

**The Langley Files: CIA's Podcast**  
***Halloween Bonus Episode: Tales from the SCIF***

*(music begins)*

**Dee:** Imagine you're a CIA officer assigned to monitor a global crisis with implications for international security and the security of the American people.

**Walter:** You're assigned to a task force working out of CIA headquarters here in Langley, one that operates 24/7. That means overnight shifts, and it means that many a dark night as autumn sets in and the leaves scatter from the trees, you find yourself here, in the middle of the night in a vast compound of wide, often empty hallways, off of which your footsteps echo and long, dark windows outside of which the darkened forests of Langley loom large.

**Dee:** And as you head back to the comforting glow and company of the task force office, your mind drifts to a story about this hallway you had heard years ago. And you wonder if you just saw something out of the corner of your eye.

**Walter:** Here on The Langley Files, being your guides around the corridors of CIA headquarters and through some of the Agency's operations around the world means introducing you to the people who do this work day in and day out, serving as America's first line of defense. But this Halloween, we're also gonna let you in on something of a CIA secret.

**Dee:** A slice of life here at Langley.

**Walter:** And reveal that among those who have worked here night in and night out there is a rich tradition of CIA ghost stories.

**Dee:** Walter and I have collected some of these stories.

**Walter:** We ourselves didn't even have to canvass. These tend to be shared this time of year, and some of these happened to colleagues that we actually know.

**Dee:** So settle in. Pour yourself a warm apple cider. And let us tell you some of the stories that circulate through the halls of Langley when the days grow darker and the air grows crisper.

**Walter:** This is a Langley Files Halloween Special.

**Dee and Walter:** Tales from the SCIF.

*(music ends)*

**Dee:** Hey, everyone, I'm Dee.

**Walter:** And I'm Walter.

**Dee:** Well, here we are, Walter, spooky season. I'm pretty sure that this is your favorite time of year.

**Walter:** It is indeed my favorite time of year. Technically, it's always spooky season at CIA. Now it's extra spooky. Um, look, wearing cool and or scary disguises.

**Dee:** Costumes?

**Walter:** Yes, right, exactly, costumes... plus ghost stories. So, yeah, I'm a huge fan.

**Dee:** I have to be honest. I'm not a huge fan of things that lurk around corners or really go bump in the night.

**Walter:** Well, we've been asked about CIA ghost stories. So, um, we're gonna share a few stories - not of paramilitary experiences, but possibly paranormal ones.

**Dee:** Mysteries of things not unclassified, but possibly unclassifiable.

**Walter:** Things that don't appear on satellite imagery or leave digital footprints.

**Dee:** Or any kind of footprints.

**Walter:** That's exactly right. Are you gonna be OK, my friend?

**Dee:** I think I'll be all right.

**Walter:** OK, so let's get to it. Let's tell some ghost stories.

*(music begins)*

**Dee:** OK, so many years ago this officer was working at a busy office in headquarters, and would work quite late hours. Now for listeners tuning in, in CIA headquarters just past the marbled floor lobby with a CIA seal on the ground that often appears in movies, there's a corridor with a row of paintings of every director in this organization's history. And this officer's usual route out of the building would take them down that corridor, near the CIA Museum, past all of those directors' paintings.

**Walter:** So to set the scene here. These are at night, long, empty corridors under bright, white lights reflecting off the shining floors with long, narrow windows along one wall, looking out onto a darkened courtyard.

**Dee:** That's right. Well, one night at about 10 p.m. as this officer was finally departing for the day, they were walking down the hall and were almost to the end of the portrait gallery, when out of the corner of their eye, they caught a quick glimpse of a man in a dark suit and a hat rapidly passing across the corridor. They remembered thinking, that's funny. Not only was he walking fast, but the person looked like he was dressed from a different time period. Maybe the 1950s.

**Walter:** Like a hat, three-piece suit, tortoiseshell glasses kind of thing?

**Dee:** Yeah, and so a few steps later, this officer was in the open hallway intersection, looking down that long stretch of corridor, and there was no one. They got all creeped out. The two things that they thought were weird is – one, they should have been able to still see the person walking down the hall, and two - they didn't hear any footsteps. They remembered feeling really uneasy and hurried to get out of the building.

**Walter:** Well, I feel like I won't walk down that corridor quite the same. The eyes of the portraits do seem to follow you a little bit.

**Dee:** They do.

**Walter:** OK, so the first story I have here involves an elevator. This officer was once walking down a corridor here at headquarters one afternoon, actually, when something inexplicable happened. The corridors were empty, which was unusual for that time of day. So this officer was lost in their thoughts, passing the never-ending walls when they finally looked up to notice a woman walking in the same direction, a few paces ahead of them.

