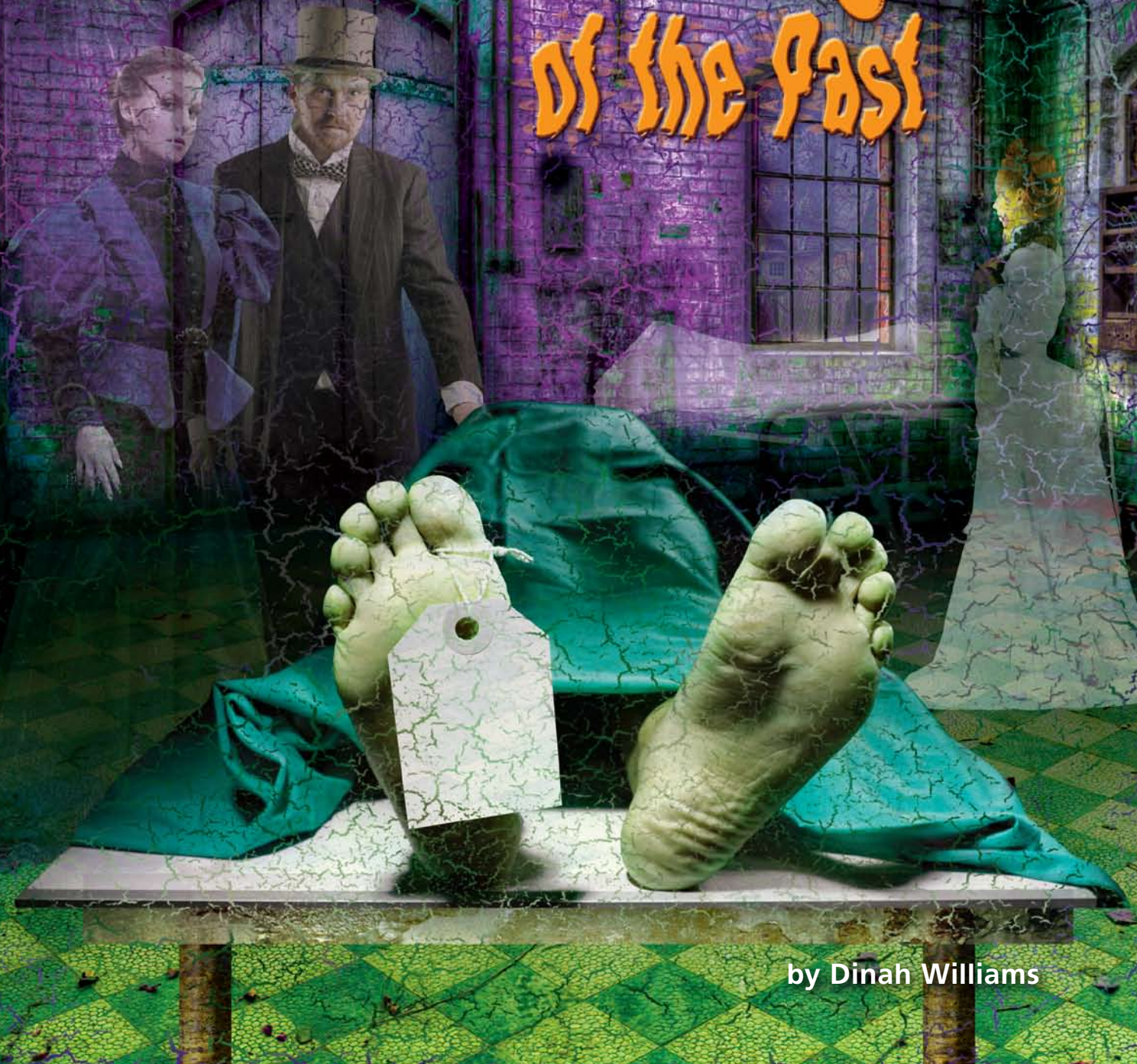


SCARY PLACES

# Monstrous Morgues of the Past



by Dinah Williams



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Publisher: Kenn Goin

Editorial Director: Adam Siegel

Creative Director: Spencer Brinker

Design: Dawn Beard Creative

Cover: Kim Jones

Photo Researcher: Omni-Photo Communications, Inc.

## *Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

Williams, Dinah.

Monstrous morgues of the past / by Dinah Williams.

p. cm. — (Scary places)

Includes bibliographical references (p. ) and index.

ISBN-13: 978-1-61772-149-6 (library binding)

ISBN-10: 1-61772-149-2 (library binding)

1. Haunted morgues—Juvenile literature. 2. Ghosts—Juvenile literature. I. Title.

BF1476.4.W55 2011

133.1'22—dc22

2010036464

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For more information, write to Bearport Publishing Company, Inc., 101 Fifth Avenue, Suite 6R, New York, New York 10003. Printed in the United States of America in North Mankato, Minnesota.

