain a blue whale and more money,
status and privilege than God.
I'm not supposed to be here, but I'm here now.
And I'm not going to settle for mediocrity.
The secret society people, they prey on scholarship kids.
Eva Richards, you are called.
So you're the Bishop Gray Illuminati.
Do what you have to do to survive, Eva.
That's what I would do.
You're in the night of the wolf.
I want to take the next step.
Get away from me.
You have a bright future ahead of you.
Don't fall in with this crowd.
Binge all 10 episodes of Academy early and add free on Wondery Plus.
Join Wondery Plus in the Wondery app or on Apple podcasts.
And like, so this is wild, this next part.
And I actually can't believe that I personally have to deliver this to you.
But as part of the story and my journalistic truth is driving me forward.
It is. So he is essentially like he is preparing
Mikey's Mikey knows what's next because Mikey and Dave
spoke about this. Oh, no.
So Jack woke up to a ghost straddling him.
OK. And he said that the figure was mostly human.
But the woman also looked like she had some sort of scales like on her skin,
almost like a snake.
And her skin, he said, was almost like a translucent white,
but like with the scales, of course.
And he told author Robert Curran, who I talked about in the first part.
She had long, white, scraggly hair and her eyes were all red.
And the inside of her mouth and her gums were green.
Some of her teeth were missing,
but those she had were very long and vampire like.
She's she a succubus. Is that what's happening here?
Oh, he claimed that the woman had some sort of hold over him.
That was like literally paralyzing him, almost like sleep paralysis,
but he was not sleeping and he realized what was happening.
And when he did, he just froze and terror.
He said after the woman had, I guess I would say, sexually assaulted him
because he he was not consenting, consenting to this.
She looked down at him menacingly and, quote,
smiled, showing those incredible teeth.

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So she like literally took advantage of him and like she raped him.
Holy shit. According to him, that's what happened.
A scaly, white, translucent woman with sharp, spiny some teeth.
And red eyes and gradually hair.
And then she smiled afterwards.
And then later he described himself as being sore.
And he said, like, like really sore, like from like he had been assaulted.
Yes, exactly.
And he said, that's how he knew that because when it happened,
he woke up the next morning after somehow falling asleep and was like,
there's no fucking way that happened.
But then he was like, my house is fucked.
I think that happened.
And now I'm sore, like I'm feeling the aftermath.
I've been assaulted.
That's what's always shocking to me in these cases is when they're like,
and then I just fell asleep.
And then I woke up the next day and I'm like, what the fuck you just fell asleep.
I feel like up in Adam, we're going to like the neighbor's house.
Yeah, we got to get out of here.
The fuck out of there.
But then I think about all the times I've had sleep paralysis
and I just fall back to sleep after that.
But it's never been on that.
No, no, no.
You just feel like a creepy guy in the corner with a hat on.
I've never interacted with my sleep paralysis demon like one on one.
No, no.
Even like when I have like a nightmare that I know I was sleeping
and it's not any kind of sleep paralysis, I have a hard time going back to sleep.
And sometimes I'm like, maybe I should go to the neighbor's house.
I should just maybe it's not safe here.
Yeah, it wasn't safe there.
If you do read Robert Kern's book, which I'll link in the show notes
and I mentioned it in part one, two, he goes a lot more into that specific instance.
I kind of just wanted to show you over it.
Yeah, it's very dark.
So you get the details in the book.
Yes, go read the book for sure.
So after weeks of, again, increasingly aggressive attacks on the Smurl House,
it was clear to quite literally everyone involved that they needed the help of the church
if they were going to get rid of this infestation in the home.
Yeah.
But the problem was that while the Catholic diocese was sympathetic

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and the local parish priests offered to come bless the house, they declined a request for, say it with me, an exorcism.

Yes.

Since they ran into a bit of another closed door there, the Smirls, and they kind of felt like they were out of options.

Jack and Janet, that's when they started thinking about going public with the story, basically hoping that someone would hear about them and offer some kind of solution.

And Jack also hoped that once they went public, the church would kind of be shamed into helping.

Yeah.

There's a bit of speculation about more than one timeline.

In this case, I kind of talked about that a bit in part one.

People question the timeline of the haunt itself,

but they also argue over who was the first person to take the story public in this scenario of people.

OK.

In their published account of the investigation of the haunting of the Smirlhouse, the haunted one family's nightmare.

Ed Warren claimed that the idea to go public with this family story was solely Jack and Janet's decision.

He said, Lorraine and I believed that Janet and Jack's son in desire to find a public forum offered one very good possibility that the Scranton diocese would have to recognize at last that something was going on in West Pittston and they had to take and they had yet to take seriously.

So basically it was like he agreed with Jack's sentiment of like, yeah, the church is ignoring this.

And if we go public with this, they're going to realize, holy shit, something really is going on and we should have helped.

Yeah, absolutely.

But others who became involved in the case a little while later, though, remember things a little differently.

So Paul Kurtz, who owns and wrote a piece in the skeptical inquirer, said, indeed, it was apparently at the behest of the Warrens

that the Smirl family first released their story to the press about the ghostly manifestations.

So Ed Warren is being like, no, no, no, no, no.

That was fully their decision.

Jack and Janet wanted to do this to pressure the church.

But Paul Kurtz is being like, no, no, no, no, no.

Ed and Lorraine put pressure on Jack and Janet to go public.

I wonder what happened.

Me too.

I wonder where the truth lies.

Somewhere in the middle. I'm sure.

Somewhere in the middle.

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What did they say? Yours, mine and.

Yeah, yours, mine and the truth.

Yeah, that's what it is. Yeah.

So whoever went to the press aside when the Associated Press story about the Smurl's haunted house starting hitting started hitting the newspapers.

And that was on August 18th, 1986.

It kicked off a huge interest in what they were calling the strange goings on in the Smurl house.

All right, the strange goings on.

Goings on. I think it was actually just goings on.

Sorry. That's OK.

Just like making everything plural.

We can make it crazy.

We can go crazy.

But the media in and around Pennsylvania, they were going wild and everybody wanted to be reporting with the latest update, like each little department of reporters.

So the next day, there was a bunch of follow up articles that appeared in local papers and they were getting quotes from Jack and Janet.

In one instance, Janet told a reporter, Steve Corbett, for some reason, the devil wants us, they, the demons, are making us pay for something we know nothing about.

The punishment has to stop.

And I was like, OK, Janet, OK, Janet.

