SAMPLE

The Guardian's Shadow: Hantu Kopek

The Night-Mare — The Crusher of Chests, the Old Woman of the Small Hours, and the Most-Met Ghost in the World

Aiden Nightfall

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The Guardian's Shadow

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Introduction

You wake in the small hours, in your own bed, in your own room, and you cannot move. Not a finger. The eyes work — the room is right, the door is shut, the light is where you left it — but the body is stone, and the breath comes shallow, and then the weight arrives: something on the chest, something sitting, something present in the dark at the bed's edge or the ceiling's corner, and the certainty — total, instant, older than thought — that it is looking at you. The episode lasts seconds or minutes; it ends as strangely as it came; and you lie in the dark afterward with your heart slamming and one sentence already forming, the sentence the whole region says in the same three words:

kena tekan. Something pressed me. Something came.

This volume is about the being the region blamed: the Hantu Kopek — the Malay night-mare, the crusher of chests, the old woman of the small hours. Skeat's authority gives her the catalogue's shortest, most exact definition: among the incubi, "the Hantu Kopek, which is the Malay equivalent of our own 'night-mare'" — and that single sentence is the volume's whole map, because the English word is the clue. The night-mare was never a dream- word; the mare was the crushing spirit herself, the rider of sleepers in the Germanic night, and the Malay-Indonesian tradition met the same being at its own bedside and named her in its own tongue. The hantu kopek is the catalogue's one ghost the whole world has met: the Newfoundlanders' Old Hag, the Japanese kanashibari's presser, the Zanzibari popobawa, the Alps' riding Alp, the Old World's mara — one phenomenology, every culture, every century, the most-met ghost in the human record.

She is also — and the volume will prove this as its own thesis — the tradition's finest work of applied psychology: the being whose phenomenology the sleep-laboratory has since charted stage by stage, whose defences the sleep-clinics still prescribe, and whose cure (the name, spoken in the dark) the journals and the grandmothers share. The hantu kopek is where the folklore of the whole series touches the reader's own bed, tonight, at the hour the tradition warned about — and this book's last chapter hands you the protection, which is the same protection, in the same words, that every bedside in the record taught.

Over the next ten chapters, this book walks the night-mare's full length: the being's two registers in the Malay lore (the pressing spirit of the bedroom and the old-woman abductor of the kampung warnings), the incubus's long moral history, the visitation's exact phenomenology, the tradition's protections and the science's (they are, this volume will show, the same), and the modern internet's shadow-man — and it closes with the finding that makes this the

most honest volume in the series: modern neuroscience can explain this ghost completely. And the experience, awake and paralyzed in your own bedroom, remains the most convincing ghost any human being ever meets. Both facts are true. That is the night-mare.

Chapter 1: What Is Hantu Kopek? The Malay Night- Mare Explained

The Hantu Kopek is the pressing spirit — the being of the paralysed sleep: the visitant who comes in the small hours, sits on the sleeper's chest, holds the body still, and looks. Her core definition is Skeat's, and the sentence is the catalogue's most economical: she is one of the incubi, and she is "the Malay equivalent of our own 'night-mare'." Around that core the regional record gives her a body: an old woman in most tellings — withered, long- haired, with the sagging, rope-length breasts of the crone-register this series met in the hantu tetek (Vol. 16) and the Javanese Wewe Gombel, the child-hiding grandmother of the hills; a figure who presses sleepers, who takes or lures or tempts by office, and whose name parents invoked at bedtime in the same breath as the breast ghost's: behave, or the hantu kopek will come for you.

Sort her honestly, because the lore keeps two beings under one name, and the volume's method is to hold both. The first register is the night- visitant: the pressing spirit of the paralysed sleep — the chest-sitter, the presence in the room, the thing that leaves no trace and no witness but the one who could not move. The second is the kampung crone: the old abductor-woman of the disciplinary warnings — the figure with affinities to the Javanese Wewe Gombel, who hides naughty children in her bundle or under her sagging breasts, who lures men from their marriage-beds, jealous, the tellings say, that the afterlife holds no husband of her own. The two registers share the name, the age, the gender, the hunger for the sleeper's company — and the folklore-studies reading files them exactly as the tradition did: one being, two offices. At the bedside she presses. At the village's edge she abducts. In both offices she takes what sleeps in the wrong place.

And the name deserves its note, as every volume gives one, because this name confesses the being's whole method. The regional dictionaries hold the register: igauan — the incubus, the nightmare; mengigau — to talk in sleep, to have the nightmare; and the household's own word for the event, kena tekan — "to be pressed" — which survives in the region's bedrooms today as living speech, the common tongue's name for the experience, said in Singapore and Kuala Lumpur and Jakarta every morning after. The hantu kopek is thus the catalogue's only being who lives inside an idiom: the ghost did not just give the region a story, she gave it a verb's passive voice — to be pressed — the grammar itself confessing the experience's defining fact. The sleeper is never the actor. The sleeper is the one it is done to.