122010

10810CGF

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1



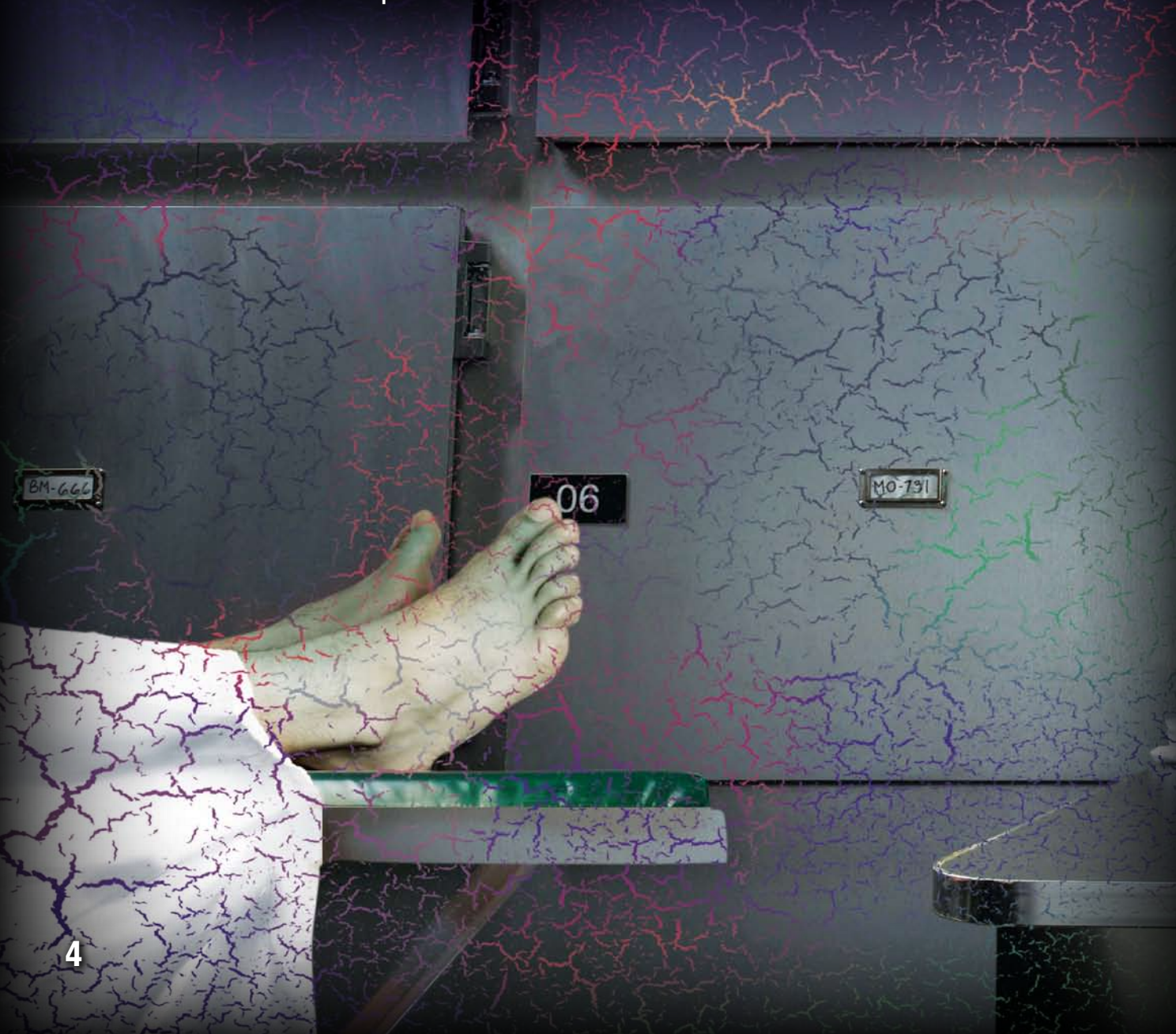
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# — Monstrous Morgues of the Past —

Imagine dead bodies lying in the cold darkness. They silently wait to be placed in their final resting place—the **grave**. No wonder people are terrified by **morgues**. Death and decay are everywhere in these buildings—which shouldn't come as a surprise. After all, morgues are places where people prepare dead bodies for **funerals** or perform **autopsies** to find out the cause of a person's death.





Morgues can be found in hospitals, **funeral homes**, and **mortuaries**. They are places where many people say they have seen the **spirits** of dead bodies lurking in the shadows. Among the 11 morgues in this book, you'll discover former funeral homes where the dead refuse to leave, a morgue that had more than one million visitors each year, and a haunted house that has a basement where people once drained the blood from dead bodies.