The woman turned into the elevator gallery ahead of this officer, and this area can best be described as a room with a single entrance and a bank of elevators. The officer followed. The woman entered an elevator on the far right. The elevator was wide open as she glided in without pushing a button, and as soon as she entered the doors began closing. This officer pushed the elevator button, knowing the doors would pop open again and they could scoot on in. And as they pressed the button, they queued up their apology. The doors seemed to hesitate a moment, then begrudgingly started to open once more. The officer was ready to quickly blurt out their apology to the woman they had delayed. Except there was no one in the elevator to apologize to.

*(music ends)*

**Dee:** Hm. So that's interesting that you have a story about a mysterious woman in an elevator.

**Walter:** And why is that?

*(music begins)*

**Dee:** Because I have one, too. Not long ago, an officer and a colleague were headed to the cafeteria for lunch. They began the walk toward the elevator bay and saw a woman a few paces ahead of them, board an open elevator and move to its back right corner. They were cognizant of avoiding the faux pas of holding up an elevator, so they both intrinsically half stepped and allowed the elevator door to close before pressing the down arrow. But when this officer pressed the button, the door popped open and the officer opened their mouth to apologize to this woman, who was clearly going to be on the elevator that they had just delayed. But when they and their colleague entered the elevator, they found it completely empty. After a long pause, their colleague looked at them and said, "Did you just see a woman walk into this elevator just before us?" They admitted somewhat in disbelief that they had. The colleague, perhaps 10 years their senior, and a generally unflappable case officer reeled at this and seemed simultaneously shocked, relieved, and terrified that they had also seen a woman enter the elevator and then suddenly disappear.

Since that day, the CIA officer has watched the dance that occurs around the elevators by their office and tried to recreate this scenario in order to explain what happened. However, they have yet to come up with anything. They say they still think about the bizarre incident every time they ride the elevators in the building.

*(music ends)*

Their colleague, well, they never stand in the back right corner of an elevator anymore.

**Walter:** Wow. Did the door just close?

**Dee:** Um, I think it's always been closed.

*(music begins)*

**Walter:** OK, anyway, I think it's my turn. This story takes place in the offices of CIA's Office of General Counsel.

**Dee:** That seems less spooky than an empty corridor or far end elevator here at headquarters.

**Walter:** You would think, my friend. You would think. Several years ago a new CIA attorney was working alone in the vault on a Saturday.

**Dee:** We should note here at CIA, offices are generally called vaults because they have to essentially be vaults, given the sensitivity of the materials.

**Walter:** Right. Or, uh, SCIFs. Another name we use here in the Intelligence Community.

**Dee:** That's correct. Pop quiz. What does SCIF mean?

**Walter:** Sensitive Compartmented Information Facility.

**Dee:** Boom.

*(laughter)*

**Walter:** Right, so they're they're extra secure from some things anyway. So this is a larger vault with a bunch of smaller individual offices along the other side. And when the CIA attorney took a break one day and walked out of his office into the main part of the vault, he thought he saw someone enter one particular office. He was surprised because he thought he was alone in the vault. And when he walked down to the office, no one was there. He hadn't felt a presence or anything, and he chalked it up to his mind playing tricks on him. But when he started to walk away, the door to that office closed on its own. So he returned to work the following Monday and mentioned it. And that's when he was told about the office ghost. For you see, my friend, it's apparently quite well known within one of the main divisions of CIA's Office of General Counsel, that one of the offices is haunted by a friendly spirit. The door randomly opens and closes. The temperature is often much cooler here than the rest of the vault, and officers assigned to that office have often felt the presence of someone else while working alone in their office. One officer said that if she did not talk to or acknowledge the ghost frequently enough, the door would occasionally slam shut to get her attention. And once she realized that, she made it a point to talk out loud a little bit more and the door never slammed shut again.

*(music ends)*

**Dee:** All right, that's not too bad. A friendly CIA lawyer ghost. I'll take it.

**Walter:** Did the lights just flicker?

**Dee:** I don't think so. I think we're all good. But why are you carrying candles?

**Walter:** I think it's your turn for the next story.

*(music begins)*

**Dee:** OK. So this next story is from a CIA officer working here at headquarters who spent many Fridays working alone during dark fall nights. They had an inside office along a long corridor, and they would listen to the news to create some noise so the last person to leave before them would know that somebody was still there. They said they would always know when they were the last person in the vault, because at around 5 p.m., they would make the rounds and be doubly sure that no one was in there so they wouldn't get locked in. And not getting locked in at CIA vaults after hours alone at night.