What? What?

They're making you pay for something and you don't know anything about it.

That's a thing.

I'm like, I don't know.

I feel like this is just demons thing.

I feel like they don't need a specific reason.

Like they don't have a vendetta.

No, I don't think they're into like lessons.

You live here.

Yeah, demons aren't necessarily like the ghost of Christmas past, trying to be like, hey, you should probably be more generous.

Yeah, I think they're just like, let's fuck shit up.

I think demons are like the strangers at the end of the strangers.

And they say, because you were home.

I think that's it.

I fucking love that.

I don't think there's a reason.

I think it's the scary, no motivation answer at the end of the horror movie where you go fuck.

You talking about scream?

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Yeah. Yeah.

Scarier if there's no motive.

Scarier when there's no motive.

It is fucking scarier.

That's why demons are terrifying.

That's why demons are demons.

That's what they do.

But she went on just like they had planned to,

to specifically name the Catholic diocese

when she was doing her interviews,

obviously putting the pressure on.

Yeah.

So she said to the same reporter,

we are a haunted family who desperately needs the power of the Catholic Church

to help purge the evil.

They are.

I just want to tell you that that light just came on.

Oh, I don't like that.

What's happening every time we talk about this?

I don't know.

Because we were a little night light just popped on next to me.

We were talking earlier about something top secret.

And the lights, it was just like a vision that we had.

But the lights started flickering on and off.

Yeah.

It was really strange.

Yeah.

As soon like you were just saying that

and I happened to look out of the corner of my eye at it

and it popped on as I looked at it.

Hmm.

That was strange.

Going zons.

Yeah.

This is where we're a haunted family.

I mean, yeah.

But now that Janet had named the church specifically,

they started the church started getting contacted by reporters.

So they had to say something.

Yeah.

So a spokesperson for the Catholic Diocese of Scranton.

Scranton.

Ding, ding, ding, ding, ding, ding, ding.

Spold reporters.

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The matter is under investigation.
The church takes the reports of demons very seriously.
However, a valid case of demonic possession
is extremely rare.
Ash just had a demonic possession.
I just had a demonic possession.
As I was reading that, I was like, I am sneezing.
I mean, I like that they're being real about it.
They're like, it's pretty fucking rare.
It's rare.
And they're like, yeah, we're taking you seriously.
We're not saying it doesn't happen.
We're just saying it's like it's rare.
Not everybody gets a demonic possession.
You're like, the swirls are not cool enough
for a demonic possession.
Yeah, they're like, the the Brendon's over there.
They're cool.
Yours is a common haunting.
It's just but the really rare ones.
There's only a few of them.
Cute of you to think you're so hot in.
Cute of you to think you're so hot.
So now that the case was getting more and more attention,
Ed and Lorraine were getting interviews with the press too.
Of course.
Ed Warren, he would always stand by Jack and Janet, excuse me,
during their interviews too.
And Ed told reporters, the swirls are truly
a family coming under visual attack.
The ghost, devil, demon, whatever you want to call it,
is in that home.
And he pointed to the 1973 Exorcist, like the movie.
Yeah, he said it was only evidence
that added credibility to the Smurl story.
He said it was based on a true case of history of a boy
from Mount Rainer, Washington back in 1949.
I was there, but as a young man only in my 20s,
nobody paid much attention to me.
Yeah, no one pays attention to a young man in his 20s.
I was like, what, Ed?
What are you trying to say there?
He's like, what?
He's like, proof of the Exorcist.

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Fun fact, I was in Mount Rainer.

Yeah.

But nobody cared about me.

He's like, yeah, you know, I was just a young man in his 20s talking about exorcisms and like,

you know how they fly under the radar.

So it's like, I don't know.

I feel like you're talking about two things that are simply not connected and trying to make some kind of connection out of it.

But you know, go off, King.

Go off, yeah.

But according to Ed, the family who lived in the Smurl house before the Smurls moved in, they were the ones responsible for quote, the first of the four paranormal stages, which he referred to as the opening.

That's the first stage, the opening.

I do love the theatrics.

I fucking love them.

I do, I love it.

Now, he wasn't able to provide a ton of details because he didn't want anyone getting sued.

No, of course not.

But he claimed that the previous occupants had, quote, allowed the doors to open up that allowed the phenomenon to occur, which like, lots of big words going on, lots of like.

Sounds pretty blamey.

Blaming exactly going on.

But as for how the problem could be resolved, he still said it would require an exorcism by a priest from the Catholic Church.

That was the only way out of it.

Yeah, it is.

But he also said that the reps of the church in Scranton were young and not knowledgeable about this sort of thing, meaning they wouldn't be of any help.

Yeah, so on one hand, they're like, we fucking need the Catholic Church to help us.

And then on the other hand, they're like, they are unqualified to help us.

So we're kind of fucked.

What do you want?

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Ooh.

But pretty much every day that went by,
more and more articles were being written.

The Smerls were being featured in newspapers
across Pennsylvania and even further than that at this point.

And a lot of them were actually front page news,
which when you think about that, that's fucking nuts.

That is nuts.

Imagine you will grab the globe and it's
like about a haunted family.

That would be pretty amazing.

Tough news week.

I would love that.

I would also love that.

But every outlet seemed to up the ante, of course,
or add some kind of piece of the story
that hadn't been mentioned before.

And sometimes the new information even
seemed like it was intended to add credibility to the claims.
Like it seemed like the reporters were like, you know what?
I believe them.

And almost kind of sneaking their own things in there
to kind of like validate the story.

Yeah.

On August 20, for example, Ed Warren
claimed that they had extensive video footage
of the haunting.

Ooh.

Exciting, right?

I'm excited.

Let's go.

Well, when he was asked to provide the tapes,
he said that he had sent them to someone.

But then they were like, OK, can you get them back?

And he was like, can I have those?

Actually, the demonic energy was so strong that it, quote,
burned a hole right through the tape.

You know, that happens.

That'll happen.

Also, which one is it?

Did you send it to someone?

Or did it get a hole burned through it?

No, it burned a hole through the tape.

Hwa?

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Yeah.

They're like, you know how it is.

You know how just like things burst into flames.

Kind of like Jack watching TV.

I mean, we do know how things burst into flames these days.

It's very true.

And how do you argue with that, though, at that point?

Like at that time, you're just like, yeah, I guess.

Yeah.

I guess you're right.

And I would want to see the tape with a hole in it.

I'd argue that.

