

Renegade Files®

Episode Title: The Strange Case of Elisa Lam and the Cecil Hotel - RF109

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App Description:

1.
A missing girl, an unsettling video, a hotel with a dark past, and an official story that leaves more questions than answers.
2.
Elisa Lam disappeared inside the Cecil Hotel. Examine the timeline, evidence, and unanswered questions.

Short Form Video Script:

In 2013, 21-year-old traveler Elisa Lam checked into the Cecil Hotel in downtown Los Angeles and then, vanished. When police released the bizarre elevator surveillance video, the internet exploded with theories. The official ruling was “accidental drowning,” but logistics, rooftop access, and timeline raise many suspicions. To dive deeper into this strange case, listen to Renegade Files Episode 109, on all podcast platforms.

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Show Notes

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This is Renegade Files Episode 109, Elisa Lam and the Cecil Hotel.

In February 2013, 21-year-old Canadian college student Elisa Lam vanished while staying at the Cecil Hotel in Downtown Los Angeles — a location already infamous for crime, unsolved deaths, and a very troubled history. After nearly

three weeks of searching, Lam's body was discovered at the hotel in a rooftop water tank. Officially ruled as an accidental drowning, law enforcement concluded there was no evidence of foul play.

Yet the details that surfaced around the case ignited worldwide speculation and debate. Elevator surveillance footage showed Lam behaving very strangely. And many questions arose, such as...

What exactly is happening in the bizarre elevator footage?

How did she access the locked rooftop?

How did she get inside the tank, and close the hatch from inside?

Independent investigators examined the timeline, police search procedures, the autopsy information, Lam's past, and other details to discover many odd coincidences.

Elisa Lam's death remains one of the most analyzed modern mysteries of the last decade. The Cecil Hotel's long and dark reputation, the digital culture around true crime, and the thin line between official conclusions and public skepticism all converge in this unsettling story.

Today on Renegade Files we dive deep into the True Crime Mystery of Elisa Lam's tragic end, and the seemingly cursed Cecil Hotel with its infamous register of residents and tragedies. Come with me now, and together we will explore the interconnections of a location plagued with foul play, and analyze the mysterious death of someone who spent her last days there, as we investigate *The Strange Case of Elisa Lam and the Cecil Hotel*.

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Episode Primary Keywords:

Elisa Lam; Elisa Lam case; Cecil Hotel; Cecil Hotel Los Angeles; Cecil Hotel Documentary; Cecil Hotel mystery; Cecil Hotel Elisa Lam; Elisa Lam Conspiracy; Elisa Lam elevator footage; death of Elisa Lam

Secondary True Crime Context Keywords:

true crime podcast; true crime mysteries; unexplained deaths; strange disappearances; unsolved mysteries podcast; real crime stories; cold case podcast; forensic analysis podcast; conspiracy investigations; dark history podcast

Location + Event Keywords:

downtown Los Angeles; skid row Los Angeles; Cecil hotel history; Los Angeles crimes; California mysteries; 2013 cold case

Topic Expansion Keywords:

mental health and crime; internet investigation; crowdsourced investigation; elevator surveillance video; media sensationalism; forensic evidence analysis

Long-Tail Search Phrases (High Intent):

what happened to Elisa Lam; Cecil Hotel Elevator Video Explained; is the Cecil Hotel haunted; Elisa Lam autopsy results; Cecil Hotel true crime story; strangest true crime cases; Cecil Hotel Netflix Series explained

AEO (Answer Engine Optimization)

Question 1: “Who was Elisa Lam?”

Answer 1: Elisa Lam was a 21-year-old Canadian student who disappeared while staying at the Cecil Hotel in Los Angeles in 2013. Her death in a rooftop water tank became one of the most analyzed modern true crime cases due to strange surveillance footage and unanswered investigative questions.

Question 2: “Why is the Elisa Lam case famous?”

Answer 2: The case went viral because elevator surveillance footage showing Elisa Lam acting strangely circulated worldwide, leading to widespread online investigation. When her body was later found, the official accidental ruling raised logistical and forensic questions that fueled public fascination.

Question 3: “What is the official explanation for Elisa Lam’s death?”

Answer 3: The official Los Angeles coroner’s ruling was accidental drowning, with bipolar disorder listed as a contributing condition. Authorities stated they found no evidence of foul play or intoxication, though independent investigators dispute the practicality and details of that conclusion.

