

Terrifying-But-True Horror Stories Reported in the News

By Matt Miller and Lauren Kranc - Oct 21, 2021

From a cursed hotel to mysterious stalkers —these are some real-life nightmares



Once in a while, a story of a dreadful disappearance, demonic possession, or devil worship will land in the local paper instead of a pulpy old paperback. We've rounded up some of the unnerving real-life tales below.



The Death of Elisa Lam

Elisa Lam was last seen on January 31, 2013 in the lobby of the Cecil Hotel in downtown Los Angeles. She was vacationing through the West Coast, documenting the trip on her blog, and checking in with her parents every day. On January 31 those calls stopped. Lam had vanished. Soon the police were involved and her parents arrived to help with the search.

They had nothing. That February, LAPD released elevator surveillance footage of Lam before her disappearance. The footage shows Lam behaving strangely in the elevator, appearing to talk with invisible people, peering around the corner of the door, crouching in the corner, and opening and closing the door. But what exactly is going on in this video raises more questions than answers. Theories range from psychotic episodes, to demonic possession, to unknown assailants just out of the camera's view:

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Around that time, hotel guests started reported weird things happening with the Cecil Hotel water supply. As CNN reports:

"The shower was awful," said Sabina Baugh, who spent eight days there during the investigation. "When you turned the tap on, the water was coming black first for two seconds and then it was going back to normal."

The tap water "tasted horrible," Baugh said. "It had a very funny, sweaty, disgusting taste. It's a very strange taste. I can barely describe it."

But for a week, they never complained. "We never thought anything of it," she said. "We thought it was just the way it was here."

On the morning of February 19, a hotel employee climbed to the roof and used a ladder to investigate the hotel's water storage tanks. That's where authorities found the decomposing, naked body of Lam, whose personal items were found nearby. After an autopsy, her death was labelled accidental. NBC Los Angeles reported at the time about the strange circumstances in the hotel's past:

The tank has a metal latch that can be opened, but authorities said access to the roof is secured with an alarm and lock.

The single-room-occupancy hotel has an unusual history. "Night Stalker" Richard Ramirez, who was found guilty of 14 slayings in the 1980s, lived on the 14th floor for several months in 1985. And international serial killer Jack Unterwiesing is suspected of murdering three prostitutes during the time he lived there in 1991. He killed himself in jail in 1994.

In 1962, a female occupant jumped out of one the hotel's windows, killing herself and a pedestrian on whom she landed.

In February 2021, a Netflix doc called *Crime Scene: The Vanishing at the Cecil Hotel* explored Elisa's tragic case and the history of the "cursed" Cecil Hotel.

The Watcher

After moving into their \$1.3 million dream home, a New Jersey family started receiving creepy death threats from someone who identified themselves as "The Watcher." As CBS News reported earlier this year:

Since moving in, the owners said they have received numerous letters from the mysterious person. "The Watcher" claimed the home "has been the subject of my family for decades," and "I have been put in charge of watching and waiting for its second coming," Castro reported.

The new owners have several children, and other letters asked, "Have they found out what's in the walls yet?" and "I am pleased to know your names now, and the name of the young blood you have brought to me."

The family was forced to flee from their home and later filed a lawsuit against the previous owners.

What do you think of the real-life tales? Do you have any true tales of terror to tell your friends or family?

