

### **Monday, October 28, 1991**

- Finalize delivery times for the cake, the flowers, the decorations. The decorations must be finished by October 30.
- Confirm that the staff is ready for the onslaught of visitors. From everywhere. Every time.
- Chill the champagne, confirm the champagne glasses are on their way from Portland.

The Pacific Hotel Closing. That was the headline. All of the work and efforts in my professional life are ending with a 4 word sentence. It reeks of failure. Of Loss. Of Death. It has been my life's work, and a good respectable life's work. My father, or Mr. Whitman as everyone knew him, bought the hotel when it was the Merwyn in 1921. It burned along with most of Astoria the next year. But he rebuilt and we persevered. I learned that work was my natural state. It has to be when you're in hospitality. My father looked after the Weinhard Hotel, one of his other ventures in Astoria. When I came of age, I was given full reign of the former Merwyn. It felt right to oversee something that was part of me. As a child, I even got to name the hotel. It was the biggest the place I'd known. So I named it after the biggest thing I knew. I grew up here. I knew every corner of it. The skeleton of a hotel is an ideal spot for hiding and seeking as a child.

That's when I first saw her and, eventually, them. A bold child, I told them to go away. No one was suppose to be here until it was done. But they had no where to go. They only knew the hotel. We started talking and I realized they were just as excited to see the hotel return, to see their home return. As I got older I would walk the halls and talk with my companions. My friends that my family couldn't see or understand. Occasionally a guest would arrive and know to whom I was speaking. Some tried to identify the as a long gone relative or a high school sweetheart. I just knew them as Ruby or Mr. Smyth.

How do you host a party, the Pacific Hotel's last party, with guests that don't eat or drink? Guests that don't care if you have staff. Guests that don't need seating or tables or carefully designed menus? I carefully checked that the art on the walls covered the timeline of the Pacific.

### **Tuesday, October 29, 1991**

- Cleaning. Everything must be cleaned and ready
- Guest rooms, prepping 4 guest rooms: one each of our four remodels

Cleaning the staircase was a priority. The banister leading up to the mezzanine always catches the spider webs that seem every where this time of year. I never understood why anyone needs fake webs when there are so many real getting caught in your hat, across your eyes, stuck in your arm hair. Once you feel a spider web, your mind remembers it for the entire day; wiping away the invisible, the impossibly still intact threads.

The pink room of today was first and easiest to complete. The balloon shades puffed out at the bottom with dry cleaning bags and the light aqua towels as accents by the sink. Our latest version of guest rooms, the tight floral patterns on the bed spread invoke the original from 1923. The tiny print of the calico flowers in delicate pink that originally covered the beds were so chic compared to the homemade quilts on my bed at home.

Thankful that I saved a bit of each iteration, we have the history of the Pacific to walk through. The threadbare white sheets from the lean times between wars would be replaced with modern white hotel sheets while preserving the evolution of the top layers and the decor. I remember

the light blues from the 1952 upgrade with the satin edge of the middle blanket to rub your fingers on and the abrupt avocado and orange with huge flowers that brought us up to date in 1973. And right back to pink. Not the original soft, muted pink. But a bold, proud pink.

I often think of these rooms by the occupants. The delicate pink was Mrs. Field's room. She was visiting Astoria from San Francisco in 1933 when she became ill. She exhaled her last breath in the fine printed cotton sheets and never left the room again. The fussy blue room with ruffled edges that never seemed taunt enough belonged to Mr. Fritz. He came from Germany by way of Milwaukee and his exacting standards were never met. I think that's where the heart attack snuck up from: constant displeasure in life and an unsatisfied desire for perfection. He was still hard to please. Unlike Mrs. Field, Mr. Fritz had no trouble leaving his room for the decades after his passing to chide me into straightening corners of the bedspread. And, Mr. Smyth coming in to move the headquarters of Bumble Bee south to San Diego. He never mentioned the wide prints and saturated hues in our 1973 rooms. He has no idea how he got stuck here. Some guessed it was poison from an upset cannery employee. Some thought his wife had paid for him to disappear. His body was never found, and his spirit remained at the last place he called home, the Pacific Hotel.

### **Wednesday, October 30, 1991**

The ghostly garland is strung; the silly witchy hats litter the buffet tables  
The tables are set for our more corporeal guests  
The staff learn the subtleties of roving hors d'oeuvres and pouring champagne

It is going to be a wonderful party and final goodbye. These rooms will be changing from temporary guests to permanent residence. It was bound to happen. We need to change and adapt. Like the evolution of our guest room decor, the building must change. I must change. I wonder what happens next. Will the Pacific Hotel remain apartments for long? Will the magnificent, open, airy lobby with the grand staircase that was backdrop for so many childhood daydreams disappear and be parceled into tight spaces? My heart, my soul is here. In the details, in the studs, from the cellar to the room top. It is my home.

### **Thursday, October 31, 1991**

Guests arrive at 5pm. My dress is laid out - the black one that I've worn for the Halloween Gala practically forever. It has just a hint of lace around the collar to conjure up mystery. I dress and I am ready for the last celebration.

Ruby, who has been here for longer than anyone, watches me get ready. She smiles, knowingly. My constant companion and my true friend, I cannot wait to join her. I am still nervous. I want to stay here. I want to escape. I want to be a part of the Pacific forever. I think about love and belonging and the future as I slip on the mask. I replace the oxygen in my body with nitrogen and I become the ether of eternity. Ruby and I go downstairs to join the party, touching, hand in hand for the first time.