

Season 8, Episode 9 Spooked at the Smithsonian Final Transcription

Lizzie Peabody: This is Sidedoor, a podcast from the Smithsonian with support from PRX. I'm Lizzie Peabody.

Molly Horrocks: This is the stairwell in question. Here we go.

Lizzie Peabody: Okay. This story begins in a stairwell, and we'll come back to that stairwell in just a moment. But first I need to tell you a little story. A little while ago, I was at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History for an interview. As I followed the curator through a staff door and into a little old elevator and down a narrow hallway toward her office, I started to wonder how it would feel to be in here alone, in the bowels of the museum, all by yourself with the long hallways and the buzzing overhead lights in the dim corners and the quiet. So, I asked her, "Do you ever feel ill at ease when there aren't visitors around?" "No," she said, "But I do have a colleague who saw a ghost once," totally matter of fact. We went on with our scheduled interview, but the prospect of a ghost lurking the halls of American History kept tugging at the back of my mind. I thought about it every time I visited the museum, until I decided I needed to know more about this ghost, which is why we're in a stairwell, in the National Museum of American History, with Molly Horrocks.

Molly Horrocks: I'm the collections manager for the exhibit that's right under this staircase, The Price of Freedom, which is an exhibit about war, basically.

Lizzie Peabody: Molly works as the collections manager from military history. And one morning a few years ago, she came in early. She was meeting with a mount maker, somebody who builds display mounts for objects in an exhibition.

Molly Horrocks: It was probably 8:30 or so, because we like to do things when people aren't around. So, I'm leaving my office, I've got my keys, I've got my supplies. I am meeting our mount maker at the case, which is right at the end of this stairwell.

Lizzie Peabody: As soon as she steps into the stairwell, she feels something.

Molly Horrocks: It was a very distinct stillness feeling. It felt like I could tell that there was something here, but there was nobody here because it was silent.

Lizzie Peabody: Had it felt like this before? I mean, you've been up this stairwell, up and down, many times, right?

Molly Horrocks: Mm-hmm. It had never felt like this before. No.

Lizzie Peabody: So, what happened next?

Molly Horrocks: So, I'm at the point in the stairwell where I could either go up or down and I hear a sound above. Just kind of a thud, but it was enough of a sound, I knew it wasn't just a weird building sound. It got my attention. But again, I was I going somewhere. I didn't really think anything of it. I was just like, "Oh, that's weird, whatever." So, I would go down the stairs and at halfway down the stairs I'm like, "Oh, that was a little weird, because there was no sound after." I was thinking, "Well, if there was somebody up there, wouldn't they have said 'hello'?" but there was nothing. There was just silence. So, I get to the bottom of the stairs, I'm at the door and I hear again this thud sound. And this time I looked up and when I looked up, there was a man peering at me from around the banister of the stairs that I had just come from, right where I had been. There was now a person there. I had never seen this person before. They were wearing an Ike jacket, a World War II-era jacket, olive drab, greenish kind of color. He was pretty young, in his mid 20s, maybe? We made eye contact. That's silly. Like-

Lizzie Peabody: Wait, why do you say that's silly?

Molly Horrocks: Just because he wasn't real. He wasn't an alive person. It was just an awareness. This was not a living person. This is just something else. But we made eye contact. I didn't feel scared. It was just... It just was. And he seemed like he was just kind of curious. It was very strange, actually, how natural it all felt. And then I just left. I just opened the door and I left. And the door that I was going to go through opens up to the World War II section and I told the mount maker was there already waiting for me. I was like, "I think I just saw a ghost." And she's like, "I don't doubt it. A lot of the staff have had some kind of weird experiences, so..."

Lizzie Peabody: I started asking around. And once I did, these weird experiences came flooding in. Experiences that are hard to define, hard to talk about, especially in an institution founded on the principles of scientific discovery. These are the Smithsonian stories exchanged behind closed doors, whispered between colleagues, the stories that can cause scientists and rigorous academics to question their own eyes and ears. So ,this time on Sidedoor, we are getting Spooked at the Smithsonian. We'll venture into the back hallways of museums, an old house in the woods, and the National Zoo after dark, for a collection of ghost stories you won't find anywhere else. Stick around, if you dare.

