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Blaisdell Hotel: Paranormal Experiences for the Brave Who Stay Late into the Night

Like the dead, some rumors just won't rest. On a chance conversation with a journalistic comrade, I learned of a "spirited" situation at the old Blaisdell Hotel. Complete with eye-witness accounts, and a week before Halloween, it was a chat possessed with potential. In the world of news writing, some story ideas are subtle, while some jump out and say *boo!*

Prelude to the ghouls

Built 99 years ago by architects Emory and Webb, and first managed by Mrs. William Wallace Blasdell, Grandmother of former Hawaii mayor Neil S. Blaisdell, the Blaisdell Hotel—or BH Building located at 1154 Fort Street Mall, has a past as nebulous as the shades who reportedly wander its halls. From a transient's paradise offering \$1.25 rooms at its inception, to a pre-WWII processing center for freshly minted mainland prostitutes, to the cheap lunch, retail and academic hodgepodge we know today, the four-stories of nearly soundproof cement have housed a wide sphere of humanity.

Many feet are bound to leave a few prints

Also burrowed in the halls of the old hotel is the Kalamalama newsroom, the epicenter of several late night sightings by caffeine-fueled, deadline-sensitive print journalists. "I have heard doors open and close with no one coming in. I have heard papers fall from desks. I have heard piano music," says Hannah Beach, a journalism senior. The hotel has no piano. I went to find Javier Fombellida, the head operator of the hotel's birdcage elevator, an antique boasting a manual hand crank *objet d'art* unique to the state. "He is out on back surgery," said janitorial man of action Hary Hartsock, "go see Kepa the supervisor." He turned the brass crank to B. "Want to see the water pipe where people say an owner hanged himself?"

I found Kepa Marks in the basement, a health inspector's nightmare (or fantasy, depending on his/her attitude).

"This is the worst place you want to be," he said with an ominous glance.

"Because of the ghosts?" I asked with a pinch of foolishness.

"Because of the rats."

A familiar face and integral functionary at the hotel, Marks is no stranger to the darker side of the Blaisdell, meaning he sometimes works past dark, especially in winter. "I was on the second floor one night and smelled cigar smoke; I was the only one here. What's that about? Another

time I heard chains dragging across the floor.” He and a friend also saw a pale wisp float by on two separate occasions. “You want to see something? Stay late one night.”

And the clock strikes 12:00

I called it quits just after 12:00 am. I learned the hotel’s converted rooms double as late-night studios for musicians with a flair for the eccentric—and a kickback spot for their hipster pals. I smelled phantom floral arrangements—until I found someone using a can of Febreze. All of the computers in the newsroom simultaneously turned on and entered maintenance mode, which they do every night. I’ve heard nothing of occult tendencies to follow a schedule, but perhaps the ghost of a former accountant is behind it?

I count myself among the lucky, leaving such a notorious place with only a moderate sense of odd. The adept words of HPU journalism/communication graduate Kuulei Funn, a witness of spectral entities with a bend toward voyeurism and newspaper dishevelment, offered a grounded perspective during my paranormal pursuits. “It seems scary, but in reality, if there is such a thing as lost souls and wandering spirits, we shouldn’t fear them. The living has more potential to be harmful than the dead.”

A statement that any lost soul wandering downtown past sundown is sure to concur.