

Library ghosts

a zine by
Lo Riddell





've worked at this library for two years, but most days it feels like I've been here longer.

I think it's because of the ghosts: time moves differently in haunted places.

It's easy to sink into a single moment and feel it stretch out for hours; it's just as easy to spend a few minutes cataloging one book and then realize the day is done.

Time stretches like taffy and the hairs on the back of my neck raise, one by one, when my lonely evening shift isn't as lonely as it should be.



As far as haunted locales in New England go, this building really shouldn't be as haunted as it is.

No pilgrim ghosts, no witch trials.

The library was first built at the start of the 20th century and had an addition made just fifteen years ago.

The building is brand new compared to most other buildings nearby.

And yet: every librarian here has a different story about the ghosts they've encountered.



We know that there are at least two distinct ghosts here; I believe it's probably closer to four or five.

There's the old children's librarian who passed away 20 years ago and used to greet the new children's librarian by tossing books off of shelves and randomly prompting the computer to open her patron account.

She's entirely harmless and incredibly sweet – my only hope is that she can find her peace and not stay in her former workplace for all of eternity.



hen, upstairs, in the adult fiction stacks, there's a more hostile energy: it feels old and masculine to me, like maybe a disgruntled trustee from the early days.

He likes to ~~watch~~ spy. It's impossible to walk through the stacks alone without feeling like someone is on the other side of the shelf.

When my coworker Mary works up there by herself, books fall off the shelves on their own. And, of course, there's the time that she heard someone say her name when no living soul was around.



he third floor – the attic – is not accessible to patrons. We use it as storage for extra books and items owned by the local historical society.

These items include a glass case containing a Union Army uniform from the Civil War and an old rocking chair donated years ago. Allegedly, sitting in the rocking chair fills the sitter with “an intense sense of sadness and dread.”

Recently, a group of teens sitting in the room directly beneath the attic heard a loud “dragging” sound – like big boxes being dragged across the floor above them.



ven the newer addition to the building is not free from haunts. A former coworker used to tell me how, almost every night, she would see someone dart around the corner of a shelf only to discover nobody was there at all.

Countless times, I've had that eerie "someone is watching me" feeling while pacing through the nonfiction. Just last week, I saw someone approach me out of the corner of my eye, but when I looked up, I was alone.

Another librarian, my good friend, consistently hears footsteps that shouldn't exist – even loud laughter.



he back workroom, through which is the staff-only entrance and exit door, has a door that loves to open and shut on its own.

Of course, it could be pure coincidence; pressure caused by a draft, air flowing from door to door.

But what about the times I knew for certain the door was completely latched shut, only to hear the loud clunk of the door handle being pushed down by some unseen visitor?



hat about the times I've left the building on my own – last one out every Tuesday – and swore I heard a whispering coming from the back stairwell, just beyond the self-opening door?

When I put the key in the ignition and start my car to leave, I hate looking up at the building looming before me. The dark windows are like eyes reflected by my headlights; I lock my doors immediately, as though I expect some formless entity to open my door and hitch a ride home with me.

I know it's impossible – but when I look at the building, I swear it looks back.

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arlier this week, a woman stopped by the front desk and asked two of my fellow librarians if they had ever noticed any “paranormal occurrences” here. Of course, they answered honestly.

The woman then proclaimed herself to be a psychic: “I had a near death experience,” she said, “and ever since, I’ve been able to see ghosts.”

My coworkers weren’t so sure, until she said: “I was just upstairs by the fiction and I felt it. I just know that the chairs move on their own. Have you ever seen that happen?”

“No,” they said, “we haven’t seen that.”

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Sometimes, when I lock up at the end of the day, I want to stay here so badly I ache: something magnetic pulling on me, pulsing in me.

And by “here,” of course I don’t mean here, my place of work. I mean here, the old building full of spectres and spirits that frighten me so. I mean here is somewhere I feel I’ve always been.

Some strange part of me, locked away in the attic, cries out for the rest of me every day – all the while I help patrons find books, I wrestle with the printer, I catalog the periodicals.



Some other part of me is older and more ancient than my bones would allow.



I have roots here, twisting and reaching out for me – ghostly hands grasping at the edges of my coat and just missing.