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: Smithsonian ghost stories date back over 100 years to the very first secretary of the Smithsonian, Joseph Henry.

Pam Henson: Some of the earliest stories about ghosts at the Smithsonian were about him coming back to wander around the hallways and check up and making sure everybody was doing their work again.

Lizzie Peabody: I mean, sounds like a nightmare boss. I got to say.

Pam Henson: Micromanager.

Lizzie Peabody: This is Pam Henson, institutional historian for Smithsonian Libraries and Archives.

Pam Henson: And that means I am responsible for the history of the Smithsonian itself.

Lizzie Peabody: She's worked here for nearly 50 years, which may sound like a long time, but by Smithsonian standards...

Pam Henson: 50 to 60 years is not unusual. It's just not. I mean, people come here and they don't go away.

Lizzie Peabody: Sometimes even beyond the grave.

Pam Henson: And now today we're going to talk about people who, even when they are gone from this world, are still here. Yes.

Lizzie Peabody: The first secretary of the Smithsonian, Joseph Henry, died in the Smithsonian Castle in 1878. A couple of decades later, a Washington Post article from May 1900 reported...

Washington Post: An old watchman repeatedly said that he had met Professor Henry, fully clothed in the garments he wore in life, walking quietly about, keeping watch over the treasures of the Smithsonian that he so loved.

Lizzie Peabody: After his death, a statue of the first secretary was placed in front of the Smithsonian Castle.

Pam Henson: There were stories from the nighttime watchman guards seeing his shade go in and out of the statue.

Lizzie Peabody: What?!

Pam Henson: There's a little door on it. He would go in and out at night.

Lizzie Peabody: What?!

Pam Henson: Yes, they reported that.

Lizzie Peabody: Now, ironically enough, Pam says...

Pam Henson: Joseph Henry would not have liked that.

Lizzie Peabody: Why not?

Pam Henson: He was a scientist and he did not believe these things happened. So I always jokingly say he was probably haunting them because they were claiming that he was a ghost and made him angry. He came back to teach them a lesson. But he himself did not believe in ghosts and did not believe that you could contact some spiritual world. When you were gone, you were gone.

Lizzie Peabody: But according to the Post, the night watchman at the Smithsonian disagreed.

Washington Post: Officers on watch have seen men lurking about, but by the time a search was begun, no one was to be found. This has happened many times and to nearly every watchman at the buildings.

Lizzie Peabody: Now, as much as I'd like to, there is no way to talk to these night watchmen from 1900, but there are still plenty of night watchmen at the Smithsonian, the boots on the ground who pace the silent halls after everyone else has gone home. So to hear stories of the Smithsonian after dark, I would need to talk to one of them, which is how I ended up in the woods at 1:00 AM with Corporal Howlin.

Ronald Howlin: Now wait for this car light to go out. Soon as it goes out, you're going to see how dark it is out here. And see, we got a full moon tonight, now. We didn't have any moon at all. You'd be barely be able to see me.

Lizzie Peabody: Corporal Howlin is a night watchman at the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center, or SERC, between midnight and 8:00 AM. His job is to patrol the many acres of conservation land out in Edgewater, Maryland, driving the wetlands and woods in a little electric car that he practically has to fold himself in half to get into.

Corporal Ronald Howlin: They keep buying these small vehicles and I'm freaking big.

Lizzie Peabody: You are really tall. How tall are you?

Corporal Ronald Howlin: 6'5". And for this house to scare me... Everybody was laughing, but I don't care.

Lizzie Peabody: Corporal Howlin is pretty much exactly who I picture when I think night watchman: ex-military, a volunteer firefighter. But there's one house out here where Corporal Howlin does not like to go. And that's where we're heading. So, okay, so you, on a typical night then, do you have a circuit that you always drive or walk?