I don't know.

At least show me the videotape with the hole
burned on the set of it, you know?

Because I would say you didn't want
to inhale all that plastic.

So that must have been a demon.

That's true.

That's what I would say.

Yes.

Good call.

Thank you.

You're welcome.

But other additions to the story were just plain bizarre.

In an interview with Citizens Voice, a local newspaper,
Jack told reporters about a curious incident involving
his feet.

His feet, I say.

Involving his feet, you say.

This is just truly ridiculous.

I had my legs crossed at the ankles,
and my slippers were alongside of the chair.

Without looking and not taking my eyes off the television,
which apparently they had replaced,

I leaned forward for my slippers and went to put them on.

When I realized I couldn't uncross my feet.

Oh.

You want to know why he couldn't uncross his feet?

Why?

This is quotes.

The demons had paper clipped my socks together
from the inside where they met.

The paper clip was opened in an S shape.

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You try to do that to your socks without ripping them.
I can't do it, but I did.
But it did.
I mean, OK.
That's like, that's very fey.
It's very mischievous.
It is.
First of all, I can't even really picture that in my head.
I'm like an S shape and you couldn't uncross.
I think you would just rip your socks
if you tried to uncross your legs.
I think you'd be able to.
So I think he's right.
You really can't.
No, but I would just rip your shit.
You would just rip your shit all up.
You would just rip your shit all up.
But like, what are the demons really get out of that?
I don't know.
Just, they're just pranksters.
You know, they're like, this is funny.
He'll fall.
Also, that's not scary to me.
I'd just be like, fuck off.
That's silly, goofy.
Yeah, and it would piss me off, you know,
depending on my mood for the day.
Yeah, I'd more just be like, that's annoying.
I don't like like, John does this thing that he knows I hate.
To your socks?
To my, because I love like, I have to have socks on.
Yeah, and don't take my socks off.
And so he'll run by me if my legs are crossed
and he'll just rip my sock off
and then he'll run around and throw it.
You guys are really cute.
That's like, that's a silly, goofy thing.
But he does it because he knows it makes me lose.
Like a rationally angry.
But he's just like, whoo, it just grabs myself.
He's just like, whoo, he just gets overcome with the wave.
I feel like he would.
So I feel like the demons, maybe they're Aries.
OK, and maybe that's just their love language.

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Maybe they took a page out of John's book.

Out of John's book, you know.

Maybe that's their love language
is driving this family crazy.

I like it.

I mean, I kind of feel like you're onto something there.

I think so.

Maybe the ghosts are just Aries and that's their love language.

They're just John.

Well, the Catholic diocese was not Aries
and they were not John.

No, that was another good segue.

Thank you.

So after being inundated with calls from reporters
and very concerned citizens and neighbors, actually,
the Scranton diocese released an official statement
on this moral case.

Reverend Gerald Malaly told reporters,
we don't know what it is.

That's the problem.

We believe what the family is telling us.

It's the explanation for what they are experiencing
that we are not sure of.

We have no idea what the fuck is going on.

They're like, yeah, we believe them,
but we don't know what we...

Because the whole thing is, who are they going to exercise?

Well, that's the problem.

The whole family is like...

Because not one person is like...

Exactly.

You know, like starting to speak like Reagan
or anything like that.

Like they're having things happen around them,
but nobody's possessed per se.

That's the thing.

So what's the point of an exorcism?

Like you're not going to exercise.

Are you going to exercise the whole house?

That's what I was going to say.

And I don't think so.

I thought you would exercise a person.

Yeah, but like you can like bless a house or, you know,
which I think they probably are more apt to do

is bless a house.
And they did.
Yeah.
But they were like,
there's really not much more we can do other than that.
Also, what is the...
I wonder what it takes to get an official exorcism.
Like what are the guidelines that we need to hit?
The benchmarks.
I think you talked actually a little bit about it
when you were doing the Arnie Johnson case.
We did talk about it, but there's like,
like we don't know what the actual two points.
We didn't talk about the benchmarks of what it is.
But it has to go up like really high.
Like didn't the Pope get involved at one point or something?
Yeah, like in the chain of like, you know, who decides,
it has to go up really high.
But I just want to know what the requirements are.
Like what they need to take to all those people
and be like, hey, this family's dealing with all these things.
See, I wonder if there's requirements
or if it depends on the person at the top.
Like what they think of the whole situation.
Yeah.
And at the same time,
you would think that there would have to be some criteria.
There has to be something.
I don't know.
I don't know.
They were like, not here.
But they said, no.
So ultimately the diocese did agree to send a priest
that was quote, experienced in demonology and parapsychology
to go out and investigate.
Okay.
And they said that after the priest was through
with his investigation, they would decide how to go forward.
Okay.
So within a week of the first report
by the Associated Press, like I said,
like daily coverage of the Smurfs ordeal
had started attracting crowds outside of the house actually.
Like it had got so big.

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People were getting together, just looking at the house.
And sometimes the crowds were larger than a hundred people.
That's fucked up.
Just like causing a scene.
Especially it's like people lived there.
Exactly.
I don't know.
I think they might have like said, hey.
Oh, they liked it.
I don't know.
Oh.
I don't, I never talked to them personally.
I was thinking it's weird just to do that anyway.
I think when people live in the house,
like don't do that.
No, the rude.
Because the thing is a lot of times
the police actually had to intervene
to disperse everyone and manage the crowd.
Imagine being their neighbor.
I would be so fucking annoyed.
That's the thing.
If you lived on that street, you might be fucking pissed.
I'd be real annoyed.
The story though actually caught the attention
eventually though, like because of all of this
of Jason Miller who played Father Damien in the exorcist.
Oh shit.
So he was, because he's from Scranton.
So one day he went along with a journalist
from the Times Tribune and took a tour of the Smurl House.
Shut up.
That's why I think like they let certain people in.
So I think they were, you know.
For sure.
But he said of the visit, this is no Amityville horror
with a big spooky house.
The family is terrified that the infestation of the home
will go to the family.
So I think they were worried that next step was possession.
Yeah, of course.
Now while they were in the living room,
Janet told Jason Miller and the reporter
that there was some activity actually going on