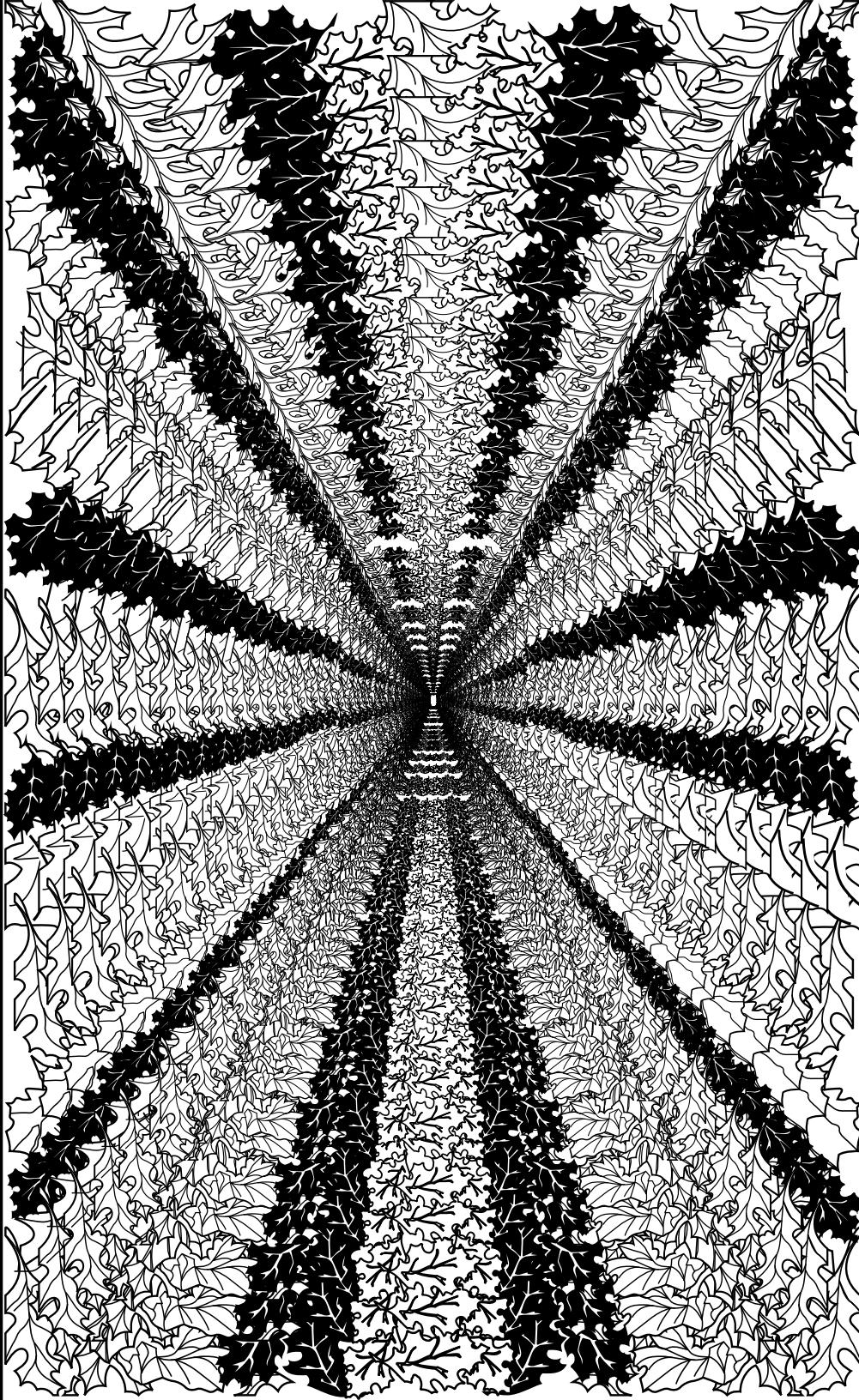
am always afraid that one day I
will linger: I punch in the right code to lock
down the building,

I wait for everyone else to trickle out,

and then I pull myself back into the
shadows.

I become dark and watchful like the others
at the top of the back staircase.

I resume my place in the attic and stand still
in the window, where even the security
sensors cannot detect me.





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loriddell.com
instagram @vintagelouisa

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