Corporal Ronald Howlin: No. You want to change it up because you never know. You never know what you're going to walk into. There's a deer.

Lizzie Peabody: Oh! Big deer. Most of the time it's wildlife.

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Corporal Ronald Howlin: Hey, Jimmy!

Lizzie Peabody: We pull up in front of some docks. This is beautiful.

Corporal Ronald Howlin: Want to get out?

Lizzie Peabody: Yeah. Not in a house, but Corporal Howlin says he needs to check on the research boats.

Corporal Ronald Howlin: Ah, I kind of feel happy. Never have somebody out here talking to me. A lot of times talking to myself.

Lizzie Peabody: The water looks like liquid silver under the full moon. Oh, this is beautiful. I wait for Corporal Holland to check on the boats, make sure everything is ship shape. It feels really peaceful out here. And I start to think how nice it would be to spend all this time out here alone in nature. I can feel a very light breeze and then I notice a little tickle on the hair of my arms. Are you feeling little cobwebs on you right now?

Corporal Ronald Howlin: Yes. You walked into some spiderwebs.

Lizzie Peabody: I don't mind. But where are they coming from?

Corporal Ronald Howlin: We can walk out there, I'll show you where they come from.

Lizzie Peabody: Ooh. Okay. We walk out towards a little shed at the end of the dock and I can just see a few strands of silky spiderweb catching the moonlight.

Corporal Ronald Howlin: Oh, there you go. Here you go. And there's one. Look at that-

Lizzie Peabody: Oh my-

Corporal Ronald Howlin: ...big sucker.

Lizzie Peabody: Oh my... Big spiders. The juicy kind with the fat middle and the hooked curving legs.

Corporal Ronald Howlin: It's a big sucker.

Lizzie Peabody: The size of golf balls.

Corporal Ronald Howlin: They are all over this building. And see, the webbing will get on you and you know he's on you somewhere.

Lizzie Peabody: Oh! It's all over me. Spiderwebs everywhere. Oh, my God. I'm not walking any further than this.

Corporal Ronald Howlin: You can stay right there. I just got to check this here.

Lizzie Peabody: Okay. From the docks, we go to the education building. Again, not a house.

Corporal Ronald Howlin: I just need to turn some lights off in here. Check a couple doors. That's it.

Lizzie Peabody: Then we drive out to the end of some road...

Corporal Ronald Howlin: This is not bad.

Lizzie Peabody: ...and back.

Corporal Ronald Howlin: The biggest problem you're going to have-

Lizzie Peabody: And just as I'm beginning to think we are going anywhere but the place we are supposedly heading.

Corporal Ronald Howlin: This is the house.

Lizzie Peabody: We drive up to a red brick house, narrow and tall, silhouetted against the night sky.

Corporal Ronald Howlin: This house right here is the oldest piece of property that the Smithsonian owns.

Lizzie Peabody: Well, the oldest that's still in its original location. The house was built in 1735 by the Sellman family, one of the first European families to arrive in what was then called the Colony of Maryland. But now it belongs to SERC, and nobody's lived in there for over a decade. The house is a stop on his patrol route. But Corporal Howlin tells me he does not go inside. Not since one night, years back.

Corporal Ronald Howlin: I'm on patrol... Sorry, I can't-

Lizzie Peabody: Hang on. There's a spider on me. I have to, sorry, sorry, sorry. Do you mind starting again?

Corporal Ronald Howlin: Okay, so I'm on patrol and I came up, parked the vehicle, left it running and something told me to look up. While I looked up at the very top window, and it used to have curtains over the window and those curtains moved.

Lizzie Peabody: He says, this wasn't the kind of ripple a mouse running along the hem would make. The curtains fell closed in the middle, like someone was holding them apart and then stepped back from the window.