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in Dawn's bedroom upstairs.
And she was like, we should go up there.
Like I can actually finally show you something.
Like it's happening right now.
But when Jack took the visitors to the room,
quote, everything was normal.
Like nothing was going on.
Yeah, you know.
So by the end of August.
I told you no media training for these ghosts.
They don't want to do, they're like, no cameras.
They're like us, no videos.
Don't take a pic.
Don't do it.
Take a pic, don't take a video.
Don't take a video.
Never.
So by the end of August,
the nonstop reports on the Smurl hauntings
started getting a little mundane for readers.
They were like, okay,
there's not a lot really happening here.
Nothing new to report.
So people are losing interest.
Now not wanting to lose an audience, potentially.
Jack, Janet, and the Warrens allegedly
came forward with a new piece of information
that they had gotten via a psychic investigation of the house
and a possible explanation for the haunting.
All right.
Which like, I think you guys already provided that,
but go off.
But sure, according to Janet, quote,
two psychics who spent time in the house
believe there may be a link between the alleged spirits
and a decades old murder.
There are two earthbound and one demonic spirit here.
One is a woman named Abigail,
a friendly spirit who talks to me.
One is a man named Patrick who is angry.
The other is a demon.
Oh.
So the psychics told Janet allegedly
that almost a hundred years earlier

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in 1898 or 1899, Patrick had murdered his wife, Abigail.

Oh, shit.

And she went on the psychic to explain, quote,

he was supposed to have been hanged nearby and buried here.

Now he's afraid to go into the spirit world

because he thinks he will be punished.

As he should.

As he absolutely should.

I also was like, why was he going to get buried
on his own property?

I was going to ask that.

It's only legal in some places.

I don't know about Scranton.

But unfortunately, in the 1800s, who knows?

Truth, truth.

Unfortunately, though, there's literally
no documented evidence whatsoever
that either of those people existed or were real
or any evidence that says a murder or an execution
took place in that, like regarding those people.

OK.

So there's that.

All right.

Now, while the Smurrels had gone to the press
initially to draw attention to their predicament
and as they claimed to get help from anybody who
had similar experiences, after a week,
the nonstop coverage was starting to take its toll
on even the Smurrel family.

Yeah, of course.

Jack Tildre reporters, it's just getting a little crazy.

Do you know we have people climbing up the tree
outside the house at night trying to look in the windows?

Yeah, that's fucked up.

And they have kids.

Yeah, and younger kids, too.

Yeah, that's fucked up.

Not cool.

And they have four girls, you know?

It's like, get it together, people.

Now, even worse than that, though,
people were now starting to criticize the story
and were talking amongst themselves,
questioning the validity of what the Smurrels were claiming.

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And Jack said, we're starting to read things that have no truth to them at all.

Some people have questioned our integrity.

I don't like that, because we're honest people.

We never thought it would run away like this.

You wanted to be in the spotlight a little bit.

I know.

Unfortunately.

So as public interest in the case began to slowly die off, the voices of the critics and skeptics were growing louder.

Oh, no.

But not all of them were accusing the family of dishonesty or fraud.

Stephen Kaplan, the director of parapsychology, excuse me, the director of the Parapsychology Institute of New York, actually said it was a bit more involved than that.

He was like, I'm not trying to make fun of this family.

He said, what you have here is someone taking a cause of psychokinesis and blowing it up into a story about demons.

Yeah.

He actually believed a lot of what the family had said about the attacks going on within the home.

But where he differed from the Warrens, however, was how it came to be the cause.

OK.

For one thing, he didn't believe in demons.

And for another, he was suspicious of the Warrens involvement in the case.

He had actually investigated the Amityville case himself, and he didn't think that case had anything to do with demons either, nor do I.

But he, and that's why he was worrying about the Warrens motivations going public with this case, too.

Because he was worried it was all going to take kind of a similar path to the Amityville case.

Yeah.

And he said, normally, when you investigate a case like this, you don't publicize it.

No.

Like, that was his main issue.

That makes sense.

OK.

So making our way to Reverend Alphonsus Trebold, downtown.

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Yeah.

What a fucking name.

The priest from Saint Bonaventure University.

Yeah.

He was invited by the Scranton Diocese to investigate the matter.

Like I was saying earlier, they were like, we're going to send a priest out there.

He's going to investigate a gate, and we'll decide how to move forward.

So he was very skeptical when he went out there.

He told reporters he was looking into the matter at the request of the local diocese.

I feel like Rachel from Seven Deadly Centers.

And I can't believe that I have seven dioceses.

And also Deadly Dioceses.

Yeah.

Go listen to Rachel on Seven Deadly Centers.

Rachel and Greg.

And Rachel and Greg on Deadly Dioceses.

It's really great, guys.

I'm serious.

I'm going to listen to it.

But I've just never said diocese so much.

Yeah.

But so he told the reporters he was looking into the matter at the request of the diocese to determine whether the manifestations quote are true and not just a matter of misjudgment, hallucination, or illusion.

Illusion.

Is Chris Angel here?

Oh, my gosh.

Mind freak.

Oh, my gosh.

Oh, my gosh.

Mind freak.

So among the skeptics who were less confident that the Smerls and the Warrens were telling the truth.

So among the skeptics who were less confident that the Smerls and Warrens were telling the truth and kind of just were like, I don't know about this.

And among the people that were not shy about sharing their opinion with the press, Paul Kurtz.

I mentioned him before.

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He was a member and spokesperson for the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims and Paranormal, also known as CSICOP.

Oh, yeah.

I mean, I know Paul.

Do you know Paul?

CSICOP.

Yeah.

That's fun.

CSICOP.

Yeah.

Well, Kurtz, he saw a lot of similarities between the Smerls claims and many other cases involving the Warrens.

And that led him to his doubts.

He said, it seems to us, you know, over at CSICOP.

Yeah, Paul and everybody.

That a great to-do has been made about it.

And we wonder if it's like the Amityville horror hoax, which was based on imagination rather than on actual hauntings.

So despite his skepticism and his general distrust

for the Warrens, the members of CSICOP,

that's just what I'm calling it.

100%.

Obviously, why wouldn't you?

They were more than willing, actually,

to go out and investigate the families claims themselves and offer assistance if they could.

I like that.

But those offers were either completely ignored by the Smerls and the Warrens or just flat out rejected.

I wonder why.

Me too.

It's crazy.

That's wild.

So the thing, yeah, the Smerls refusal from this large organization with the knowledge and the resources to explain and possibly even end their ordeal seemed pretty strange to most people.

Like, all you're doing, like, your whole claim with going forward with this was to get help.

Yeah.

And then those people were like, hey, we're over here.

Hi, we have help.

