

All Shadow People Are Terrifying, But The Phantom Hat Man May Be One Of The Worst Of All

Dark apparitions that reveal themselves while you're sleeping are scary enough, but of all the Shadow People that visit you at night, the Hat Man may be the most creepy. It's been discovered that there are [different classes of Shadow People](#), and this terrifying man with the hat is among them. He's been spotted all over the world, and according to people who've shared their stories, the Hat Man has apparently been around for a while.

What are Shadow People? It's certain these dark apparitions aren't human, but with all kinds of theories about their existence - from time travelers to aliens - no one really knows what they are or where they came from. The Hat Man is believed to be one of them and although he's extremely mysterious, many witnesses claim he's over six feet tall and always wears a hat. According to creepy stories about the phantom Hat Man, he appears during times of emotional turmoil or distress and will often observe you as you sleep. Who is the phantom Hat Man? Humanity may never know but if he ever pays you a visit, consider yourself special.

- **The Hat Man Is Said To Wear A Fedora Or Top Hat, A Trench Coat, And Have Glowing Red Eyes**



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According to everyone who's seen him, the Hat Man appears as a completely dark figure like other Shadow People. The obvious difference is that Hat Man wears a hat which has appeared as a top hat in some sightings and a fedora in others. While many people are unable to make out what he is wearing, some report seeing [old-fashioned clothing](#), a long trench coat or a cape, and he always appears at least six feet tall.

The Hat Man's face is also usually indistinguishable but many who he has visited have claimed he has [glowing red eyes](#), unlike other Shadow People. There have also been reports that Hat Man carries a [gold watch](#) attached by a chain to his belt and will occasionally look at it.

- **Although Some People Claim The Hat Man Has Attacked Them, He Is Usually Content Just To Watch**



Photo: Unknown / [PeakPx](#) / Public Domain

People who claim the Hat Man has attacked them tell stories about being jumped on or [choked](#) and have



Terrifying Hat Man Witnessed by Thousands of People

COULD HE BE REAL?

There have been many sightings over the years of shadow people lurking near the edges of our beds as we are trying to get a good night's sleep. One particular figure has emerged as a terrifying version of the shadowy boogeyman. He is known as the Hat Man.

While lying in bed late at night, waiting for sleep to take you, it isn't uncommon for your mind to play tricks on you. You may think you hear strange noises or see terrifying figures in the shadows. According to some people, these experiences aren't always the product of an overactive imagination but encounters with actual shadowy entities.

Shadow People

Have you ever been in a dark or shadowy room and thought you saw a human-like shape lurking in the darkness? If so, you may have been [visited by shadow people](#). Shadow people are believed to be the visual form of spirits or other entities trying to make their presence known in the human world: they appear as "shadows" of the denizens of the world of the dead. Others believe that the mysterious entities could be astral projections, aliens, or visitors from other times or dimensions. Typically, they start out appearing in your peripheral vision and become more distinct as you focus on them. While seeing one may be a frightening experience, the shadow people are not always dangerous. Some of these spirits are likely harmless visitors; some shadow people have even been known to be helpful to those they visit, warning them of real dangers lurking nearby.

In 2008 Adam Selzer, a tour guide in Chicago and New York, took this eerie photo. He was running a private ghost tour through the Congress Hotel in Chicago. While in the notoriously haunted Florentine room, a shadow figure was photographed along the back wall.

Selzer has been at a loss to explain the mysterious entity in the photo.

What is the Hat Man?

Many people believe that the Hat Man is just one of the shadow people. However, there are specific aspects of the story that set him apart as a distinct entity. Shadow people are typically human-shaped, but their appearances are vague. The Hat Man, on the other hand, has a distinct look that distinguishes him from other entities.

Like the shadow people, he appears in dark, gloomy areas where he almost seems to blend in. He has been described as wearing a long black trench coat, three-piece suit, and hat (either a fedora, top hat, or cowboy hat). He is very tall; witnesses place his height anywhere between 6 and 10 feet. Occasionally, he is seen to glance at a gold pocket watch that he pulls out of his pocket. However, his most terrifying feature is his eyes: when he appears in the shadows, his eyes glow a bright red.

