

Invisible Light

Two stories in this issue have me questioning life, death, change, and the courage it takes to face the unknown.



LORI DUCKWORTH

“YOU DON’T BELIEVE in ghosts?” my friend Jonathan asked incredulously.

“You do?” I replied, also incredulous.

Jonathan’s an Anglican priest, a church history scholar, a lawyer, and one of the most brilliant people I’ve ever met. It was March 2021, and we were in St. Louis to celebrate our friend Woody’s birthday. Somehow, the conversation turned to my love-hate relationship with the ghost-hunting genre of videos on YouTube. I consume them endlessly, but I hate them. I loathe pseudoscience, and I instinctively distrust too-easy or overly detailed answers about life’s hardest questions. And yet I keep coming back. This dichotomy surprised my theologically minded friend.

When Jonathan pressed, I admitted to wondering if we somehow leave bits of our selves behind in the spaces we inhabit. Do those bits echo once we’ve moved along? If so, how? It all leads to more questions than answers in my mind.

I was thinking about this again recently when Megan Rossman, Lori Duckworth, and I spent a morning at the reborn First National Center, the site of my first *Oklahoma Today* office. When we worked there, the building was bordering on the decrepit—our colleagues forever were getting trapped in malfunctioning elevators; bathrooms lacked toilet paper and reliable plumbing; and it felt like there

Above: Raising a glass in the newly renovated Great Banking Hall at First National. Left: Getting cheeky on our last day in the building in 2015.

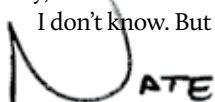
was a thin patina of grime over everything. In one notable encounter, a huge cockroach fell out of the ceiling of my office and landed on my shoulder, leading me to weave what the writer Jean Shepherd once called a “tapestry of obscenity” that could be heard up and down our hallway. When we did at last vacate the premises, it was in the middle of August 2015, when the air conditioning was about to be shut off—no way for Oklahomans working on the sixth floor to live, especially in the turgid heat of this state’s summer.

I hadn’t been back in the building since, but it was a balm to my soul to see it reborn. Developer Gary Brooks and his team have silk-pursed this most beloved of Oklahoma City buildings back to life, and you’ll read about it in Megan Rossman’s lyrical feature “Gilded Age” (page 48).

Ghosts—or at least the idea of the unseen all around us—came up again for me during this issue while looking at David Joshua Jennings’ artful “The Rites of Spring” (page 66), a series of landscape images taken with a modified infrared camera to capture light the human eye cannot obtain, invisible rays reflecting off the chlorophyll greens of spring. Reviewing these gorgeous photos, I couldn’t help but wonder what else might be there to see if only we knew how to see it.

I don’t know if there are ghosts. Maybe a little piece of me still stalks that long hall of First National Center, thrilled and terrified in equal measure of the dream job he’s just stepped into. Maybe, as David’s portfolio shows us, there always are things lurking just beyond the edges of our perception. Does that mean I’m going to buy an EMF detector or start a YouTube channel where I jump at every small creak in an abandoned building? Oh my, no. But will I listen and watch a little more closely? Will I be a little humbler in the face of unanswerable questions? Will I, thinking of David’s images of light I cannot see, locate the humility and courage to let go of comforting certainty, embrace the gray, and say, “I don’t know?”

I don’t know. But I hope so.



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