Corporal Ronald Howlin: Hair on my arms was standing up when I saw that. That's why I've never been back in the house. And I know people are going to have their... They're going to think twice. They're going to say, "Ah, no, maybe not." It's what I saw.

Lizzie Peabody: By now, we're both peering up at the dark little window on the third floor and I feel like he can probably guess what I'm about to ask. Can we go inside? Would you go in now?

Corporal Ronald Howlin: No.

Lizzie Peabody: Okay, I'll ask you again in five minutes.

Corporal Ronald Howlin: That's fine. You're going to get the answer: no, I'm not going in the house. I'll go right there. We're only going to walk in right here, okay? I'm not walking through the house. I'm not!

Lizzie Peabody: We go in the side door. Okay.

Corporal Ronald Howlin: I mean, this is the house.

Lizzie Peabody: The house has tall ceilings, big windows, and old wooden floors. \This is the biggest fireplace I've ever seen. We make our way through the old kitchen and little by little, Corporal Howlin and I walk further and further into this house. Is this farther than you've been in before?

Corporal Ronald Howlin: I've never been in this far.

Lizzie Peabody: Wow. I'm honored that you're coming in here with me and you don't have to. I can... You don't have to.

Corporal Ronald Howlin: I understand.

Lizzie Peabody: Okay. And at this point I'm actually feeling pretty tough leading this 6'5" fully-armed ex-military professional through these rooms. And then we emerge into the front hallway where a wide wooden staircase leads up and out of sight. Honestly, there is something so creepy about stairs. Is that just me or do you find that creepy?

Corporal Ronald Howlin: This is as far as I'm going in the house, if that's what you're asking. Because right now, I'm not going to lie to you. I don't like this house at all.

Lizzie Peabody: And I can tell he's telling the truth. But somewhere above us is that window and these stairs lead to it.

Corporal Ronald Howlin: I'm not going,

Lizzie Peabody: Oh my gosh. See now I'm torn because I feel like it's my job to go up there. But if I'm being honest, I don't want to go up there. It's not that I think I'll encounter anything, anyone, logically I am sure I won't. But I'm beginning to feel unsettled. Maybe it's seeing Corporal Howlin so ill at ease or the way our voices cut into the silence of the house, the sound traveling around corners and into rooms we can't see, or the way the shadow of the upper floor seems to fall down the stairway. But I have that feeling you get when you're a kid playing hide and seek and you're tucked away in a quiet place waiting to be found. My legs are shaking.

Corporal Ronald Howlin: It's okay, my hands are shaking. I'll be here.

Lizzie Peabody: Okay. And I start up the stairs. One by one. I walk through the upstairs rooms. My heart is beating so fast. Empty. I get the distinct feeling that this is not my space. If there's something here, I don't want to risk disturbing it. And all of a sudden I really want to leave. Wow! Okay. Whoa, I think I need a minute. I went up to that window and I looked out.

Corporal Ronald Howlin: Did you?

Lizzie Peabody: Yeah. It's really hard to explain. But even now, sitting in a recording studio weeks later, thinking back to what it felt like to be in that house, it makes my legs go a little wobbly.

Corporal Ronald Howlin: Walking this house, walking around that property. There's some spirits here. I really truly think there's some spirits here.

Lizzie Peabody: When we come back, we find a bathroom at the National Museum of Natural History where the normal rules of plumbing do not seem to apply. And we meet a shadowy figure at the Smithsonian's National Zoo. Don't go away.

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: Inside the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History are many wondrous treasures. We've explored a lot of them on this show. Dinosaur bones, live tarantulas, the Hope Diamond, but there's one place in the museum we haven't been to yet.

Deb Hull-Walski: Anyway, so this is the woman's room. Anybody in?

Lizzie Peabody: The third floor staff bathroom, which has the creakiest door I have ever heard.

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Deb Hull-Walski: They used to call it the haunted ladies' room because people would come in and a sink would go on.