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Unlike shadow people—who can be neutral or even helpful—the Hat Man always brings a sense of fear and foreboding. Some believe that he only appears to people who are experiencing negative emotions, feeding off of their pain and suffering. Some have reported seeing him after dabbling with a Ouija Board or after encounters with aliens. Often, he speaks to his victims, whispering ominous threats and warnings in the form of bizarre riddles. Sometimes, he just stares ominously or tips his hat. When he disappears, the victim is left with a sense of impending dread.

In some cases, the appearance of this dark entity seems to be linked closely with tragedy. Many who have seen him claim that shortly after the man's appearance, their lives were stricken with catastrophe. It is unclear whether the entity served as a warning of misfortune, or was the cause of it.

When these three women had their photo taken out the front of their home they couldn't have known the chilling image that would develop.

Behind the three ladies you can see what looks like the shadow of a man wearing a hat. If you look closely you can see that the shadow figure has placed a hand on the shoulder of the woman on the left.

It is said that three days after this photo was taken the woman died in a horrible car accident.

The photographer claims that there was certainly no hatted man standing behind the women when the photograph was taken and is simply baffled by the image.

Perhaps this strange shadow appeared as a sort of omen, foreshadowing the tragic events that would unfold just three days later.

Sightings

There have been countless reports of sightings over the years. In some cases, he appears only at specific times. For example, one Reddit user called "Strangelydazed" only saw him while she was spending the night with her boyfriend. She says that he would watch her sleep, sometimes leaning over the bed. The relationship eventually ended, and the boyfriend went on to abuse other partners. This witness believes that the man's underlying anger and violence attracted the entity to their bedside.

Another common theme among the stories is seeing the entity as a child or while staying in your childhood bedroom. This was the case for another Reddit user: "thesiccisowizard." This witness encountered the entity at age 8. They state that they saw a man fitting descriptions of the Hat Man watching from the corner of the room. They recall feeling that the entity was malevolent, even though he did nothing but watch. According to this witness, others who lived in the house in later years had similar experiences, some even reporting that the children of the house had been lifted from their beds and dropped.

This photo was captured by a woman who was dozing in her bed in 2017. She was listening to a podcast and felt herself drifting off to sleep. Suddenly she felt a dark, ominous presence in the room and glanced over to the window. She claims that a tall figure with a hat was standing by her bed, watching intently. She grabbed her phone and took a quick photo but realised there was no one in the room. When she looked at the photo, she couldn't believe what she saw. Indeed there was a solid black entity standing in the room wearing what looked like a top hat.

The entity seems to be attracted to specific people. According to Heidi Hollis, a Hat Man expert, one night she was sound asleep when the quiet of the night was shattered by a blood-curdling scream. She awoke suddenly, realizing it was her roommate calling out in terror. She opened the door to her roommate's bedroom and found her curled up in the corner of her room having a full-on panic attack. When her panic eventually subsided, she told Hollis that she had been visited by a shadowy figure in a black hat. Hollis never saw the figure but could feel a lingering sense of evil.

One aspect of the Hat Man phenomenon, other than the entity's distinctive appearance, that separates it from shadow people is how it moves. Those who have encountered shadow people typically state that the figures seem to dissolve into the dark after a certain period of time. However, the Hat Man appears to move more like a human. Witnesses often describe him walking away after a while. One witness and founder of The Hat Man Project, Tim Brown, stated, "He stood there for what seemed like an eternity. He then moved very slowly and without sound back into the hallway just out of view." This suggests that the Hat Man is not a spirit, but something entirely different and far more malevolent.

Some believe that even if that Hat Man himself is not a ghost, he sometimes brings ghosts with him. One Reddit user, "TheirEyesUponYou," describes waking up one night to discover her bed surrounded by shadowy figures. One of them, which looked vaguely like a young girl, leaned forward and began speaking in some other language. The witness states that they were inexplicably able to reply in the same language. The witness then heard laughter coming from another corner of the room. They looked toward the sound and saw a shadowy figure in a hat with glowing red eyes. Each time the victim replied to the young ghost in a foreign language, the entity in the hat seemed delighted and let out an eerie laugh.