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We can help you.
And then they were like, no.
They're like, no, we don't want that.
Like, that's a little ridiculous.
So when Kurt's there, reached out to Janet Smerl
to offer assistance, she just kept putting him off.
She told him she would get back to him,
but she would never call him back, that kind of thing.
That's strange.
She was kind of ghosting him.
Yeah, that would make me ghosting him.
That's funny.
Oh my god, I actually didn't even mean to, but like, good catch.
I like that.
But you know what CSICOP was?
What was it?
Undeterred, I figured.
I always knew they were.
They were undeterred.
So they referred a team of local affiliated investigators
to the Smerls.
And after a few brief conversations,
the Smerl family actually did agree to let them come out
to the house and investigate.
Like, it took a little poking and prodding, but they were like.
Which it shouldn't have.
It shouldn't.
No, definitely should not have.
Especially when you said that's your whole goal.
Yeah.
But they were like, you know what?
OK, come out.
But when they got to the house, they
were met by Ed Warren and Jack Smerl.
And apparently Jack had changed his mind.
And he and Ed refused to allow the team to go inside the house
and actually demanded that they get off the property immediately.
So like, what's going on?
That's rude.
First of all, you said no to me.
And then I was like, please.
And you were like, OK.
And then you were like, actually, get out right now.
It's the end of you and me.

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And to wait until you've packed all your shit.

Right.

And brought it out to the location.

And then you're like, actually no.

It's like, bitch, I bought a button-up shirt for this.

I got new pants at Target.

Like, what the fuck?

What the hell?

No, that's not right.

It's going to JoJo me like that?

It's a JoJo me.

It's a verb.

Yeah.

So the refusal to allow the team inside,

I don't know if you see it this way, but I do.

As a major red flag.

Yeah, I would question that.

The members of CSI cop also felt that way.

They were like, that's fucking.

That's weird.

That's suspicious.

So the CSI cop investigator, Richard Bush,

he told reporters, and I thought of you when I heard this quote,

it said, good science says, first, let's

rule out possible fraud.

Let's be careful.

Let's be critical.

Let's be unemotional.

Today, there are a lot of emotion here and a lot of secrecy.

I want to open things up and look at things fairly.

He was like, I want to do good science.

I like that.

I like that he's like, I want to remove all the secrecy

and the emotional bullshit from this.

And I just want to look at what's happening

and tell you if it's real or if it's fake.

And then when if I say, I don't know,

it seems like it might be real, then we'll delve

a little further into this.

Exactly.

You're not even letting me get to that point.

And I wonder why.

I wonder why.

Because if it's real, why wouldn't you

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want me, a pillar of the scientific paranormal community, to go in front of the media and say, this is real, and we need to investigate it?

Exactly.

I agree.

Also, he's giving Capricorn vibes.

Thank you.

Yeah, he really is.

But so that's the thing.

They're refusal to allow CSI cop into the house, not enough to stop the organization.

Like I said, undeterred.

Yeah, they're a Capricorn.

So what they did, they are as an organization, a Capricorn.

You cannot tell them no.

You can't stop them.

So what they did was they just started organizing.

No, they didn't start.

Well, yeah, they probably did organize some things.

And then they started investigating off the property, offsite.

And they came to several conclusions about the Smurl's claims.

Now, the biggest issues for the independent investigators now doing this outside of the house, the biggest issues for them were that the only supposedly documented evidence of the activity in the home was suspiciously unavailable, like we said.

And they also were like, the only investigators allowed in this house are Ed and Lorraine or their people.

And any attempt being made so far to understand this phenomenon relied entirely and exclusively on a Christian framework, which like, that's fine if that's what you believe in, but it limits you.

But it does limit you greatly.

Yeah.

And whenever the Warrens were asked by reporters on multiple occasions to produce that video that they had or any photos of activity that they also claimed to have, every single time Ed Warren kept putting them off, he said, quote, he had loaned them to a TV company but didn't remember its name or quote, they would be released in time, but only to the Roman Catholic Church.

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The church doesn't even want to help you here.

What the fuck are you giving them videos for?

And also they asked you for the videos
and you said a hole burned through them.

Yeah.

So what's the story?

What is the story here?

And the Warrens weren't the only ones giving weird stories.

The Smerls also adopted a very vague explanation
when asked the same question.

They would tell reporters, quote,
they don't own the tapes and that if they allowed
one or two journalists to stay overnight,
they'd be deluged, deluged?

Deluged.

Deluged.

I think you can say it kind of, you know what I mean?

I always think like a deluge of things.

I like it.

Well, they were gonna be deluged
with requests from other reporters,
which I guess is a fair point,
but it's like at least release some pictures
because you're going to the media so often,
why can't you just give them a couple of pics?
That's the thing, just give them a little bit.

Right.

So in time, the press, much like the public,
started to wonder why the Smerls were being so secretive
and now at this point, they were refusing to talk
to any, quote, unsympathetic members of the press.

So like the number one people you don't want to piss off
in the story like this are the press,
especially when they were helping you in the beginning.

That's the thing.

And when Janet Smerl was asked about all of this
during an interview with an ABC News program
featuring Paul Kurtz, our guy,
Janet claimed that she had been,
that she actually had contacted CSICOP a year earlier,
but it was that organization that had told her
that she had been watching too many late night horror movies.

Remember I had said that earlier?

Yeah, that's not good.

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That's not good, but she didn't have any proof of that.

Well, that's the thing.

And also, it's okay to be skeptical at first.

This is your chance to shine.

This is your chance to prove them wrong.

Like wouldn't you want that

if you are very confident in your own truth?

Right, exactly, that's the thing.

But she was pissed off about that

and she was also pissed off that they suggested

that she see a psychiatrist.

Okay.

So you can see why like she would find that insulting

in the manner in which it was said, I suppose.

Yeah, well, and some people just don't want to be told that.

Exactly.

So it's like, you know.

But during the interview,

Kurtz actually said that was completely false.

He said, although this sounds like good advice,

we have no record of having received such a call.

We invariably ask that the caller send us a letter

giving all the facts

and we have no such letter on file from the Smerls.

I mean, whenever you ask for proof of something

over and over again and they don't provide it to you,

it's probably fucked up and like, I don't know.

It's weird.

I don't know when someone's not willing

to provide the receipts,

but they have them according to them.

I don't know about it.

I don't like it.

I don't know about it.

I've been in that position before

and I've been like, show me the proof.