Question 4: “Why do people believe there is more to the Elisa Lam case?”

Answer 4: Conflicting details about rooftop access, water tank logistics, video edits, and contradictory police statements created a gap between the official narrative and observable facts. Online communities continue to explore alternative explanations involving mental health, foul play, institutional failures, and larger environmental coincidences.

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Episode Text

Hello and welcome to Renegade Files, your underground connection to paranormal events, cloak-and-dagger mysteries, and deep cultural analysis. I’m your host, Lex Gordon, sending you this secret signal from the Jungle Villa Outpost, Deep in the Uncharted Tropics.

This is Renegade Files Episode 109, The Strange Case of Elisa Lam and the Cecil Hotel.

Fair warning: this episode contains topics of death, murder, foul play, suicide, supernatural theories, prescription side effects, mental illness, specifically depression, bipolar disorder, and hallucination, and police procedural descriptions of a crime scene. If any of these subjects are uncomfortable for you or those within listening range, please tap your way to one of our other, over 100 episodes.

In February 2013, 21-year-old Canadian college student Elisa Lam vanished while staying at the Cecil Hotel in Downtown Los Angeles; a location already infamous for crime, unsolved deaths, and a very troubled history. After nearly

three weeks of searching, Lam's body was discovered at the very hotel from which she had vanished. Her death was officially ruled as accidental, and law enforcement concluded there was no evidence of foul play.

Yet the details that surfaced around the case ignited worldwide speculation and debate. Elevator surveillance footage showed Lam behaving very strangely. And many questions arose, such as...

What exactly is happening in the bizarre elevator footage?

How did she access the locked rooftop?

How did she get into the location where she was found?

Independent investigators examined the timeline, police search procedures, the autopsy information, Lam's past, and other details to discover many odd coincidences.

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Today on Renegade Files we dive deep into the True Crime Mystery of Elisa Lam's tragic end, and the seemingly cursed Cecil Hotel with its infamous register of residents and tragedies.

Come with me now, and together we will explore the interconnections of a location plagued with dark deeds, and analyze the mysterious death of someone who spent her last days there, as we investigate *The Strange Case of Elisa Lam and the Cecil Hotel*.

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PART 1 – Timeline, Setting, and Official Narrative

Who Was Elisa Lam?

- Elisa Lam (林奚含) was born on April 30, 1991, in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada
- Her parents were from Hong Kong, and they operated a restaurant in Burnaby, BC.
- Elisa attended the University of British Columbia (UBC), and while she remained enrolled, she continuously took breaks due to struggles with her mental health. She expressed concerns that the gaps in her transcripts might one day adversely affect her goals to attend graduate school.
- She was clinically diagnosed as having bipolar disorder and depression, according to her family, and her available medical records.
- At the time of her death she was prescribed 3 Medications:
 - Lamotrigine -luh-mo-trih-jeen
 - Quetiapine -quy-tie-a-peen
 - Ven-La-faxine (non-adherence possible per blood levels)Go into summary of each including side affects.
All 3 of them have side effects of Suicidal “whatevertheycallit”
- She was a reader and a prolific writer and Blogger, and her last active content was posted mostly on Tumblr under the title “nouvelle-nouveau”, which can still be found. She used blogs to keep journals of her travel plans, make fashion posts, express her struggles with depression, both her understanding and confusion about life, and her many personal reflections.
 - read some of her posts (sometimes she posted hundreds of times a day).
- At some point she decided to embark on a solo trip along the US West Coast by both Amtrak and Bus, and she had plans to document the journey online. She was 21 years old.

Elisa Lam’s Arrival in Los Angeles

- **Arrival Date:** January 26, 2013
- Elisa traveled by Amtrak and bus, first to San Diego.
- While there she posted this Blog note: <https://nouvelle-nouveau.tumblr.com/post/41414644630/today-i-slept-took-a-long-hot-shower-stuffed>

She did go to the zoo. She posted pictures from her day there on her blog.

