SAMPLE

The Guardian's Shadow: Hantu

Pemburu The Spectre Huntsman — The Hounds of the Forest's Heart, the Bird That Announces Him, and the God Reduced to a Hunt

Aiden Nightfall

Free sample: Introduction & Chapter 1

putrabooks.github.io

Buy the full book:

Gumroad

Payhip

Contents

Introduction

Chapter 1: What Is Hantu Pemburu? The Spectre Huntsman of the Malay Forest

Chapter 2: The Origins and History of the Spectre Huntsman

Chapter 3: The Anatomy of the Hunt — The Hounds, the Bird, and the Hour

Chapter 4: The Powers and Abilities of the Spectre Huntsman

Chapter 5: The Huntsman in Society — The Forest's Lease and the Village's Ear

Chapter 6: How to Protect Yourself From the Spectre Huntsman

Chapter 7: The Spectre Huntsman in Modern Media and Culture

Chapter 8: The Moral Lessons of the Spectre Huntsman

Chapter 9: Separating Fact from Fiction: The Science of the Huntsman

Chapter 10: Living with the Huntsman — The Forest's Standing Tenant

Glossary

References

The Guardian's Shadow

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

Introduction

There is a sound the kampung dreaded above all the forest's sounds: the note of the birik-birik, the night-bird whose evening call, Skeat recorded, "is listened to with the utmost dread and misgiving" — because the bird "flies in the train of the Spectre Huntsman," and the Huntsman is coming. Behind the bird rides the hantu pemburu: a huntsman of the old forests with several ghostly dogs at his heels — hounds with names, recorded in the pawang's own charms — and his passage through the trees is "the forerunner of disease or death." He is the catalogue's one daylight hunter, striking most often "between noon and the hour of prayer, called dlohor" — the deep forest's deadliest hours — and his bag is not game but hearts: the village's platter-charm begs him, as one of his own followers, for a share of the hunt, and the begging is a fraud, and the fraud is the protection.

This volume walks the Spectre Huntsman's whole trail, and it is the richest chase in the series — because Skeat's corpus holds more of this being than of almost any other in the catalogue: the ghostly hounds by name (Si Langsat, Si Kumbang, Si Nibong — and the lame old hound Si Sukum, carried on his master's back); the huntsman's own family, filed in the charms (Si Kedah the huntsman, Si Gadeh his wife, Si Aduan the sword- carrying son who "having become a hantu," was ashamed to go home); the pawangs' anti-Huntsman charms of Pêrak, invocation by invocation; the delusion-charm — the beaten platter and the shouted "Nenek, bawa hati- nia!"

("Great-grandfather, bring us their hearts!"); and the identification that closes the series' longest arc: "Si Hantu Pemburu, here definitely explained to me as Batara Guru" — the Spectre Huntsman is Shiva. The Great God of the old Hindu world, whom the tradition had already filed as the Black King in the Heart of the Earth (Vol. 17), walks the Malay forest as a huntsman with lame dogs and a bird.

The volume's second thread is the tradition's strangest defence in twenty books of ghosts: the delusion-charm is a fraud — licensed, communal, and beautiful. The village that heard the bird beat a spice-platter with a kitchen knife and shouted its claim to be the Huntsman's own people, and the Huntsman, deceived by the claim, rode past the household and left it whole. No other being in the catalogue can be fooled; no other protection in the record is a lie told by an entire village at once. The reader who wants the tradition's whole genius in one image will find it here: the terror that cannot be fought is joined, loudly, and the joining — fraudulent from the platter to the hearts — works.

Over the next ten chapters, this book follows him from the Wild Hunt's world-parallels (Wotan's host, Herne the Hunter — the Malay forest keeps its own copy of Europe's most famous night-procession) through the strike- hour's daylight doctrine, the delusion-charm's cunning, the nightjar's omen-office, and the science of the forest's real noon dangers — and ends with the tradition's most poignant demotion and its most humane defence: the god who became a hunter, and the villagers who escaped him by claiming to be his people.