There's been several times

that I think we've both seen this happen.

Yes.

Where you're like, show me the proof of that.

Show me that that actually happened.

And they're just like, mm.

And then I do what Carrie and Lara from SUP,

another great podcast you should listen to.

Truth.

You just say, so you say, so you say, so you say,
so you say, so you say.

But some people run with it.

Yeah, they do.

But now that the Smerls seem to be gaining
a more adversarial tone with anybody
other than Ed and Lorraine Warren
and more and more inconsistencies
we're starting to build within their story,
this was when the press shifted their tone publicly
and even the public itself started
even gaining more suspicions.

Yeah, I mean, I could see that.

So according to Jack,
the surgery caused short-term memory loss
and that the operation had no bearing
on his family's claims
that the house was possessed by demons.
He was basically saying two completely separate events.

Okay.

And as for why they had become so closed off
at this point, he told reporters,
Jack, if there's action taken in this house
it's got to be from a religious point of view.
So he was like, basically I don't want anybody
investigating this that is not affiliated with
or believes in the church.

Which like, okay.

Again, I think you're limiting yourself.

Yeah, I mean, that's just a limited scope.

Right, it's all.

When you're only looking through one lens
it's hard to see anything else.

And you're not seeing the forest past the trees.

Exactly.

And so skeptics and all the press
and everybody that was starting to get pissed off
about this, they obviously disagreed.

And also so did a psychiatrist named Dr. Robert Gordon.

We got a doctor up in here.

Dr. Gordon.

Dr. Gordon.

Not the one from Saw.

I don't think.

What's that?

What's that?

Carrie L. whist blade.

Well, in a prepared statement written on behalf of CSI cop, he suspected that the family might be suffering from a kind of shared hysteria, quote, similar to that prevalent during the Salem witch trials. Shared hysteria is fascinating.

Fascinating.

We're going to cover more of those because it's a fascinating phenomenon.

I think I agree with him in this particular case.

And I believe in demons and I believe in hauntings.

That's the thing.

In this case, I think it might have been like a shared hysteria kind of thing.

So do you say, and it's like, it kind of feels like they believe it.

Oh, I think they believe it.

Because I think that's part of shared hysteria and shared delusions.

They aren't lying.

That's the thing.

They're not like willingly being like, fuck you, I'm telling you about fabrication.

Like they're not spinning you a yarn on purpose.

They believe what they are telling you.

Cause that's the thing.

I think there's multiple viewpoints on this story as a whole.

And I think one of them is that they were telling the truth and that like they got fucked over.

I think another viewpoint is that like they were not telling the truth and they did this to get famous.

And then I think this is the viewpoint that I have.

They did this because they were genuinely terrified and believed it, but I think it became a shared hysteria.

It was like, I think they truly did see those things that they thought that they were seeing.

And it could absolutely be a little bit,

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a little sprinkle of all three as well.
I love a good smorgasbord.
You know, we love, it's kind of like a girl dinner.
That's like a thing now.
Girl dinner.
It's a TikTok thing right now.
It is.
And it's, you know how like you just will throw together
a dinner with like, you know, fucking chickpeas
and some salsa and tomatoes.
Tomatoes, like just, honestly, that's like a real dinner.
Like, just, this is-
This girl dinner.
Girl dinner equals three cubes of cheese,
a couple of grapes, a Capri sun and a cookie.
Oh, that's a girl dinner?
Yeah.
Girl dinner's just like random shit thrown together.
But it can be like more than like two grapes, right?
Oh my, it should absolutely be more than-
It should be like a handful.
Yeah, like many grapes.
Okay.
I was like, is that what girl dinner is?
No, it doesn't mean small.
It just means-
Oh, okay.
I thought I had it wrong.
And I was like, oh.
No, your dinner sounded like-
I don't like girl dinner.
Your dinner sounded like an actually good prepared dinner.
Oh, yeah, yeah.
Okay, girl dinner is three pieces of turkey,
few cubes of cheese, a handful of grapes.
A handful of grapes, a Capri sun always.
A Capri sun sounds great.
And like a chomps beef jerky stick.
There you go.
There's like some random ass shit.
Yeah, just like whatever you can cobble together,
that makes sense, okay?
I thought, I just thought I had the wrong idea of it.
And I was like, oh no, am I like-

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No girl dinner's great.
I thought I was like, I thought girl dinner was fun.
No girl dinner is fine.
Okay, cool.
And girl dinner is what you make it,
so let's make it raw.
It's whatever the hell you make it.
But what was the point?
Oh, cause I was saying,
I was saying the outcome of this,
you were saying there's like really three viewpoints here.
Yes.
That they experienced this for real,
they got fucked over
and they didn't get the justice they needed.
Or that they outright lied
to get the media attention and the fame out of it,
they knew what they were doing,
bought a boot.
Or the third one is this shared hysteria
where they really felt like they were experiencing
these things and it was just growing within their family.
Exactly.
And I was saying it could be like a little sprinkle
of all three, two kind of like a girl dinner
of all the various options.
Whoop, there it is.
But who are we to say?
I knew there was a connection, who are we?
I don't know.
And Dr. Gordon felt the same
because he was like, you know,
Jack Smerl is not a patient of mine,
so I can't comment on his personal health.
And he's like, I don't live there.
But he did note that the surgeries
and potential injuries to the brain
often cause lingering symptoms
that can mirror those of a psychotic disorder.
Okay.
In a letter, he wrote,
a shared tension might cause mass hysteria
with shared symptoms,
which could involve delusions or hallucinations.

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The family's strong religious beliefs in demonology might serve to bolster the delusional system of belief. Something terribly wrong may be going on in that family system that has nothing to do with demons. That's true. So I do think I slightly agree with that. Like I lean more toward that belief. I could see it. I have no fucking clue, but I could see that absolutely, right? So while Kurtz and members of CSI cop continued pushing to investigate the Smerl home and continuing to investigate it on their own, the public impressed at this point, so we've gone with them where they were happy and they were so excited to read more about this, started wavering, had questions, then we're met with kind of like, ugh, I don't like that. Now they're just like, I don't give a fuck about this story at all. Because now you've overstayed your welcome. That's exactly what it is. You've pushed back on too many things, but then welcomed other things. So I think people get over that. Exactly. You know what, I'm just not gonna give it the attention. Exactly. So people, these were kind of like their final thoughts. One neighbor told a reporter, they're trying to get a movie made in West Pitson, that's all, Pitson, excuse me. And then another neighbor, Bernard Radsvin, which is another fucking dope ass name, he lived a few doors down from the family and he said, it's a lot of malarkey. There's people been living in this neighborhood 30 years and didn't have nothing happen. The kids rather than the demons are all that screaming around here. I love Bernard. Bernard Radsvin forever.