- She then traveled to Los Angeles.
- She got a room at the Cecil Hotel, in the section called “Stay on Main” which was made up of hostel-type rooms.
- The Cecil hotel had rebranded part of the property as Stay on Main in 2011, after a long decline from it’s original glory days as a business hotel in the mid-1920s.
- The Cecil Hotel is located at one end of skid row in LA, and the area, even at the time Elisa Lam stayed there, was populated by hundreds of thousands of homeless, and the area as well as the hotel itself are plagued with hard drug use, high crime, prostitution, and all manner of vice. This is not my opinion, but rather simple facts.
- The city had forced the Cecil to turn much of the hotel into housing for the homeless population, and the sections rebranded as Stay on Main were what they were able to remodel and offer as hostel and hotel accommodations for travelers. This mixed long-term residents with tourists.
- The two distinct areas of the Cecil Hotel shared elevators and hallways and some common areas. (What could go wrong?)
- The hotel has a long history of being the scene of much violent crime, drug activity, many suicides, and has been the transitory residence for multiple known murderers. (*We will go Deeper into the “infamous residents” later...so stay tuned.*)
- Originally Elisa Lam was booked into a shared female hostel-style room, but was soon moved to a private room after her roommates complained about her, quote, “odd behavior”.
- According to Amy Price, the manager of the Cecil Hotel at the time of Lam's disappearance, Lam was allegedly leaving sticky-notes for her roommates that said things like “Go Away” and “Go home”... and locking the door while they were gone, then making them guess a password to get back in when they returned. So they gave her a private room.
- Another post from her blog, which is a quote from Richard Wright’s book “*Black Boy*” reads: I walked home slowly, asking myself what on earth was the matter with me, why it was I never seemed to do things as people expected them to be done. Every word and gesture I made seemed to provoke hostility. I had never been able to talk to others, and I had to guess at their meanings and motives.

- A few days before her disappearance, she attended a live taping of the *Conan O'Brien Talkshow* in Burbank, but was escorted off the premises by security, due to what facilities officials described as disruptive behavior.
- Throughout this time she maintained contact with her family with daily phone calls.
- Her last call to them was on January 31, 2013

The Disappearance Timeline

- The Last confirmed sighting of Elisa Lam at the Cecil Hotel was on Jan. 31, 2013. She was seen by staff and recorded on security cameras.
- She was supposed to check out the next day, but failed to ever do so.
- She also did not call her family on February 1st, the same day she missed her checkout time, and this is when her family first alerted the LAPD that their daughter was missing.
- Now, a 21 year old girl in LA who fails to check out of her hotel when she's supposed to is probably not a 3-alarm missing person's case on her first day missing, for the LAPD.
- But they did send officers to search the hotel, but initially they just kind of walked around the hotel and the hallways and asked if anyone had seen her and when. Some of the hotel staff looked for her too.
- The police didn't have warrants to search any of the other rooms, and they found her room in neat order with some of her belongings still in it.
- But 5 days passed and no sign of Elisa Lam. So on February 6 the police issued a public Missing Persons bulletin.
- From Feb 7 through Feb 13, Police conducted canine searches of the hotel, the hotel roof, and the surrounding blocks. It seems that the dogs alerted to her scent in a hallway but lost the trail at a window.
- The dogs found nothing on the rooftop according to the police reports.
- No witnesses interviewed had seen Elisa Lam any time after January 31.

Police Search Efforts

- At this stage the LAPD Missing Persons Unit reached out to the media with Flyers and press briefings to solicit tips or leads.

- They further interviewed hotel staff, reviewed check-in data, and conducted more extensive room searches.
- One of the most disturbing Outcomes of the deeper search, was that police realized that no visual evidence of her leaving the hotel could be found on any of the ground-level cameras. So she had disappeared, but it looked like she was still somewhere in the hotel.

Police Decision to Release Elevator Surveillance Footage

- **Date Released: February 14, 2013**
- **Source:** Elevator camera footage from **January 31, starting at approx. 8:00 PM**
- (timestamp inconsistencies noted but not discussed publicly)
- The surveillance video shows Elisa enter the elevator, swing her arm dramatically to then bend down and press multiple buttons. It looks like she's just pressing all the buttons over and over for a few seconds. She then steps slowly toward the still open doors, and peers into hallway. She looks both ways. She returns into the elevator and backs up into the front corner on the side where the buttons are, and she seems to hide there for a few seconds. She exits the still open doors, and begins to make strange and elaborate gestures with her hands, curving them back in un-natural ways. She steps in and out of the elevator repeatedly, before exiting, lingering at the edge just in frame and just outside the doors, then moves away to the left and is never seen again.
- There's a link to this video in the show notes, so you can watch it for yourself.
- *We will dive even deeper into the elevator footage analysis and anomalies in Part 2.*

