

Ancient Walls Hold Secrets

Clattering boots of mill-girls and children hurrying, hugging shawls around them.
Quick, before iron gates clang shut - no pay for you today!
A large stone building, many windows, forbidding doors. River cascading over the weir.
Thrumming creaking water wheels, gushing water, powering indescribably loud machinery.
An overseer shouting orders above the sound of bobbins shooting back and forth, swishing,
a whirling dervish of spinning, rotating, whirring. Twelve hours a day.

Ancient rough walls hold secrets of events witnessed long ago, of workers screams when
hair was caught and fingers trapped, gaffers shouting, chastising children.
Walls that have absorbed aromas of cotton, grease and burning tallow
Now absorb the cries of gulls and geese flying overhead, peregrine falcons nesting.
Dust has settled, the tall chimney that once belched forth smoke, went long ago,
Only a date remaining on its stump.

Now silence echoes eerily through vaulted archways, and cast-iron pillars.
Redundant iron monsters that once clicked and clacked have moved elsewhere,
sitting forlornly like ghosts of the industrial revolution, tombstones inscribed with Spinning
Jenny, Water Frame, Ribbed Stocking and the names of their inventors.
An all-pervading dampness seeps into the cold empty building
the river flows, once harnessed to power machines, now producing electricity.

By Rachel Kenning

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