**Walter:** Check. And what you seem to be hinting at is that this officer always confirmed, made certain that they were the only one left in the vault.

**Dee:** Exactly, my friend.

**Walter:** But...

**Dee:** It always started about 30 minutes to an hour into this officer's time working alone. It would start with a keyboard. They would hear someone typing on the keyboard. This officer knew that they were alone, but they could hear it plain as day -- tap, tap, tap. Every once in a while, they would hear a phone hang up. It was always that phone hanging up that would prompt them to ask out loud "Hello? Anyone in here?" They would then get up from their desk, go looking for someone in the vacant offices, thinking to themselves, I know someone is here. How could someone not be here? They would make the rounds, making certain there is no one else there and then get back to their work. And no sooner than when they sit down -- tap tap tap. At this point, they would turn the TV up louder just to drown out the noise. Every now and then, this officer would hear a door close during many of their late-night shifts, and when they would go looking for a closed door, everything was just as it was. Nothing had closed. One day, they had asked a colleague if she had heard any noises when she was working late. The colleague replied, "You mean the rats in the walls?" The officer looked at her and said, "The rats are really smart because they've learned how to type." And that's when the colleague said, "So I tell myself it's rats, but that doesn't mean I believe it's rats."

**Walter:** So what did this CIA officer do?

**Dee:** Well, they told their mom about the nightly guests in the vaults, and she said, "You should make peace with them." So when this officer had to work late, they would introduce themselves and announce that they were working late and that they, and whoever else was in the vault, were both working hard on the same mission. And you know what? They said the tapping would die down, and the sound of doors closing would go away.

*(music ends)*

**Walter:** Corey?

**Dee:** Grif?

*(music begins)*

**Walter:** Huh, no one there. Ok, uh, I think I have the next story. OK, so this one takes place at a CIA location outside of headquarters here in Langley. This is a historic manor that CIA has a presence in, and the rumor is it's not the only presence inside those halls. Now, Dee, you and I actually have both heard this story just by happenstance from someone we both know personally here at CIA. And as they tell it, they once had to stay overnight in this particular location. They were to stay in a particular room, which this CIA officer described as large and filled with antique furniture. And the very first time they checked it out, they sensed something, something odd about it, right from the get go. The evening wore on, and a few minutes after midnight, they ventured back to their room. They sat down on the bed and they felt a bit weird. They weren't in the mood for TV, so they started reading a magazine about foreign policy.

**Dee:** This is how you know it's a CIA ghost story.

**Walter:** But as soon as they sat down on the bed, an indentation formed on the mattress next to them, as if someone had just sat down alongside them. This officer was beyond alarmed. They hastily got up from the bed and started telling themselves they, they must be feeling the stress of their work. They paced back and forth and turned on every light in the room. Finally, they calm themselves down.

**Dee:** But...

**Walter:** But at around 1:30 a.m. when they finally got in bed and pulled the blanket up over themselves, it was slowly pulled off of them. They would pull it back up, and again it would be slowly pulled off of them. Now we both know it's far better when this officer tells the story. But they 100% left the room at that point to see if anyone was downstairs, opening the door onto a spiral staircase and a chandelier.

**Dee:** Straight out of a horror film.

**Walter:** 100%. Absolutely. And they ended up simply standing there against the door for the remainder of the night until the break of dawn. And the next day, when sharing the story with colleagues, they asked those who'd spent much more time at this particular location about whether anything strange had ever occurred there. Those people's response, "how much time do you have?" And later still, he spoke with a colleague and good friend of his who had also spent the night at that manor. And she responded with shock because almost to a T, in that same location, the same thing had happened to her.

*(music ends)*

And actually, Dee, we probably don't have time to tell all the stories that are associated with this particular location. But there are many, many more from all sorts of people who, independent of one another, have gone there for various purposes.

**Dee:** That's correct. And I feel like we could spend an entire episode just talking about that.

**Walter:** Yeah. All right, my friend, um, I think that does it for our stories for tonight.

**Dee:** Not quite, my friend.

**Walter:** Not quite?

**Dee:** I have one more for you.

**Walter:** OK.

**Dee:** Brought to us by one of our SPOs, as we call them here. Our security protective officers.

**Walter:** We interviewed a couple in the past.

**Dee:** We did. Well, this one, she has a, she has a unique story to share. So I told her that we would, uh, maybe feature it here.