Another witness named Greg Newkirk believes that the entity in the dark hat brought along unwanted guests. He claims that for months after moving into a new house, he heard terrifying noises while in his bedroom at night. He described them as muffled conversations coming from inside his closet. One night, unable to stand the sounds any longer, he left the room and tried to sleep in a guest bedroom. As he tried to fall asleep, a shadowy entity in a large hat appeared at the foot of the bed. He let out a terrified scream, and when his family ran into the room and turned on the lights, the entity disappeared.

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While some people are fortunate enough to only encounter the terrifying entity once, others have repeated run-ins. One witness, whose name was not identified, claims that the Hat Man visited him at least three times when he was a child. Once, he saw the entity standing in a corner of his bedroom after he had been fighting with his parents. A few years later, the same being appeared floating outside of a second-story window. The man came to him one final time in a dream.

Some even claim that the man runs in families. According to Tim Brown, after he described his experience to his family, he was told that his grandmother and great-grandmother had also encountered the entity.

Is the Hat Man Real?

There have been many explanations for the Hat Man phenomenon. One of the most common theories is that those who have encountered shadow people are actually suffering from sleep paralysis: a condition in which the person wakes from sleep completely unable to move and typically in a complete panic. Often, the neurological condition causes the sufferer to hallucinate, which could explain the appearance of figures in the shadows. However, not all witnesses who have encountered shadow people or the Hat Man report accompanying paralysis.

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Others believe that the heightened feelings of fear that one often feels in the dark could lead one to perceive entities in the



Photo: Unknown / [PeakPx](#) / [Public Domain](#)

People who claim the Hat Man has attacked them tell stories about being jumped on or [choked](#) and have experienced burning in their chest or tingling on their scalp. Shadow People are said to often do this, the Hat Man is also happy just watching. He tends to stay longer than most Shadow People as well and has been spotted watching people in the mirror, [bending over them while they sleep](#), or just hanging out in the corner with a creepy smile on his face.

Perhaps not attacking a person and simply observing from afar is much more terrifying, especially since many people insist [Hat Man has a solid form](#), unlike other Shadow People. And while Shadow People tend to just disappear when it's time for them to leave, Hat Man [has been seen floating](#) above the ground or [walking away](#).

• Hat Man Often Appears During Times Of Trauma, Aggression, Or Other Negative Emotional Disturbances



Photo: [Robert Couse-Baker](#) / [Flickr](#) / [CC BY 2.0](#)

In many cases, the Hat Man seems to be hanging around [areas where there are negative emotions](#), taking place, such as households that have experienced domestic abuse, fighting, or depressed family members. Some people believe the Hat Man is a demon sent to bring those who are about to die to Hell. Others think he is [demonic](#).

Heidi Hollis may be able to back that up with a [story a German soldier told her](#) about witnessing Hat Man, asking who he was, and being told "Scratch," an old nickname for the Devil. Hollis also recounted the story of a suicidal man who woke to find himself in the hospital and the Hat Man close by. According to the story, the Hat Man quickly disappeared after the man woke up but not before saying, "I almost had you."

• Some People Believe The Hat Man Emits Very Powerful Negative Energy And Feeds Off The Fear He Causes



Photo: [Voitech Okenka](#) / [Pexels](#) / [Public Domain](#)

People can usually feel when they're being watched, and a gaze from the Hat Man is no exception. Many have also noted a very dark energy emitted from him and said they [immediately knew he was extremely evil](#) and very likely wanted to kill them. Some get the feeling the Hat Man is [enjoying their fear](#) and actually feeding off of it. It's possible, however, that since people who witness Hat Man are usually already in a fearful, angry, or other emotionally charged state thanks to whatever negative thing is going on in their life, they associate Hat Man with their negative feelings.

Because he appears in so many different situations, and occasionally to [several people in the same family](#), there isn't really a clear explanation if he's truly evil and why he appears to so many people.

• He Has Been Seen All Over The World, Making The Hat Man A Global Phenomenon



Photo: [Daniel Avelino](#) / [Flickr](#) / [CC BY 2.0](#)

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Others believe that the heightened feelings of fear that we often feel in the dark could lead us to perceive entities in the shadows. When we're alone at night, we often fear what could be lurking nearby. In this way, the Hat Man could be a sort of self-fulfilling prophecy. However, according to experts, this is an unlikely explanation. When we imagine that something is lurking in the shadows stalking us, we typically examine it closely to determine what it is that we are seeing. If the shadow is actually the result of something benign, we usually figure that out relatively quickly as our eyes adjust to the dark. Those who have encountered actual entities in the shadows don't have this comfort. The longer they stare at the entity, the more real and terrifying it becomes.

