14 The Ghost of North Hall

NORTH HALL is one of the biggest buildings in this part of Pennsylvania. It’s a huge, red brick dormitory [at Mansfield State College] that rises seven or eight stories high. It’s got elaborate designs on the doors and a bell tower on the top. A few years ago, it was condemned as unsafe, so they moved some offices into the two ground floors and cleared all the students out of the upper floors.

The last students to live in North Hall were freshman girls in about 1975. They were mighty superstitious. One of the girls—her name was Kyle—was in communication with the ghost.

But let me tell you how the ghost came to be. The ghost was a girl jilted by her lover. It happened some time in the 1930s or even farther back. North Hall used to have a great open stairwell in the center of the building. It rose seven stories to the top. Well, that open stairwell is now closed up. The maintenance people say it’s because of fire, that the stairwell would have caused an updraft that would burn the whole building down, but the girls know better.

They closed it up because she threw herself down from the top.

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She had been going out with this guy for some time, and one night he didn’t show up. Instead, he sent a note saying he didn’t love her any more and didn’t want to see her again. No explanation.

She went crazy. She went running around the floor. The other girls tried to calm her down. Finally, they got her to go to sleep. She awoke in the middle of the night, more upset than she was before. She walked to the banister, looked down the dark stairwell, swung her leg over and jumped. They heard her scream on every floor as she went down.

Well, they had the funeral at her home and the college hushed up the whole thing. The administrators said to the papers that a young woman had taken sick and had gone home, then she had died.

All the students knew better.

Within a few weeks they could hear her walking the floor at night. She carried a candle or an oil lamp that lit up her face in an eerie way, but she was not unfriendly. What she would do, she would choose one girl to communicate through. Then she would tell her everything: how to find her photo in the old yearbooks, how to find out how the college hushed it all up, and which room she lived in.

And soon after her death, the carpenters came in and put rafters across and made floors where the stairwell used to be.

Now this girl, Kyle—and this is, oh, probably fifty years later—is in touch with her ghost, and the ghost tells her when to come up to the seventh floor and what room she used to live in. Up on the

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seventh floor you can just feel her presence. Sometimes the ghost makes noises, sometimes she leaves lights on or doors open. She is always gentle and she wants to help young girl students. She told Kyle that she can walk on any floor in the building because in her death plunge she passed through each floor. So we sometimes call her "The Ghost of Every Floor."

The men students never used to believe in the ghost of North Hall until they closed the upper floors off. That's when we started "visiting" her. Kyle would tell us when she [the ghost] wanted to see us and we would sneak into North Hall through an unlocked window. We got up to the upper floors through a secret passage. Once we were in, Kyle would take us to the place she was. We would bring a few of the men students along.

I have never seen her, but others have; she wears a long white nightgown, and carries a lamp or a candle. Her hair is long and sometimes she speaks. Mostly, though, you can just feel her presence. We brought some of the guys up into North Hall, and they heard her moving on the floor above us. They believed. Then one night we were walking across campus and we saw her looking down on from one of those garret windows on the top floor. The guys saw it too.

I don't know what's going to happen to her when they tear old North Hall down. I can't see her ghost surviving the end of that building. I wonder if the students still stay in touch with her.