-
- So on February 19, hotel maintenance worker Santiago Lopez went to troubleshoot the hotel water system, after multiple guest complaints of low water pressure, discoloration, and foul water.
 - He accessed the rooftop through a stairwell and a locked rooftop door. Only Hotel staff had keys to access the roof.
 - Lopez noticed one of the four, 8-foot tall, 1000 gallon water tanks that supplied water to the hotel had a partially ajar lid, and when he climbed

the ladder and looked inside, he found a deceased Elisa Lam.

- She was naked, quite decomposing, and floating face up.
- Lopez immediately notified hotel management and the LAPD was informed.
- The LAPD and Fire Department had to drain the tank, and cut into it to recover the body.
- According to the Autopsy Report, Released in June of 2013, the official Cause of Death was drowning. There was no evidence of sexual assault, external trauma, or intoxicating levels of any illicit drugs or alcohol.
- She had therapeutic ranges for some of her prescribed drugs, and subtherapeutic levels for others. (In other words she had been taking some of her bipolar and depression medicines, but not taking others.)

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PART 2 – Conflicts, Logistics & Investigative Questions

Elevator Footage Anomalies

- Released by LAPD on **February 14, 2013**, but the raw digital file shows irregularities not addressed by police.
- **Missing Time:** Multiple independent video analysts identified a **53-second segment** that appears removed or skipped based on door dwell timing and motion cues.
- **Editing Indicators:** There is an **obvious jump cut** around the moment the elevator doors almost close, then re-open, suggesting part of the feed was intentionally removed or censored.
- **Timestamp Issues:** The **timestamp field is blurred** or overlaid with a gray block, raising questions about whether the blur was applied by LAPD, the hotel, or a third party during processing.
- Internet investigators used frame interpolation and enhancement to **rebuild parts of the blurred timestamp**, concluding:
 - The footage likely ran slower than real-time (possible frame-rate alteration).
 - The blurred timestamps show non-linear progression (indicative of edits).
 - The missing gap corresponds to footage where someone else **could have been present** just outside the frame.
- **Unanswered Questions:** LAPD never addressed:
 - Who blurred the timestamps?
 - Why was the video altered before release?
 - Whether unedited footage exists.
 - Who had access to the surveillance system and export tools at the time.

Rooftop Access Procedure + Fire Escapes

- The **main rooftop access** was via a **stairwell** ending at a **locked door** equipped with an **alarm system** (audible alarm reported by hotel staff during later interviews).
- Only **hotel employees** and certain maintenance staff held keys or alarm bypass capability.
- The **fire escape route**, located on the side of the building, provided an **alternate climbable exterior path** from guest floors to the roof, though it was:
 - Difficult to locate,
 - Structurally exposed,

- And required navigating out a window at height.
 - Police never confirmed whether the rooftop door alarm was logged or triggered on **January 31** (or any time before discovery).
 - There is **no known security footage** of rooftop entries or exits despite rooftop access being critical to the case.
-

Water Tank Entry + Hatch Details (Police vs. Discovering Hotel Worker)

- The four rooftop water tanks were **cylindrical**, approximately **8-feet tall** and **4-foot diameter**, each holding **~1000 gallons**.
 - Each tank had:
 - A **metal ladder**
 - A **top hatch** roughly **16–20 inches** across.
 - **Discovery Details (Santiago Lopez, Feb. 19):**
 - Lopez reported the **hatch was partially open** when he arrived.
 - He physically **climbed the tank ladder**, looked inside, and saw the body.
 - **Police Position (Early Statements):**
 - Some LAPD spokespeople initially **misstated** that the tank hatch had been **closed**, raising immediate logistical problems (i.e., how did Lam close it from inside?).
 - Later clarification established **Lopez found it open**, but the earlier contradictory statements fueled foul play theories and distrust of the official account.
 - Extraction required **draining and cutting the tank**, indicating **no internal ladder** or footholds that would allow easy exit.
-

Search Protocol Issues and Gaps

- Police conducted **dog-assisted searches** on multiple days, but:
 - Dogs alerted to the **hotel's interior**
 - Lost scent near a **window**
 - **Did not alert** on the tanks or rooftop surface.
- Police **did access the rooftop** during initial searches, but **did not open** the tank hatches, which became a major procedural criticism.
- No formal explanation was ever given for **why the tanks were not inspected by the hotel staff sooner**, despite being potential hazards or concealment locations.