Lizzie Peabody: This is Deb Hull-Walski. She's a collections manager at the museum where she's worked for the last 30 years. And back in the early '90s when she first started, she would hear stories about this bathroom. The faucets, manual turn knobs, would turn on by themselves. But Deb didn't really pay any attention to these stories. The plumbing was old. There was probably some explanation. And this bathroom was closest to her office. It was convenient. And so, one morning she heads in there. It's a pretty big bathroom, six stalls with wooden swinging doors, six sinks. And when she walks in, the bathroom is empty. She walks into the stall, closes the door, locks it, and as soon as she does, she hears the water turn on at one of the sinks. And she thinks, "Huh." She goes out of the stall and over to the sink.

Deb Hull-Walski: So, I turned it off. It was the hot side. I turned the hot side off.

Lizzie Peabody: Deb thought somebody probably didn't turn the knob hard enough when they left.

Deb Hull-Walski: If you don't turn them off quite right, the water can start leaking and maybe then it can become more of a force.

Lizzie Peabody: Like the pressure could build up.

Deb Hull-Walski: Yeah, pressure can build up a little bit and make a more steady stream of water.

Lizzie Peabody: And just as she's thinking this through...

Deb Hull-Walski: The next sink went on and then I turned the knob off on the next sink. And then the next one went on. And I turned that one off and it stopped. So, I'm thinking to myself, "Huh. Either there's really bad plumbing here, or all the stories I've heard about this room are correct." I went home and I told my husband the story about the sinks and what I had done, and he looked at me and he said, "Plumbing really doesn't work that way. The faucet shouldn't have made the next faucet go on. Turning off one shouldn't have made the next faucet go on or the next one."

Lizzie Peabody: A short time later, Deb brings her daughter into work for a visit.

Deb Hull-Walski: I took her to the Museum and I told her this story because it's a great story. And I showed her the bathroom.

Lizzie Peabody: Deb's daughter didn't really believe her. She was 15, skeptical.

Deb Hull-Walski: Then we walked to my office, which is right down the hall from here. My office is one that has a sink, and it's one of the older offices that was built around 1910, 1911. We both sat down. I sat at my desk, she sat in the table at the front of the room. The minute we both sat down the sink went on.

Melissa Johnson: I felt frozen.

Lizzie Peabody: This is Deb's daughter Melissa. I called her up to find out what she remembered.

Melissa Johnson: I wanted to move more, but I couldn't move more. I was just frozen in place for a few seconds. And I got the goosebumps.

Deb Hull-Walski: And the two of us looked at each other like, "What?!"

Melissa Johnson: She walks over to the sink and she has to physically turn the knob to get the water off. So, at that time, I knew someone or something had turned that water on.

Lizzie Peabody: What feeling did you get?

Deb Hull-Walski: So, I think I was not scared, just so surprised. Because really, I did think it was the plumbing to some extent. All those stories where so many people had the same story, but it was obvious that something was being playful and turned the faucet on, because it had never happened before. Sink had never gone on its own before, and it never did after that day. It was the only time that it happened to me.

Lizzie Peabody: For our final spooky story, we're going to the zoo. When Kim Dixon was a young zoology student, she landed the volunteer gig of her dreams at the Smithsonian's National Zoo. It was 2001, and a new baby elephant, Kandula, had just been born.

Kim Dixon: The researchers there wanted to take on behavior research of a new mother and calf in captivity. It wasn't readily examined at that point in time, and to have this there at the Smithsonian was a great point to research.

Lizzie Peabody: The zoo staff stationed trained volunteers in the elephant house around the clock, observing and taking notes on the elephants. Kim had the midnight shift.

Kim Dixon: I would sit there in the dark, with just a red light on for my data, and watch the elephants every 15 minutes to take a mental snapshot of what the animals were doing and write that down.

Lizzie Peabody: So, give me an example of what kinds of things you saw. What kinds of things were you writing down?