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I really love Bernard.
I love that he's like, I've lived here my whole life
and I haven't seen demons walking down this street not once.
He's like, kids, not a bunch of them,
loud little shits, demons, nah.
Haven't seen one, don't believe it.
And even the family's parish priest,
Reverend Joseph Adonisot,
took a cautious position on the matter.
He said, we're going to pray for their peace of mind.
We can't pray to remove the demons
because we don't know for sure yet that they're there.
I think that is as close to a sick burn slash roast
that you will get from your local Reverend.
I think so too.
It's like, we're going to pray for you.
You know what?
We'll pray for you.
We got you.
But the Smurls and the Warrens, they didn't like that.
They were becoming even more antagonistic now
that people are losing interest.
They're mad.
And they're still feeling like they're going through this.
So now they're feeling shunned.
Yeah, exactly.
So reporters began taking a far less serious tone
when it came to the story,
and that's what was pissing them off.
And an example of this is Jill Porter wrote
in the Philadelphia Daily News, it's a little ridiculous.
She said, as a reporter,
I think a certain amount of skepticism is healthy,
but I can't understand why the public
is so suspicious of the Smurls
when so many homes are beset
by similar unexplained happenings.
Why, just yesterday, my friend Ellen was telling me
of the demons who have turned her summer house
at the seashore into a nightmare.
She returned from the beach the other day
to discover a paper cup had been stuffed down the toilet,
stopping it up and requiring a very expensive visit
from the plumber.

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None of her three sons, aged 15, 12, and nine,
had any idea how it happened.
Of course, though, they were all home all afternoon.
Wow.
So basically she was like,
you don't have demons who have kids.
I was gonna say, so she's literally like, I can't imagine.
She's just being like, every home in the country
with kids in it goes through the same thing.
How can we just ignore that?
Yeah.
Ignore that paranormal.
Shun that.
Yeah.
What a coincidence.
She was like, send the warrants to my friend's beach house.
Is it weird that the kids are home
all the time when this happens?
No.
Not at all.
No.
That's high brow.
That's satire.
That's high brow satire.
It is.
Honestly, her article was gentle, though,
compared to some of the others written
and published at the time.
Francis DeAndrea wrote in the Times Tribune,
most folks are too sophisticated
to say that they believe in demons.
I mean, I'm not.
All right, that's it.
That's what I mean.
He got a little.
Step back.
He got a little sassy there.
Yeah, I'm not with you anymore.
No, I'm not there either.
But he said that.
And he said, not the Smerls.
They didn't try to hide their ghosts
in the family closet, no sirree.
They told everyone about the visitors

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from the spirit world and all the nasty things
the ghosts have been doing to their family,
their dog and their furniture for the last 18 months.

All right.

Okay.

I mean, like, I would have been with you a little bit,
but I'm not.

But he was rude a little bit.

Yeah, you were rude.

Now, Jim Collins, the reporter
that had accompanied actor Jason Miller,
who played in *The Exorcist*,
into the Smerls home less than a week earlier,
wrote, at the tail end of a dull August,
nothing churns up the small town grapevine,
like having a neighbor who works
in the local bubblegum factory,
announced that he has been sexually assaulted,
I'll say repeatedly, by a crone-like ghost.

So basically what he was saying was like,
I think they're trying to stir up a story
because it's the tail end of a dull August.

I mean, yeah, we're entering into fall, you know?
Fall time, spooky season.

Let's get spooky with it.

Let's get spooky with it.

But I mean, that's a lot.

That's one way to say it.

That's a lot to spice up a dull August, I would say.

And he was referring, when he was talking about this,
mostly to a very disastrous press conference
held in the Smerls backyard at the end of August.

Most of the comments or questions
were at this point intensely mocking,
like the Smerls, obviously.

And one person said,
do you think you can arrange for a night
with me in the succubus?

Which like, that's really mean.

And also, because especially, again,
like if he had this brain surgery
and like that happened to be a complication afterwards,
that he's dealing with like hysteria and delusions,
now you're making fun of him.

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Well, that's the thing.

It's also, whenever I see like adults teasing and bullying other adults, I'm like, that's pathetic.

It is.

Like it really, like regardless, whether regardless of whether you think they're pathetic or not.

Right.

You're on their level.

And that's the case.

Like you're sitting there in their backyard.

Exactly.

Oh, can you make the ghost have sex with me too?

It's like, get out of here fucking Sally.

Like, see you later.

Exactly.

And it's like, do you have nothing better?

Like you're immersed in this shit.

So go live your life.

What are you saying about yourself that you're sitting here?

Yeah, let them think they have demons.

Why is it bothering you?

That's the thing.

People insert themselves in these things and it's like, it doesn't have anything to do with you.

If you don't want to hear about it, don't hear about it.

Exactly.

And just to explain, we don't always use like this amount of quotes in a story, but just to explain why I had used them,

I feel like this story is such an interesting statement on how people in the press and just in general will believe something so wholeheartedly one day and like feast upon it and then fucking turn the next day.

Oh yeah.

Like it's crazy.

Well, that's the way.

They is like you hoist someone up and you believe them and support them and then you smack them down as hard as you can once they've reached a certain point.

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And that's exactly what happened with this family.
Whether they were telling the truth or not,
that's exactly what happened.
Exactly, like it just turns.
I just think it's like standing there
and like mockingly asking them questions and stuff.
It's like, I don't know why you think you're better
at this point because
you sitting there doing that.
I'm like, that's like loser behavior.
Loser.
Loser behavior.
You're like, you're a loser.
Like just go be like, okay, I don't believe them.
Bye.
Exactly.
Like just to talk about it with your friends.
The kiki.
I just think in their backyard.
To be mean to someone's face is like, hmm.
Yeah, I don't know about that.
No, I don't like it.
It's just, it's spreading more negativity,
which is going to create demons for you a little bit.
Yeah, exactly.
In the backyard.
Yeah.
It's like, you know, safe to say that press conference,
you know, didn't end on a high note.
But the final nail in the coffin came in the beginning
of September, 1986, when the press reported
that what a neighbor told them previously was true.
The Smurls were in negotiations with Star Productions
to sell the rights to their story for a feature film.
But again, I think you could say multiple things on that.
One, they're a family of,
they're like a pretty big family
and they have four mouths to feed.
So perhaps this did happen
and they need to make money off of it.
Yeah.
To see an opportunity.
Absolutely.
Or perhaps this was the goal all along.