- The hotel had **no record** of maintenance logs for rooftop checks during Lam's disappearance window, leaving gaps in timeline reconstruction.
 - Police confirmed **no fingerprints or forensic swabs** were taken from ladders, hatches, or tank surfaces, due to "impracticality" after water exposure and delayed discovery.
-

Witness Info + Police Statements

- **Staff Witness:** The only hotel witness statement confirmed during the disappearance window was **hotel desk staff** who last saw Lam on **January 31**.
- **Roommates:** Her former roommates were **not present** after she moved to a private room, offering no additional timeline data.
- **No external witnesses** came forward placing Lam outside the hotel after Jan 31, leaving **no confirmed sightings** beyond the elevator footage.
- **Police Public Statements:**
 - Early statements emphasized lack of evidence of "foul play."
 - LAPD repeatedly declined to elaborate on tank access, alarm logs, or video edits.
 - Autopsy communications stressed the **role of bipolar disorder**, shaping the official accidental drowning narrative.
- **Family Statements:** Lam's family did sue the hotel for negligence involving the unlocked water tanks and roof access, but a judge ruled that a determined person could access the roof even if the hotel had it secured by a locked door, and the case was ultimately dismissed.

The family questioned the police ruling the death as accidental, but **did not pursue litigation**, citing emotional exhaustion and limited resources.

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PART 3 – Alternative Views & Cultural Aftermath

Online Investigation & Speculation Culture

- The Elisa Lam case became one of the earliest **viral true-crime investigations** powered by forums, YouTube analysis, and social media collaboration.
- Communities on **Reddit, Websleuths, 4chan, and YouTube** dissected the case frame-by-frame, analyzing elevator footage, LAPD behavior, floor plans, and autopsy reports.
- These online researchers produced **maps, timelines, surveillance reconstructions, rooftop access demonstrations, and crowd-translated interviews**, creating a pooling of amateur and expert resources rarely seen before in a missing person case.
- The case became a **digital archetype** for “crowdsourced sleuthing,” predating later waves of similar internet-led investigations (ex: Maura Murray, Cecil Hotel Netflix discourse, etc.).

Mental Health Framing vs. Foul Play Theories

- The **official narrative** emphasizes:
 - Accidental drowning
 - Bipolar disorder as a contributing factor
 - Medication non-adherence
- Critics argue the mental health framing **does not explain logistical conflicts**, including:
 - Gaining rooftop access without triggering alarms
 - Entering an 8-foot high water tank
 - Removing clothing before or after submersion
 - The initial “closed hatch” confusion
- Alternative theories include:
 - Coercion by another person
 - Encounter with a violent hotel resident
 - Stalking or targeted attack
 - Human trafficking or drug-related activity

- These theories are fueled by **logistical improbabilities** rather than emotional speculation, and persist due to lack of transparent investigative closure.

There's another possibility that I thought of while researching this case. Indulge my speculation here. So remember the missing 53 seconds of footage from the elevator tape?

What if that showed whomever it was Elisa was hiding from? What if someone really was after her? She might have pressed all the buttons to get the elevator to go to multiple floors and throw off someone who was following her, but she overdid it and caused the doors to just freeze for an extended period of time.

I mean if she wanted to kill herself how would she even know there were huge water tanks on the roof in the first place? Is it possible that she used the fire escape for exactly that... an escape?

She goes into the elevator, presses a bunch of floors, but too many, and when the doors won't close, she panics. She peeks out into the hall. She hides back in the elevator, but the doors still don't close. She goes into the hall and we see her almost writhing, contorting her hands... this could be her anguish, talking to herself, trying to decide what to do, as if she knows whoever it is coming. Maybe not there yet, but coming. She might hear the footsteps in the hollow stairwell. The elevator still stuck. So she leaves, out of frame to the left, and gone.

Then in the 53 seconds of missing footage, the person stalking her could have walked by. But she has fled, and gone out the window... the window in the hallway where the police dog had found but then lost her scent.