Kim Dixon: Well, I had the joy of watching very, very young Kandula learn life. For instance, one of the greatest things I've ever seen in my entire career was him learning how to use his trunk. So, he extended his trunk and wrapped it around one of the bars of the enclosure and then put his trunk in his mouth. And then was completely baffled by the fact that he couldn't move. And just watching his ears as I could see him, thinking through the process and trying to figure out why he was stuck. And eventually Shanthi came over and kind of gently moved him to the side so he could figure out, you don't do that. You get yourself stuck that way.

Lizzie Peabody: It was a great gig. Kim loved being alone with the elephants for hours. Nobody else around. But one night that changed. This is what Kim remembers.

Kim Dixon: It was about 2:30 in the morning. I'd been on my shift maybe an hour, and I was taking my notes, sitting in the dark with my red light on, and I heard the far door by the hippo enclosure open. And then I heard the echoing footsteps of hard soles across the tile floor. Very slow, deliberate steps, just a simple click, click, click, click, click. And since it was a big open space with that concrete floor, it just echoed everywhere.

Lizzie Peabody: There were only two sets of doors in the elephant house. Both were kept locked at night. And the only people with keys to that lock were zoo staff.

Kim Dixon: It didn't disturb me at that point in time, because I still thought it was maintenance, it was security, it was a keeper. It was someone that I knew. Not a big deal. So, I was in the middle of taking some notes and I looked over in front of Ambika's enclosure, who was the enclosure to the left of where I was sitting. And there was a tall, what I felt was male, figure. And he leaned into the lower bar and put his hip out and looked at the elephant. And then he turned and he looked at me. I don't remember any facial features and I didn't think anything of it. I smiled, I nodded. My timer went off. So, I looked down and I started to take my notes and then I looked up to say something to them and they were gone. I didn't even breathe at that moment, because I was listening for any footsteps around me since it was pitch black other than my little red light. And I didn't hear any footsteps and I didn't hear any door.

Lizzie Peabody: Kim had been given a flashlight with a red lens, so the light wouldn't disturb the elephants. She flipped it on and as quietly as she could, she started to search

Kim Dixon: Enclosure by enclosure, using my flashlight to check if there was anything open, if there was anyone in that area, if there were any odd shadows. Watched for every shadow. Listened for every sound on top of my heart, just pounding, pounding, pounding, pounding. There was no one there.

Lizzie Peabody: She went to check the doors.

Kim Dixon: The doors were still closed.

Lizzie Peabody: The building was completely silent. She hadn't heard any more footsteps, hadn't heard any doors open.

Kim Dixon: So, at that point in time, I was quite upset. There was someone in the building who probably shouldn't be in the building with me, and I didn't know where they were or what was going on.

Lizzie Peabody: Kim booked it for the keeper's office, locked the door and wrote a message to security.

Kim Dixon: "There's someone in here with me, I think, could someone please come down?" And they were very good. They came within a few minutes and they walked around with me too. They didn't see anything. They have a log of who comes in and out of the buildings. There was no one, no one in and out of that building.

Lizzie Peabody: Kim was so shaken up the guard sent her home, even escorted her to her car in the parking lot. The whole drive home, she kept running through what had happened in her head, trying to make sense of what she saw.

Kim Dixon: "Could it have been that you were falling asleep? Could it have been the lighting in the room?" Nope. That didn't work. I checked that. I checked that. I checked that. And to this day I can still kind of see how they were: gray figure, very solid-looking. And I know they turned and they looked at me. They noticed me. We made some type of contact in that moment. But the second I looked down, they vanished.

Lizzie Peabody: From where you sit here today, what do you think happened that night?

Kim Dixon: I think because of the history of that building and the history of the grounds, I firmly believe that there was an entity very tightly connected there. It seemed to appreciate looking at the elephants and it almost felt friendly. So, I really do think it was just connected to the building in some way.

Lizzie Peabody: So, it sounds like you believe that, for lack of a better word, you saw a ghost.

Kim Dixon: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

Lizzie Peabody: I shared this story with Pam Henson. As a Smithsonian historian, she knows all about that building, the history of the zoo, and I wondered if she had any guesses as to who, if Kim did see a ghost, she might have seen.

