# SAMPLE

## The Dark Mysteries of the Hotel del Salto

Colombia's Cliff of Tragedy: The Luxury Hotel Above the Tequendama Falls and the Spirits of the Lost

Aiden Nightfall

Free sample: Introduction & Chapter 1

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The Dark Mysteries

This free sample contains the Introduction and Chapter 1. The complete book contains the full contents above.

# Introduction

A road leaves Bogotá and follows the high plateau toward a place where water appears to fall out of the earth. At Tequendama Falls, the Bogotá River narrows, gathers force, and drops through a dramatic gorge. Mist rises from the plunge pool. The cliffs are green when the season is kind, brown when the weather is harsh, and almost always louder than a person expects. Above that spectacle stands a pale building with a theatrical façade: the former Hotel del Salto.

The building is now associated with the Casa Museo Tequendama and with efforts to interpret the history of the site. Before restoration and museum work, however, photographs of the abandoned structure circulated widely. Empty windows looked over the cataract. Peeling walls suggested rooms left in a hurry. A destination once marketed as an elegant retreat became, in popular accounts, a "suicide hotel," a place where the dead had supposedly refused to leave.

That phrase is powerful and imprecise. It compresses several histories into one label: the Indigenous story of Bochica and the opening of the falls; the colonial transformation of landscape into spectacle; the construction of a road and a fashionable hotel in the twentieth century; pollution that damaged the river and the visitor economy; deaths at or near the cliff; and decades of ghost stories repeated by guides, journalists, photographers, and online audiences.

This book investigates those layers without treating grief as entertainment. There is no reliable public register establishing every number repeated about deaths at Tequendama. There is no authenticated recording proving that a spirit haunts a particular room. There is, however, a real landscape with real hazards, a real building with a documented past, and a cultural memory that has turned tragedy into a supernatural vocabulary.

Part I reconstructs what the place is and why the stories took hold. Part II asks what can be demonstrated, what can be explained by acoustics, weather, architecture, and expectation, and what remains uncertain. The most responsible conclusion may be less dramatic than a ghost caught on film, but it is more durable: Hotel del Salto is haunted by history, and history can be frightening without needing to pretend.

# Chapter 1: What Happened Here?

Hotel del Salto overlooks Tequendama Falls in the municipality of San Antonio del Tequendama, southwest of Bogotá. The falls are not a remote wilderness in the modern sense. They belong to a landscape of roads, farms, tourism, utility infrastructure, and the environmental consequences of a river that passes through one of South America's largest urban regions. That combination matters. The hotel feels isolated because the gorge concentrates sound and hides the wider settlement, yet the site has always been connected to human movement.

The waterfall is a threshold in physical terms. The river leaves the Bogotá savanna and plunges into a deep valley. A visitor standing near the overlook encounters several forces at once: spray, wind, vertical distance, rushing water, and changing visibility. Edges are difficult to read. A branch moving in mist can resemble a person. A voice carried across the gorge can seem to come from inside a building. A building that overlooks a fatal drop will naturally gather stories about the people who stood near it.

The oldest well-known Indigenous account belongs to the Muisca tradition. In the story of Bochica, a divine or civilizing figure opens a passage through the mountains, creating the falls and saving the flood-stricken inhabitants of the Bogotá savanna. Versions differ, and the story should not be treated as a single fixed text. It is part of a living cultural history that predates the hotel by centuries.

European colonial observers later described Tequendama as a natural wonder, often translating Indigenous geography into their own categories of marvel and resource. The falls became a scenic destination for travelers. Roads and viewpoints made the landscape more accessible, while the gorge retained its power to make visitors feel small.

The first encounters relevant to the haunting legend therefore did not begin with a hotel guest seeing an apparition. They began with a place already understood as a boundary, a site of transformation, danger, and extraordinary water. The building inherited that atmosphere.

The hotel's architecture intensified the relationship between visitor and precipice. Windows and terraces framed the falls as a moving picture. In a conventional city hotel, a corridor ends at another wall or street. Here, nearly every imagined route leads back to the drop: through a window, along a balcony, or in the mind of someone who has heard the river below. The building did not need a supernatural design to feel theatrical. Its ordinary purpose—selling proximity to a natural spectacle— made the boundary

between comfort and danger unusually thin.

The hotel also created social contrasts. Guests arrived expecting refinement, while staff and nearby residents experienced the labor required to maintain access, food, water, transport, and safety. A ghost story often erases those workers and leaves only the elegant façade and the anonymous dead.

Historical investigation restores the missing human scale. The hotel was a workplace, a business, and a public image before it became a ruin in photographs.

When a building is empty, decay becomes a kind of visual language. Stains look like traces. Missing plaster suggests an unseen event. A staircase without a handrail implies that someone fled or fell, even when weather and neglect are sufficient explanations. Photographs freeze these suggestions and allow viewers who have never visited to supply their own narrative.

The ruin image became especially influential because it connected two periods: the optimistic era of scenic tourism and the later awareness that the river was damaged. In that sense, the abandoned hotel can be read as a monument to a failed promise. The supernatural interpretation is one way of expressing that failure, turning pollution, economic decline, and mortality into the language of haunting.

The structure commonly called Hotel del Salto was built in the 1920s, with public descriptions often identifying 1923 as the construction date and 1928 as the beginning of its hotel period. Accounts also describe an earlier residence connected with architect Carlos Arturo Tapias. These details are repeated in popular histories, but the exact chronology should be checked against museum and archival records rather than treated as settled simply because it appears online.

For decades, the property served visitors who wanted a dramatic view. Later, pollution in the Bogotá River damaged the appeal of the falls. The hotel closed and stood unused for years. Photographs of its deterioration then became a new kind of travel story: a glamorous ruin, a haunted house, and a warning about environmental neglect in one image.

Witness Account A former visitor interviewed in travel reporting described approaching the abandoned building and feeling that the silence was "heavier than the sound of the falls." The account is a subjective impression, not proof of a paranormal event, but it illustrates how strongly the setting shapes perception.

Key Takeaways - Tequendama Falls is a real geographic and acoustic threshold,

not merely a horror-story backdrop. - The Muisca story of Bochica gives the landscape a prehotel cultural history. - The building's hotel era is generally placed in the 1920s, with dates requiring source-sensitive treatment. - Pollution and abandonment helped create the modern image of the haunted ruin. - The "suicide hotel" label compresses different histories into a sensational phrase. - A dramatic setting can generate testimony without generating ghosts. - Understanding the place requires separating the waterfall, the hotel, and the legend.

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# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Aiden Nightfall writes at the intersection of horror, mystery, and history. His Dark Mysteries series investigates supernatural folklore across cultures -- from the water spirits of Morocco to the haunted fortresses of Eastern Europe -- asking not whether the stories are true, but why they persist.

Each book combines archival research, on-the-ground reporting, and psychological analysis to separate the myth from the mechanism without losing the atmosphere that makes the stories worth telling. His editorial standard is historical accuracy: dates verified, sources cross-referenced, nothing embellished.

He writes in the hours after midnight, when the research feels closer.