Out the window, up the fire escape, and onto the roof, to get away from someone on her trail. Looking for a place to hide she sees the large tanks, and the ladders up to their tops. She opens the lid and slides down into the dark water. No one would even think to look for her there. In fact, not even the police searching the building for her for 2 weeks did.

After all, if she wanted to kill herself, she's already on the roof and so a faster far easier way is steps away.

And it's possible that when she entered the tank the water was high enough for her to swim up to the opening and get back out... maybe, she could have thought, at daylight.

But as residents bathed and flushed and showered and used water the tank level dropped and she couldn't get out. Some have suggested she removed her clothes to rid herself of their wet weight, and try to jump for the opening in the now higher tank roof. But exhaustion and panic and ultimately, drowning, took her life.

Whether she went into the tank to hide from a real threat, or from an imagined one, in the end, is irrelevant, but the missing elevator footage begs these kinds of questions.

If the missing footage showed someone pass by following her as she went to the roof, who would want to hide that person, and why?

The only organizations that we know ever had original possession of the tapes were the hotel and the police. The police say they didn't alter or edit the tapes, and the hotel says the same... but it seriously appears that someone did. Who, and why?

Tuberculosis Outbreak Theory (TB Hypothesis)

This is where things get really weird.

- At the time of Lam's disappearance, there was a **tuberculosis outbreak** among the homeless population in the **Skid Row** area surrounding the Cecil Hotel.
- Investigators online discovered that the TB screening test being used during that outbreak, was called "**LAM-ELISA**", an acronym for **Lipo-arabino-mannan Enzyme-Linked Immuno-sorbent Assay**, spelled **exactly the same** as "**Elisa Lam**".
- And Elisa Lam, as you may recall, attended the University of British Columbia. The University of British Columbia houses Canada's largest tuberculosis research department, leading to speculation regarding research links, studies, or experimental programs.
- Lam may have been a student pharmaceutical test volunteer
- She may have observed or documented something related to testing
- Her death could represent an **institutional cover-up**
- And the rooftop tanks may have been chosen to **avoid airborne contamination**
- Supporters cite the coincidences as **too precise to ignore**, while critics argue it's just **pattern-recognition** with no evidentiary basis.

This conflict is at the heart of every conspiracy theory and rebuttle, and the TB Hypothesis in the Elisa Lam case is no different.

Media Treatment, Documentaries, and Narratives

- Mainstream media initially treated the case as a **bizarre disappearance**, shifting to **sensational mystery** after elevator footage went viral.
- Several major productions covered the case, including:
 - **Netflix's "Crime Scene: The Vanishing at the Cecil Hotel"**
 - YouTube documentary series and breakdowns
 - Longform podcasts (including *Casefile*, *Morbid*, and others)
- Media often framed Lam as:
 - a Vulnerable traveler
 - a Mental health case-study
 - a Paranormal mystery (due to the mysterious elevator footage)People suggest it looks as if she is conversing with an invisible presence, or that she appears to be possessed.

Long-Term Legacy for Cecil Hotel + True Crime Culture

- The Cecil Hotel became an **infamous tourist and documentary location**, often rebranded but never fully escaping its history.
- The case accelerated the popularity of **urban disaster tourism** and **true-crime hotel lore**, comparable to locations like the Stanley Hotel or Amityville House.
- In true crime culture, the Lam case:
 - Became a template for **online sleuthing**
 - Highlighted **the limits of official narratives**
 - Sparked discussions around **mental health vs. malfeasance**
 - Drove scrutiny toward **police transparency and video evidence**
- The Lam case continues to serve as a **cultural intersection point** between:
 - Mental health stigma
 - Institutional trust
 - Government transparency
 - Media ethics
 - Conspiracy culture
 - Digital-era investigative communities

PART 4 – Infamous Residents & Cecil Hotel Tragedies

Serial Killers Linked to the Cecil Hotel

• **Richard Ramirez (“aka the Night Stalker”)** – who Stayed at the Cecil during part of his 1984 - 1985 killing spree in Los Angeles, during which Ramirez murdered at least fifteen people. He had a troubled childhood that included abuse by his father that caused brain damage, he started abusing drugs at the age of 10, became fascinated with the macabre in his teens thanks to his older cousin who was a Vietnam veteran with schizophrenia and PTSD, who extensively bragged about the violent war crimes he had committed, and who killed his wife in front of Ramirez when Ramirez was 15. Ramirez showed no remorse and died while awaiting execution.