Pam Henson: Well, first would come to mind would be William Blackburne, who was the first keeper. And he was there over 50 years.

Lizzie Peabody: Wow.

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Pam Henson: Okay? And Blackie, as he was called, could get animals to do anything. One time one of the big cats got out, and he talked the cat back into the enclosure. He had that ability to communicate with them. I mean, his devotion of those animals was just beyond belief. And he walked the first set of elephants up into the zoo.

Lizzie Peabody: He did?

Pam Henson: Yeah. When it opened. So, I would say, my guess would be most likely it's Blackie back again, just checking out how the newest elephant's doing.

Lizzie Peabody: Kim says 20 years later, she's as certain of what she experienced as the day it happened. And while it was scary in the moment, she surprised me by saying that she sees this encounter as a gift. That's interesting what you say about the gratitude piece, that you are kind of grateful for that experience. Tell me more about that.

Kim Dixon: Well, as a scientist, I am always looking for proof and it's very hard to disprove a negative. So, the more experiences I have like that, the more I can be more open-minded to that aspect. So, I'm grateful for it.

Lizzie Peabody: I think, and this is something I'm finding with the stories around the Smithsonian, is that like the realer, the truer they are, I think the more loath people are to share them because they really actually mean something to you.

Kim Dixon: They do. It's a once in a lifetime experience, maybe? And it's that special gift that I have from the Smithsonian. There's definitely a connection. They couldn't pay me to work the 2:00 AM shift anymore. I did it for free until that moment, but I was given a tremendous gift that I can carry with me for the rest of my days.

Lizzie Peabody: This Smithsonian is full of collections, objects, animals, architecture. Some of their stories, we know. Those are the ones you'll see captioning display cases. But other stories, the lives these objects have touched, we may never know. Maybe we'll just catch glimpses from time to time. Who's to say whether these stories are real or not. But I find it comforting. The idea of sightings, sounds, encounters we can't explain. It makes me think there's something here that we don't understand and certainly always room to explore and discover more.

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: You've been listening to Sidedoor, a podcast from the Smithsonian with support from PRX. Thank you to all the brave souls who came forward with their spooky tales. Those who told them for the record, and those who whispered them to me beyond the microphone's reach. Your secrets are safe with me.

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: For photos of the supposedly, okay, I think totally, haunted bathroom at Natural History, the stairwell in American History and snapshots from my ride-along with Corporal Howlin at SERC, subscribe to our newsletter. You can do that at si.edu/sidedoor. And if you have a spooky tale to share, we want to hear it. Or at least I do, I love this stuff. You can find us on Twitter and Instagram @SidedoorPod or shoot us an email at sidedoor@si.edu.

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: Special thanks this episode to Molly Horrocks; Deb Hull-Walski and her daughter, Melissa Johnson; Corporal Ronald Howlin; Pam Henson; and Kim Dixon. Thanks to our colleagues at the Office of Protective Services, especially Dylan Garon and Emily Clyne. Thanks also to Robert Padgett, Valeska Hilbig, Tina Tennessen, Jen Zoon, Jim Wood, Matt Dozier, Maddie Green, and Dan Wood.

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Lizzie Peabody: Our podcast team is James Morrison, Nathalie Boyd, Ann Conanan, Caitlin Shaffer, Tami O'Neill, Jess Sadeq, Lara Koch, and Sharon Bryant. Episode Artwork is by Dave Leonard. Extra support comes from PRX. Our show is mixed by Tarek Fouda. Our theme song and episode music are by Breakmaster Cylinder.

[MUSIC]

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Lizzie Peabody: I'm your host, Lizzie Peabody. Thanks for listening.

Google Maps: Turn right.

Lizzie Peabody: Oh my God, that was my Google Maps. (Beep). Scared the bejesus out of me. I didn't know my-

Speaker 11: You've got to think! This almost... before?