The most striking aspect about this phenomenon is that the reports are all so congruent, they all describe almost the exact same thing – a dark, ominous figure that likes to watch people sleep. The Hat Man is the most troubling of all because it's such an oddly specific sighting. How is it that thousands of people around the world all characterise the Hat Man exactly the same?

To those who have spotted these shadowy entities, the experience can't be explained away. For them, the Hat Man is a very real and very frightening entity that defies logical explanation.

Is the Hat Man real? You'll have to look for him in the shadows and find out for yourself.

From <https://slappedham.com/the-hat-man/>



Many cultures from around the world have always claimed to having seen shadowy beings lurking around. One variation of this type of entity is the hat man. This type of entity is mostly featureless, although they /he/it clearly have masculine forms and wear old fashioned hats. It's also been suggested that this strange entity is somewhat of an inspiration for Freddy Krueger. Wes Craven has talked about an experience he once had when he was a young boy, in which he saw a scary-looking man walking down the street wearing a bowler hat.

The man had scars all over his face and looked up at Craven through the window and gave off a sense of foreboding.

While this could have just been an ordinary guy and not a shadowy person or demon, it was still a creepy experience. People who reportedly come across a hat man usually claim to feel a frightening feeling, as if they are being threatened.

While some ghosts don't seem aware of the presence of the living, it seems that shadow people do. Witnesses claim that, despite not seeing his face, they have a sense that the hat man is staring right at them.

Furthermore, it would seem that this entity's sole purpose in visiting people is to make them as uncomfortable and frightened as possible. They normally don't try to communicate, except for the fact they are emitting bad vibes. Their mere presence alone is enough to make someone feel extremely uncomfortable and even threatened



An Encounter with the Hat Man

This is what the person who met the Hat Man says:

When I was around 10 or 11 we lived in a small rural town that was a few miles away from a normal town. Anyways there were only like 30-ish people there and we all knew each other. Well one day I was watching SpongeBob and I just had this weird butterfly feeling in my gut, so I decided to look to my right out of the bedroom to check on my dad. That's when I saw him. A tall man with a big detective like that with glowing red eyes standing over my dad. I didn't know what to do and freaked out. I kept yelling my dad's name and he wouldn't wake up. The creature didn't even bother with me, but eventually, my dad woke up and that's when the thing looked at me and turned around fast.

He walked toward the back of our house and I followed him. There was no door exit this way so it wasn't like he was trying to escape. Well, he was really fast and I barely saw his coat tail right when he entered the bathroom. I ran in and he was gone. Nothing. No one was there. I looked everywhere. Even in the cabinet, under the sink, and in the water tank on the toilet. He was gone.

And there are thousands of such stories.

Who is the Hat Man?

Still, there's no evidence to suggest that something very bad happens after someone sees the hat man. The "ghost" or "demon", whatever it may be, usually goes away after a few moments and nothing bad ever seems to happen afterwards. So, shadow people really malevolent? Is the hat man really a threat to anyone?

It seems that this phenomenon provides more questions than answers. Most people who witness hat men claim that they're solid and definitely an outline of a male body.



[An Encounter With The "Hat Man"](#)



Photo: [Daniel Avelino](#) / [Flickr](#) / [CC BY 2.0](#)

In 2001, the subject of [Shadow People](#) was first introduced to mainstream media via [Coast to Coast AM](#). After the broadcast, many people sent in drawings of what they had seen and shared stories about their own experiences with Shadow People. Author and strange encounter-enthusiast [Heidi Hollis](#) noted in 2008 that there was a commonly seen Shadow Person she named "Hat Man," and people all over the world claimed to have been visited by him as well.

No one expected so many people to have experiences with Hat Man or Shadow People, but the similarity of people's stories has given the creepy dark man a lot of popularity and more credibility for a lot of people. You can find stories all over the internet from those who have encountered him and one person started a website [specifically to collect tales about Hat Man](#) sightings.