Chapter 1: What Is Hantu Pemburu? The Spectre Huntsman of the Malay Forest

The Hantu Pemburu is the Spectre Huntsman — the ghostly hunter who "roams Malay forests with several ghostly dogs, and whose appearance is the forerunner of disease or death." His definition is the omen's: he is not met to be fought but met to be read — the being whose passage announces what is coming behind him. The record's terms are exact: he strikes by encounter (the sickness his meeting causes); he travels with hounds (named, in the charms, like a kennel-ledger); he is heralded by a bird (the baberek or birik-birik, whose night-note is his approach); and he keeps daylight office-hours — the charm-notes' own annotation places his striking-time "between noon and the hour of prayer, called dlohor (early in the afternoon), that being the time of day when the Spectre Huntsman most commonly strikes people with sickness." The forest's noon, in the Malay register, belonged to a hunter.

Sorting him is the volume's first task, and the sort is clean. He is not the jembalang (Vol. 10) — the earth's officer holds ground; the Huntsman holds a route: he roams, which no jembalang does. He is not the jadi-jadian, the were-tiger of the forest's other dread (Skeat files them side by side, but the were-beast is a shapeshifted man; the Huntsman is no man shifted, but a being entire). He is not of the birth-death family, not a keeper of familiars, not a taxonomy-jin of the census — though the series will show he is filed with the greatest of them. And he is not the forest itself: the hantu rimba, the wood's general haunting, is the forest's atmosphere; the hantu pemburu is its personage — one figure, one pack, one bird, one hour, one errand. The catalogue has hauntings that are moods. The Huntsman is a haunting with a schedule.

And his office deserves the series'-frame at the outset: the Hantu Pemburu is the tradition's plague-rider — the omen-figure of what the village could not see coming. Disease and death travel in his train, the record says — his appearance is their forerunner — and the being's whole structure (the distant bird-note, the far-off dogs, the passage through the trees, the strike by encounter at the forest's edge) is the architecture of an early-warning: a being built to be heard before he is met. Chapter 9 reads the office in the forest's real terms (the sicknesses that came with seasons and vectors, the bird that really called, the noon that really killed). The tradition's reading, held from the first page: the kampung gave its forest a rider, because the forest sent things — and the rider's approach was the village's one chance to get the platter beating.

His geography deserves its own entry before the history opens, because the Huntsman is the catalogue's one being defined by a route rather than a haunt. The langsuir has her tree; the jembalang his ground; the kopek the bedside; the Huntsman has a run — the forest's deep interior, the ravines (the benchah mahang, the charms' named ground), the far stands where the village's firewood ended and the forest's own business began — and the route's reading is the tradition's oldest boundary- mathematics: the haunt is a place; the route is a pressure. A being that holds a haunt can be avoided by avoiding the place; a being that runs a route can be met anywhere the route reaches, and the route reaches everywhere the forest does — which is why the Huntsman's register is the omen's (the approach, the forewarning) rather than the location's: the village could not avoid the route, only the hour.

The tradition's answer to its one ranging being was its one time-based protection (the noon curfew), and the pairing is the volume's geography lesson complete: a place can be fenced; a schedule can only be learned.

And the encounter's own phenomenology, though the record gives it thin (the Huntsman is heard more than met), deserves the space between the lines the tradition left: the meeting happens in the deep interior at the strike-hour — the noon ravine, the heat's distortion, the forest's own silence — and what is met is the procession: the dogs first (the pack's sound, the ghost-hounds' voices where no village dog could be), then the bird's note overhead in the train, then the hunter himself — the figure with the long claws of the forest's heart, the lame old hound packed on his shoulders — and the meeting's outcome is not violence but sickness: the vomiting- onset, the traced diagnosis, the pawang called.

The tradition never gave the Huntsman a kill-scene; the being who is the forerunner of death does not do the death — he announces it, and the one who met him falls sick with the announcing. The volume's reader, holding the whole series' grammar, will recognise the register at once: this is the touch tradition (the badi's touch, Vol. 12; the terkena, the "struck" register of Skeat's own taxonomy) — the Malay night's standard mechanism of harm, which wounds by meeting and is treated by naming.

The thinness of the meeting-record is itself a finding. Compare the canon's other meetings: the langsuir is met in the orchard and described hair to nail; the pocong is met in the graveyard and described fold by fold; the Huntsman is heard — and the record's witnesses agree on the sound and disagree on the figure. The reason is the office: a being who is the forerunner of sickness does not need to be seen to be met, and the meeting that matters is not the vision but the onset — the vomit, the fever, the traced diagnosis. The Huntsman's

witnesses are therefore not the people who saw him but the people who fell sick after the noon in the interior, and their testimony is filed in the pawang's ledger, not the village's storytelling. In the whole Malay canon there is no being met by more witnesses and described by fewer.

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