• Ramirez reportedly **disposed of his own and victim’s clothes in dumpsters near the hotel** and returned through the back entrance to avoid attention (based on police and biographical accounts).

• **Jack Unterweger** – Austrian journalist-turned-serial killer, stayed at the Cecil in **1991** while researching crime in the U.S.

• He killed **three women** in Los Angeles and was eventually caught and convicted.

• These are two of the worst we know who have lived at the Cecil Hotel.

• in the **1930s–1960s**: The Cecil was known for a high frequency of **suicides**, including:

- Poisonings
- Gunshots
- and many Jumping from windows

• The media commonly referred to the building as the **“Hotel of Suicides”** during mid-20th century coverage.

• One of the most known tragedies:

- In **1962**, a woman jumped from the **ninth floor** and landed on a pedestrian, killing them both a detail often repeated in documentaries about the hotel.

• **1970s–1990s**: Crime, drug overdoses, stabbings, and unsolved assaults continued, reflecting the worsening state of the hotel and surrounding neighborhood.

Proximity to Skid Row Crime & Culture

- The Cecil sits adjacent to **Skid Row**, one of the densest populations of homeless and mentally ill individuals in the U.S.
- Skid Row's crime profile historically included:
 - Violent assaults
 - Narcotics trafficking
 - Mental health-related incidents
 - Infectious disease outbreaks
- This geographic context created a **constant flow of police, paramedics, and coroners**, making the hotel a magnet for tragedy and anonymity.

Law Enforcement & Emergency Response History

- LAPD and Los Angeles Fire Department recorded **numerous emergency calls** to the Cecil involving:
 - Assaults
 - Overdoses
 - Domestic violence
 - Unattended deaths
- Due to transient guests and long-term residents, **identifications were often delayed**, adding to the hotel's mysterious crime legacy.
- True crime communities frequently cite the Cecil as an example of "**place-based haunting**" — not in the supernatural sense, but as a building that accumulates trauma and stories over time.

In the end, it is the case that Elisa Lam drowned. The mystery is, did she go into the water tank on her own, or not. She wasn't battered and showed no signs of struggle. Perhaps she climbed in to hide from someone she felt was a threat, or because she suffered from mental illness and imagined the threat, or because she was clinically depressed and bipolar and on 3 medicines, two of which have suicide as a side effect.

Or did she run afoul of some botched drug testing program, or was the TB breakout in skid row part of some controlled field test from the University she went to, and she knew too much? There are known and proven cases of officials contaminating the public, and in California for that matter.

In 1950, the U.S. military conducted a secret experiment called Operation Sea-Spray, where they sprayed two different deadly bacteria over San Francisco to study the city's vulnerability to biological attacks. This experiment may have

contributed to one death and several illnesses among residents. And this absolutely happened.

So many things are possible. And when we try to figure out Elisa's actions, we do so, in many cases, with healthy minds and common perspectives.

This is why we ask questions like, if she wanted to end her life, why not do this or that instead of what she did? This assumes her death was intentional and her decision making rational. People with extreme mental issues can behave in unexplained ways and those ways often elude logical analysis.

Another blog post by Elisa, a line from Virginia Woolf reads: *"Why, she reflected, should there be this perpetual disparity between the thought and the action, between the life of solitude and the life of society, this astonishing precipice on one side of which the soul was active and in broad daylight, on the other side of which it was contemplative and dark as night?"*

And here are a few more of her posts:

"Was life that dull, that boring and humdrum for people? He hated to think of his own life stretching ahead of him that way, a long succession of days and nights that were fine, fine—not good, not bad, not great, not lousy, not exciting, not anything." Robert Cormier, *The Chocolate War*

And from the Tao of Pooh: "Do you really want to be happy? You can begin by being appreciative of who you are and what you've got."

And finally, Elisa posted this quote from Marianne Williamson: "Until we have seen someone's darkness, we don't really know who they are. Until we have forgiven someone's darkness, we don't really know, what love is."

I wish Elisa peace and happiness, and her family as well.

XXXXXXXXXXXXXX

ending sign off

Thank you sincerely for investigating The Case of Elisa Lam and the Cecil Hotel with me.

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I am so glad to have you in the Renegade Files Crew.

Until next week, I'm your host Lex Gordon...

*Stay Wild, **Starseed** Child!*