- **Like Shadow People, The Hat Man Often Appears When People Are Experiencing Sleep Paralysis**

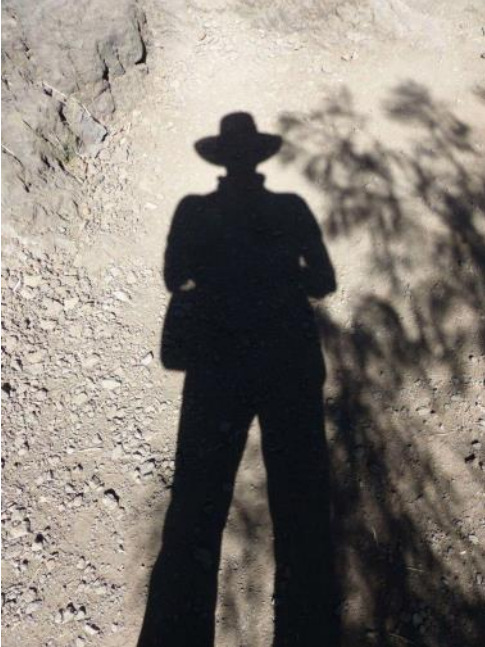


Photo: Unknown / [Pxhere](#) / [Public Domain](#)

Sleep paralysis is a sleep disorder that scientists believe may be [caused by a disturbed REM sleep cycle](#). People who experience this physically harmless but psychologically terrifying experience are fully awake but unable to move. They may also have hypnagogic hallucinations as they are trapped between being asleep and being awake and might see things like Shadow People or the Hat Man. These hallucinations can obviously be quite scary and even more terrifying when the person experiencing them is unable to move. Scientists have no final explanation for why so many people see the same creepy apparitions though. Many people experience [Shadow People](#) and the Hat Man when they are awake as well, so the idea of sleep paralysis doesn't completely account for this phenomenon.

- **Hat Man Often Appears In The Bedroom And Many First Saw Him When They Were Children**

Although the Hat Man can seemingly appear at any time of day in any location, many encounters people recount have [taken place in bedrooms](#), with a large amount of sightings occurring in [basements](#). Why this is the case isn't entirely clear, but since many basements are dark and scary to begin with, it makes sense. Considering many encounters with the Hat Man take place when the person visited is about to go to sleep, has just woken up, or is already asleep, the Hat Man appearing in a bedroom makes sense too. Lots of witnesses have met the Hat Man when they were children and kept the stories to themselves for many years, either because they didn't want to be thought of as crazy or they didn't rationally believe the story themselves.

- **One Person Saw Hat Man Only While Dating A Boyfriend Who Turned Out To Be A Very Violent Person**



Photo: [Michael Coghlan](#) / [Flickr](#) / [CC BY-SA 2.0](#)

Former Reddit user [/u/Strangelvdydazed](#) shared their Hat Man story:

My (now ex) boyfriend always talked about these shadow people. He saw the top hat man and the man in the fedora. He always said the top hat man came to warn him of awful things that were going to happen. I, of course, thought he was a psycho and dismissed it. Two months later, I started to see the man in the hat next to our bed. He would lean over me. Anyways my boyfriend ended up violently assaulting several girls. I read somewhere that he may show up if you are in the presence of an evil person, or dangerous environment. I also saw a different shadow man in the middle of the road in the car at night with him. I explained his appearance to my boyfriend. He explained immediately that this man came when death occurred. Ironically, I went to a doctor's visit the next day and was informed I had a miscarriage last night. Since we broke up I haven't seen shadow people since.

- **At Least One Person Saw The Hat Man With A Young Girl Who Spoke An Unknown Language**

Witnesses hat men claim that they're cold and commonly an outline of a male body.



[An Encounter With The "Hat Man"](#)

The outline of the hat is also distinct and solid. It's only natural to assume that they're real enough to be more than just the witness's imagination. One theory is that they could be physical manifestations of one's own psyche, and are somehow created subconsciously after an individual experiences some problems in life. Whatever the case may be, anyone who ever witnesses a hat man will undoubtedly feel creeped out by him. Whether he's an actual entity or a psychic manifestation of someone's subconscious, he definitely gives of negative vibes and a sense of foreboding to anyone around.

From <https://anomalien.com/who-is-the-hat-man-the-real-life-nightmare-shared-by-thousands/>



Photo: [Tama66 / Pixabay / Public Domain](#)

Redditior /u/[TheirEyesUponYou](#) shared:

I saw him at 18 years old in my room after a particularly traumatic experience...