# A View of Death

## Paris Morgue, Paris, France

In the early 1800s, unidentified dead bodies in Paris were taken to the city's morgue. Family members or friends would come there, hopefully, to identify the **corpses** and agree to give them a proper burial. The building was open from dawn until dusk, seven days a week. What began as a place to identify bodies, however, soon became one of Paris's biggest tourist attractions.

Visitors at the Paris morgue





Curious visitors crowded into the Paris morgue to look at the dead. As a result, a bigger morgue was built in 1864 near the Notre Dame **Cathedral**. Inside the new building was a large room with a glass wall. Behind the wall were 12 black marble tables lit by a skylight.



Notre Dame  
Cathedral

Unidentified bodies were displayed on the tables for as long as two weeks. Beside each corpse's head was a faucet so the workers at the morgue could sprinkle water and chemicals on the bodies to try to keep them from rotting. When refrigerators were invented, they were used to help preserve the bodies.

In November 1876, two packages containing the top and bottom of a woman's corpse were delivered to the morgue. The story of a woman cut to pieces caused a sensation. When put on display, her body was viewed by as many as 20,000 people in one day. Through police work, the woman's murderer was eventually caught—and put to death.



The Paris morgue became so popular that by 1892 more than one million people visited the building in a year.



# Death by Ice Pick

## The Morgue at St. Elizabeth's Hospital, Washington, D.C.

St. Elizabeth's Hospital was America's first **federal** mental institution. From 1855 to 2002, more than 125,000 patients were treated there. Unfortunately, many of them ended up dying at St. Elizabeth's as well. Thousands of their brains remained in the hospital's morgue long after their deaths.

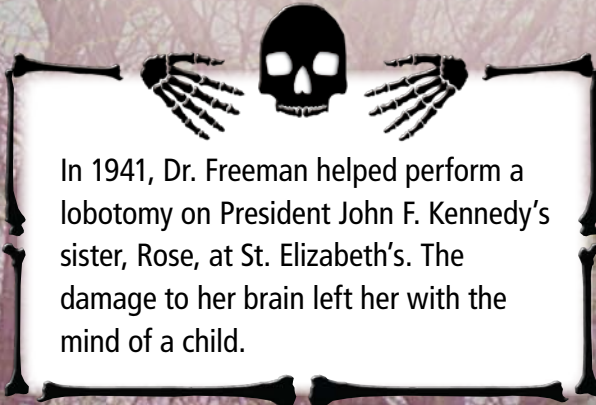


The autopsy room at  
St. Elizabeth's Hospital

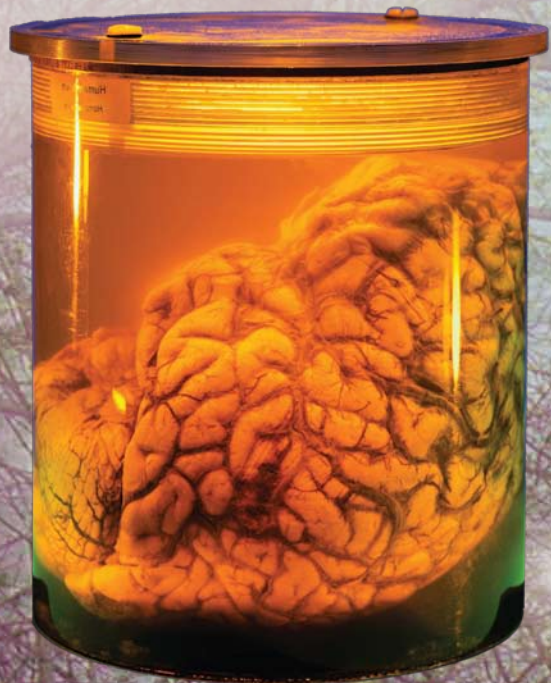


The morgue at St. Elizabeth's was always busy. Between 1884 and 1982, more than 15,000 autopsies were performed there. Doctors were looking for defects or injuries to the brain that might cause people to be **mentally ill**. As a result, they kept a collection of more than 1,400 brains in glass jars. The morgue also had 5,000 photographs of brains and 100,000 slides of patients' brain tissue.

One doctor at St. Elizabeth's, Walter Freeman, was especially interested in the relationship between the brain and mental illness. He performed a risky brain surgery called a **lobotomy**, which was supposed to lessen the **symptoms** of mentally ill patients. During the surgery, Dr. Freeman would hammer an ice pick through a patient's **eye sockets** in order to cut nerve connections in the brain. Dr. Freeman performed more than 3,000 lobotomies on patients during his career. Unfortunately, about 15 percent of those people died.



In 1941, Dr. Freeman helped perform a lobotomy on President John F. Kennedy's sister, Rose, at St. Elizabeth's. The damage to her brain left her with the mind of a child.





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