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You never know.
We don't know.
But for skeptics, the fact, this fact,
confirmed the suspicion that this had always been
about fame and money for them.
And I can see that.
Mm-hmm.
I could see anything.
Yeah, exactly.
And Star Productions president Ralph Loma came forward
and said, we have had several discussions.
We haven't signed anything yet, but we hope to.
It's going to make a hell of a movie
when it's finally made.
I mean, it would.
He confirmed it.
And Janet Smurl expressed her disbelief
at the statement telling reporters,
I don't believe this.
Obviously the press is making things up now.
We have no comment.
So she wouldn't say either way.
All right.
Now, it should be said that whether the Smurls
were actually involved in talks
with Star Productions at this time is pretty unclear.
But within four years of this news going public,
they had not only sold their rights for, excuse me,
they had not only sold the rights
to their story for publication of a book,
but that book was adapted and made into
a made for television movie titled The Haunted.
So they did get some stuff out of it.
Yeah.
And in a later story published
with the Philadelphia Inquirer,
reporter Bill McAndrew contradicted Janet's claims
that she couldn't believe this whole rumor.
And he said he actually had been present
for one of the family's meetings
with the Star Productions president there.
Oh.
So that was pretty much the end of the spectacle though.
As soon as people found out that there was a pending

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like film deal, it shattered their confidence in the story.
Yeah.
And of course there was still a handful of family and friends
and, you know, like devout Catholics
that went to church with them, that believed them,
but the majority of people had had enough.
And by late October, the Smurls
may be trying to spice things up.
They were calling the press to report
that the demonic activity had miraculously ended.
Oh, after the movie deal?
After the whole debacle and it ended in October.
I was like, I feel like the ghosts
do not take vacation on October.
Or maybe they were, maybe that's their busy season.
So they were like, we gotta get out of here.
They said on to the next one.
Yeah, they were like, we've got shit to do.
Okay, okay.
Jack and Janet told reporters,
we believe that the elimination of our problem
can only be credited to the intercession
of the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Michael the Archangel,
and to the Sacred Heart of Jesus
who have answered our prayers
and the prayers of the thousands of others
through the rosary.
Took the words right out of my mouth.
That's what I was gonna say.
Yeah, yeah.
Now, CSI cop there,
even though they never gained entrance into this house,
they were never allowed,
they still completed their investigation from afar.
CSI cop.
CSI cop forever.
And they offered insight
into a possible explanation for the haunting.
In his report, Kurtz concluded, quote,
our investigation of the Smurl case thus far,
points to several possible alternative explanations
for what has allegedly been happening
without the need to invoke the occult or a paranormal one.
He said, there was a faulty sewage pipe,

which could account for the strange and horrible odors that were reported by the Smurls, and that it was a known problem within the neighborhood and had actually been reported to the town managers many times.

That's horrifying.

Corrifying.

Corrifying itself.

And then the team also managed to track down the previous residents of the house.

They had lived there for 17 years and they reported never having any problems or experiencing anything unusual.

Okay.

And ultimately, Kurtz and his team of investigators believed that at the urging of, and with the encouragement from Ed and Lorraine Warren, the Smurls got very caught up in the excitement of this moment and that it was dramatically increased by the intense press interest and everything took off from there.

And they said, as for why the public spectacle got so far out of control,

Kurtz said, the fact that the Smurls have signed a book contract raises serious questions about their motives.

I mean, yeah.

And it does.

I get it.

I'm not saying that they're lying.

I'm just saying it definitely makes you think for sure.

But what an interesting story.

Because at the end of it.

Regardless, it's an interesting story.

You really, like, I don't know if the house was haunted.

One way or the other.

But like, wow, they went through it either way.

That said that they, and they went for it.

They went for it and it got through it all around it, inside it, like they just, they did it.

And at the end of the day, they made their fucking movie, they got their fucking book written.

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So it's like, you know, they, and it,
it's like they, if they were lying,
they spun an interesting yarn.
An interesting enough yarn, yeah.
Yeah.
That I guess didn't really like hurt anyone.
No, you know.
Honestly, it's funny.
Cause usually in like haunted stories,
I'm looking for like the haunted stuff.
Oh yeah.
And the Bobby Mackie story,
all the different things that happened there.
I was like, oh shit, like that's interesting.
In this story, I was more interested in like the,
like how people perceived them.
And that's, and it's, and it really is interesting to me
that whole, like grown adults will make these things up.
Absolutely.
It's happened.
And it's, and it is very interesting to me
how far they'll go with these stories.
Like what?
And again, I'm not saying they made it up.
I don't know.
I wasn't in that house.
No.
But it is interesting when you do find out like the Lutz's,
like the Lutz's admitted that they, that it was a hoax.
Right.
And it's like, so you just like went for it.
Like just full send.
And it's like, did you guys have a discussion about this?
Did you game plan it out?
Was there an outline?
That's that they know.
Especially with the Lutz's too,
cause you think about it, like, you know,
young couple just vibing.
I can't imagine just sitting on the couch with Drew
and being like,
what do you think if we like went to the fucking press
and we're like, this place is haunted as fuck.
You want to fake a haunting?

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Like, you're trying to fake a haunting.
Isn't that why we're going to do-
That's why we're going to do, like what?
Just like, how does that conversation start?
That's what I wonder.
You're right.
It's just very interesting.
Imagine sitting on the couch with John and being like,
I got a fucking game changer idea.
You know, I got a date night.
You want to fake a haunting?
I got a date you're all planned out for us.
See how long we can stretch this thing.
You like the press?
You like the press?
They're about to love us.
It's so strange.
It really is.
But I don't think their game plan accounted for it
going terribly, terribly wrong
and everyone turning on them.
I don't think so either.
What an interesting story regardless.
Very interesting story.
The Smurls.
That's what I got for you.
With a name like Smurl, it's got to be good.
It does.
So we hope you keep listening.
And we hope you keep it weird.
But not so weird that you're mean to people
and you doubt their story right off the bat.
You know, don't do that, it's rude.
But like, definitely investigate.
CSI cop all the way through.
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