*(music begins)*

**Dee:** Many years ago, she had worked the midnight shift as a security officer here at headquarters. So midnight shifts sometimes have some excitement. And on this particular night, that was no exception. She was responding to an alarm call in one of the vaults, and she had opened the vault to see what was causing what they call a motion detection alarm. She entered and saw that someone, about 14 desks in or so, had two foiled Happy Birthday balloons in the vault floating just above their desk.

**Walter:** That's nice.

**Dee:** It is. But those balloons can often set off alarms. So while it was a lovely gesture for their coworker, the balloons had to be deflated in order to prevent the motion detector continuing to go off throughout the night. So she deflated them and placed them both on a flat desk. The officer whose desk the balloons belonged to had a stapler laying there. Um, so she put the stapler on top of the balloons in hopes of preventing further movement. She called it all clear and left the vault secure for the night.

**Walter:** So just to make sure I'm tracking here. Security officer working overnight, responds to an alarm in one of the vaults - motion detected. She finds these balloons, pops the balloons, secures them such that they won't move. Locks back up, heads back to her post.

**Dee:** Exactly right, so thinking all is good, a few hours later, that same alarm goes off - motion detected, in that same vault. So she walked back, opened the vault, deactivated the alarm and checked the vault again. She stepped a few feet into the vault and felt something underneath her foot. It made a crinkling sound.

**Walter:** No.

**Dee:** Yeah. She looked down knowing full well what she was expecting to see. The balloons were right under her feet.

**Walter:** But she'd secured them with the stapler.

**Dee:** She had. And those balloons were 14 desks back into the into the vault space. So here they are, crumbled at her feet. As soon as she stepped on the balloon, the motion lights actually turned off. So, like motion lights can be either manually turned on at the switch or motion detected.

**Walter:** So she's plunged into darkness.

**Dee:** Total darkness. So, frozen in that darkness, she grabs her flashlight, right, and she, at this point is not only noticing the balloons at her feet, but she notices that the light panel is down a little bit on the hall.

**Walter:** Of course.

**Dee:** So she walks down, clicks on the light, turns around, and there are the balloons a few feet from her.

**Walter:** No.

**Dee:** Yeah, so she says, clearly, at this point hairs on the back of her neck are standing up. At that point, she picks both of the balloons up again, looks around the space and clearly states out loud, "Security. Anyone here?" Obviously, no answer. So she makes her rounds, checks the rest of the vault, all the while holding these deflated balloons in her hands, and she came back to the desk that she had originally put these balloons on. The stapler was on the floor. So she picked up the stapler.

**Walter:** Wait. What?

**Dee:** Yeah. So she picks up the stapler, again, placed it back on the desk, and then looked for something heavier to keep the balloons in place. Again, places the balloons down. So she puts a book on top this time.

**Walter:** Ok.

**Dee:** And she's looking around the rest of the vault.

**Walter:** Right. Was there a fan or maybe an AC unit directly overhead or something?

**Dee:** Here's the thing - nothing there.

**Walter:** Nothing.

**Dee:** Exactly. So she took a moment and slowly stepped back from that cubicle. She peered down the hallway toward the door, towards the alarm panel, and began walking towards that door. She stopped, checked behind her, did a clear look, scan of the vault again. But 14 desks away from the door, the balloons had stayed, so she armed the alarm again and exited the vault, calling it all cleared. Now she claims that she didn't hear any more alarms from the vault for the rest of the night. But I'm pretty sure had she, she would have definitely asked a coworker to join her the next time.

*(music ends)*

**Dee:** That's all I have, my friend.

**Walter:** Whew. Well, I think that is as good a note as any to end on.

**Dee:** I think so too.

**Walter:** Well, I know we're sitting in a legendarily secure facility but somehow...

*(music begins)*

**Dee:** Even you, I can see it. You're now worried that there's some things out there that no amount of security could catch right?



**Walter:** Or some such things already in here.

**Dee:** Things that might drift right through.

**Walter:** Like a balloon across the CIA vault, my friend.

**Dee:** Well, I think, uh, that's it for our special episode of The Langley Files. We'll be leaving it to the listeners to decide whether the CIA officers in those tales stumbled upon something outside of the Agency's usual means of intelligence collection.

**Walter:** Indeed, we're not offering a formal CIA assessment.

**Dee:** Hopefully, you all enjoyed it.

**Walter:** Happy Halloween everyone.

**Dee:** From all of us here at Langley...

**Walter:** They'll be seeing you.

**Dee:** Uh, don't you mean, we'll be seeing you?

**Walter:** Do I?

*(music ends)*