I woke up at an incredibly late hour, probably 2-3. I didn't check, but something was off. I was speaking, in a language I've never heard. I was speaking to what I can only describe as a young girl, or something with the body type of a young girl, perhaps 14 in a dress. I couldn't make out her features, but I could make out her eyes and her mouth which could only be described as 'sharp looking' like a human piranha or something. She was whispering something in my ear, and I was replying in this strange language.

But it wasn't just this shadow girl, my bed was surrounded by tall dark figures which I could not make out the features of, perhaps four of them not counting the girl. They sat motionless and watched me but the most striking figure was a tall man in a wide brimmed hat standing in the corner of my room. I could feel as if he was amused, no, more amused than the others. Each time the girl whispered in my ear, I would let out a reply of which I didn't understand, and the man in the hat would be delighted. You'd think that one would be scared of this sort of encounter, but it felt familiar! I felt rather warm, as if I were surrounded by old friends or family.

I forgot to add that I was researching this encounter and came across a startling similar account. The person had an almost identical experience, minus talking in another language or at all for that matter, and the little girl was yelling into their ear as opposed to whisper as she was for me. Very strange.

• No One Knows Who The Hat Man Really Is But He May Be An Interdimensional Being Or Astral Projection Like Shadow People



Photo: Annoyed with fanboys / [Wikimedia Commons / CC BY-SA 3.0](#)

There are many [theories regarding what Shadow People actually are](#), and why humans see them, and the Hat Man may have a similar explanation. Perhaps he is an interdimensional being, visiting humanity from another dimension and only partially visible since he's on a different vibration than we are. He could also be an astral projection, the shadow of a person who's currently traveling out of their human body. A demon is certainly a possibility, based on all the negative feelings people feel around him.

Other theories about the existence of the Hat Man include aliens, time travelers, and ghosts, as well as just the wild imaginations of the witnesses. Currently, there's no scientific method to test any of these ideas, so for now the Hat Man remains a very creepy mystery.

From <<https://www.ranker.com/list/phantom-hat-man-facts/erin-mccann>>

Shadow People

Sunday, March 7, 2021 4:20 PM

A **shadow person** (also known as a **shadow figure**, **shadow being** or **black mass**) is the perception of a patch of shadow as a living, humanoid figure, and interpreted as the presence of a spirit or other entity by believers in the [paranormal](#) or [supernatural](#).^[a]

Contents

History and folklore

A number of religions, legends, and belief systems describe shadowy spiritual beings or [supernatural](#) entities such as [shades](#) of the underworld, and various shadowy creatures have long been a staple of folklore and ghost stories. The *[Coast to Coast AM](#)* late night radio talk show helped popularize modern beliefs in shadow people.^[a] The first time the topic of shadow people was discussed at length on the show was April 12, 2001 when host [Art Bell](#) interviewed [Native American](#) elder Thunder Strikes, who is also known as Harley "SwiftDeer" Reagan. During the show, listeners were encouraged to submit drawings of shadow people that they had seen and a large number of these drawings were immediately shared publicly on the website.^[a] In October that year, Heidi Hollis published her first book on the topic of shadow people,^[a] and later became a regular guest on *Coast to Coast*.^[a] Hollis describes shadow people as dark silhouettes with human shapes and profiles that flicker in and out of peripheral vision, and claims that people have reported the figures attempting to "jump on their chest and choke them".^[a] She believes the figures to be negative, alien beings that can be repelled by various means, including invoking "the [Name of Jesus](#)".^[a] Although participants in online discussion forums devoted to [paranormal](#) and supernatural topics describe them as menacing, other believers and paranormal authors do not agree whether shadow people are either evil, helpful, or neutral, and some even speculate that shadow people may be the extra-dimensional inhabitants of another universe.^{[a][b]} Some [paranormal investigators](#) and authors such as Chad Stambaugh claim to have recorded images of shadow people on video.^[a] Shadow people feature in two episodes of [ITV](#) paranormal documentary series *[Extreme Ghost Stories](#)*, where the phenomenon is described as a "black mass".^{[a][c]}