Her portrait's relatives deserve their census, because the crone-register is the

region's own shared canon, and the kopek's portrait was built from the company she keeps. The Javanese Wewe Gombel — the grandmother of the hills who hides children (not kills them, the tellings insist: keeps them, feeds them, returns them) — the abductor-office's gentlest face, the figure the Javanese tradition says takes the neglected and the battered children to her hill-country and raises them herself; the nenek kebayan of the wider Malay-Indonesian register (Skeat's spirit-taxonomy carries her name) — the crone of the tales, the old woman of the woods' edge, ugly, wise, dangerous to the unwary child; and the hantu tetek of Volume 16 — the breast-ghost of the tree-line, the other sagging figure of the disciplinary canon.

The company's meaning is the register's: the Malay- Indonesian night did not fear a single crone, it feared the old woman as a class — the post-maternal female, powerful, hungry for the young, resident at the edge of every settled thing — and the kopek is the class's night-shift: the one member of the crone-company whose office is the bedside itself. Grandmothers kept the kampung's children. The night kept a grandmother of its own.

And one more sorting-note completes the definition: the kopek's census is the largest in the catalogue, and it is not a census of believers — it is a census of victims. The langsuir needs a lying-in; the polong needs a keeper; the jin need a pawang's invocation. The hantu kopek needs only a sleeper, a back, and the small hours — the being's visitation-rate is the species' own sleep-architecture, and the surveys' arithmetic (a lifetime- rate clustering by sample from a tenth of respondents to nearly half) makes her, by pure numbers, the most-met figure in this entire series: more witnesses than all the other volumes' beings combined, across every culture that ever kept a bed.

The volume's claim in the Introduction — the most-met ghost in the world — is not rhetoric. It is the census. And the census's corollary is the volume's quiet comfort, taught at every bedside that ever feared her: she has never once kept anyone. The being with the catalogue's largest visitation-rate has the catalogue's smallest body- count. She presses. She leaves. That is the whole of her record — and the gap between those two facts (the terror's size, the harm's absence) is this volume's own subject, from here to its end. The census also gives the volume its method, and the method is the inversion the reader should carry through every chapter that follows: the kopek is not studied, like her siblings, through the tradition's tellings; she is studied through her witnesses' memories — the attacked, not the believers, are the archive.

That changes the scholar's position in every argument this book will make. With the polong, the reader asks what the village believed; with the kopek, the reader asks what the sleeper underwent — and the second question has

instruments, prevalence tables, and a clinical literature, while the first has only tellings. The being's archive is therefore double: folklore on one shelf, physiology on the other, and both shelves hold the same visit, described in two grammars. No other volume in the series can say that; no other volume in this catalogue needed to.

One sorting-entry completes the definition, and it is the distinction the whole volume stands on: the tradition kept two grammars for the night's experiences, and the kopek lives in the second. The first grammar is the dream's: the dream (mimpi) is experienced as content — images, stories, the mind's own night-work, interpretable (Skeat records the dream- registers: the omens, the dictionaries of dreams, the diviners' texts) but falsifiable by waking — one wakes, and the dream admits it was a dream. The second grammar is the visitation's: the kopek's pressing is experienced as event — not watched but undergone; not remembered but survived; and the waking does not dissolve it, because the witness was already awake when it happened.

The tradition's whole architecture of the night-mare (the being, the charm, the bedside liturgy) is the second grammar's grammar — the region's way of filing the night's one experience that refuses the dream's rules. And the modern sleep-science's categories confirm the sorting with the same line: the dream is REM-content; the pressing is a REM-state intruding on waking. The villagers did not confuse a bad dream with a ghost. They drew the exact line the laboratories drew, ten centuries early, with the only tool available: the witness's own word — I was awake. The distinction also explains why the kopek's witnesses argue the way they argue.

A dreamer concedes; a survivor contests — tell the pressed that they had a nightmare and they will correct the tense: nothing had happened; something happened, and they were there. The tradition took that testimony seriously for ten centuries, and the modern record vindicates the seriousness: the sleep-paralysis witness gives the most reliable testimony in the whole supernatural archive — the experience is known, timed, survivable, and repeatable, and the witness's description matches the instrument record closely. This gives the kopek a status no other figure in the catalogue holds: she is the one being whose believers never needed faith. The village believed her because the villagers had met her — and so, by the prevalence tables later in this book, will a notable share of this book's readers.

End of free sample. The full book is available at putrabooks.github.io