Scientific explanations

Several [physiological](#) and [psychological](#) conditions can account for reported experiences of shadowy shapes seeming alive. A [sleep paralysis](#) sufferer may perceive a "shadowy or indistinct shape" approaching them when they lie awake paralyzed and become increasingly alarmed.^{[a][d]} A person experiencing heightened emotion, such as while walking alone on a dark night, may incorrectly perceive a patch of shadow as an attacker.^{[a][e]} Many [methamphetamine](#) addicts report the appearance of "shadow people" after prolonged periods of [sleep deprivation](#).^{[a][f][g]} Psychiatrist Jack Potts suggests that methamphetamine usage adds a "conspiratorial component" to the sleep deprivation hallucinations.^{[a][h]} One interviewed subject said that "You don't see shadow dogs or shadow birds or shadow cars. You see shadow people. Standing in doorways, walking behind you, coming at you on the sidewalk."^{[a][i]} These hallucinations have been directly compared to the paranormal entities described in folklore.^{[a][j]} Finally, visual hallucinations, such as those caused by schizophrenia and bipolar disorder, may appear to be shadowy figures at the edge of peripheral vision. ^{[a][k]}

In popular culture

- [The Nightmare](#)* is a 2015 documentary that discusses the causes of [sleep paralysis](#) as seen through extensive interviews with participants, and the experiences are re-enacted by professional actors. It proposes that such cultural phenomena as [alien abduction](#), [the near death experience](#) and **shadow people** can, in many cases, be attributed to sleep paralysis.^{[a][l]} The "real-life" horror film debuted at the [Sundance Film Festival](#) on January 26 and premiered in theatres on June 5.
- Shadow people, described as "Shadow Men", feature prominently in the 2007 novel *[John Dies at the End](#)*. When they kill a person, that person is retroactively erased from existence, and history is rewritten as though they were never born.^{[a][m]}
- The 2013 horror film *[Shadow People](#)* depicts a fictional sleep study conducted during the 1970s in which patients report seeing shadowy intruders before dying in their sleep. The movie follows a radio host and [CDC](#) investigator who research the story, and the story is claimed to be "based on true events".^{[a][n]}
- In a 2012 episode of *[A&E's Intervention](#)* series, the subject Skyler is plagued by "shadow people", sometimes called "phase people", and sprays a mist to unveil them in the [refractions](#).^{[a][o]} He also builds weapons to fight them and alleges that they are using stolen technology to telepathically communicate with certain individuals.^{[a][p]}
- In the online game *[Deep Sleep](#)* and its sequels, shadow people have existed since the dawn of the human race and lurk in lucid dreams. Players who realize that they are asleep can be paralyzed and possessed, and the character's dream self will be turned into a shadow person.^{[a][q]}
- An episode of the 1985 *[Twilight Zone](#)* series titled "[The Shadow Man](#)" dealt with a teenage boy who had a shadow person living under his bed.^{[a][r]} The episode portrayed the shadow man as fitting the "hat man" appearance commonly ascribed to shadow people and notably added to the shadow people mythology, that shadow people can kill human beings but will not harm those whose beds they live under.

From https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shadow_person

You've No Doubt Seen Or Heard Of Shadow People...But What ARE They?

Shadow people have been scaring people for thousands of years - but what are they? Some people believe these humanoid figures are a supernatural spirit or entity that manifests as a dark shadow. The history of shadow people dates back as early as the 600s CE. Creepy shadow people stories come from all parts of the world and are eerily similar. The Quran makes mention of pitch-black sapient beings created from fire that were "[not purely spiritual or physical in nature](#)." Heidi Hollis more recently described shadow people in her book *[The Secret War](#)* as "dark silhouettes with human shapes and profiles that flicker in and out of peripheral vision." But their emergence in popular culture can be attributed to some paranormal investigators who've dedicated their life to researching and finding these shadow people. But what are shadow people, and where do they come from? Read these creepy stories and see if you can discern for yourself.

- **They Look Like Huge, Ominous Black Shadows In The Shape Of A Human**



Photo: [Timitzer](#) / [Wikimedia Commons](#) / [CC BY 3.0](#)

The most common form a shadow person presents themselves in is the "[classic shadow being](#)," which is described as "dark, inorganic, phantom-like bipedal figures that look just like a dark black shadow of a figure, but don't seem to quite have full human form or facial or bodily delineation. They feel very masculine and oppressive and like something that is beyond human and out of our scope of understanding."

Natalia Kuna, the psychic medium, describes the figures as "tall, about seven feet in height, though they can configure and transform into different sizes and shapes. Often their limbs (arms and legs) seem quite long, and very occasionally fingers seen."

Some believe their dark form is used as camouflage and they take on a rough humanoid form to blend in with us. Others report seeing shadow people with red or green glowing eyes, or even wearing a hat, like the "[Hat Man](#)" who often appears in a "cape or trench coat and a hat which can range from a top hat to a fedora or cowboy hat."

• Some Believe That Shadow People Are Extraterrestrials



Photo: [Yasir999](#) / [Wikimedia Commons](#) / [CC BY-SA 4.0](#)

Author and self-proclaimed shadow people expert [Heidi Hollis](#) mentions that shadow people are "alien beings" in her book [The Secret War](#). More specifically she believes "The Man In The Hat" to be an extraterrestrial. Some believe the figure's hat could be a "[form of disguise](#)" to cover up an unusually shaped head that could be alien in appearance, or it is some kind of otherworldly technology or even protection device."

Theorists believe "The Man In The Hat" may belong to an alien species known as "[the greys](#)." These types of aliens are what most people associate with extraterrestrials.

• Others Believe They're Interdimensional Beings

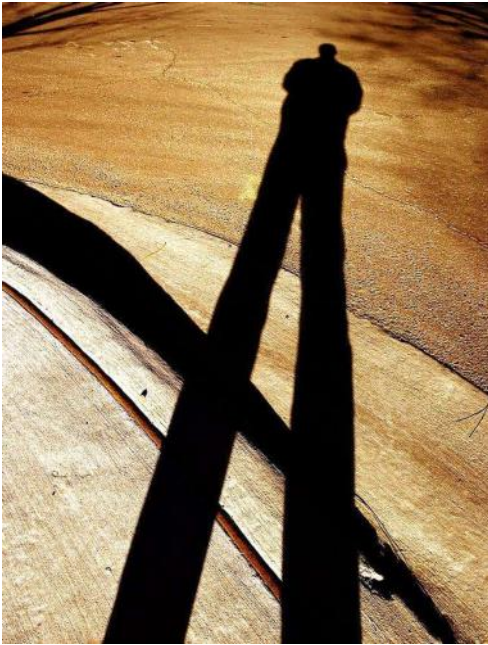


Photo: [CopyrightFreePhotos / Wikimedia Commons / Public Domain](#)

Natalia Kuna, a [psychic medium](#), describes shadow people as "conscious, intelligent, interdimensional beings." She writes that they're able to dematerialize very quickly and "shape-shift into other forms such as in the figure of a cat, dog, rodent, oddly-shaped spider, insect or other creature or shape." On Kuna's website, she says the "Man In The Hat" is "an intelligent consciousness from another dimension or time-space reality, possibly the future."

She's not the only one to think this. Author Michael Kinsella wrote in his book [Legend-Tripping Online: Supernatural Folklore and the Search for One's Hat](#) that shadow people are "extra-dimensional inhabitants of another universe."

• Ancient Cultures Believed In Shadow People



Photo: Unknown / [Needrix / Public Domain](#)

[Mythology of shadow people](#) dates back to early 600 BCE. Ancient Egyptians believed in shadow people, and called them the "khalibut." Romans believed these people came from the Underworld. Greeks thought shadow people were literal shadows of themselves, which they often gave up to Zeus as a gift. All of these cultures, though, had a common belief: these shadow people were both part of the real world [and the metaphysical one](#).

In Ancient Egypt, in particular, shadow people often went and did the bidding in the spirit world for humans who couldn't reach it - sometimes for good and, sometimes, for evil.

• Most People Who Experience Shadow People Suffer From Sleep Paralysis



Photo: [Fritz Schwimbeck / Wikimedia Commons / Public Domain](#)

Dr. Shelley Adler wrote a book that could connect seeing shadow people to having sleep paralysis. In her book - [Sleep Paralysis: Night-mares, Nocebos, and the Mind-Body Connection](#) - people who suffer from sleep paralysis may perceive a "shadowy or indistinct shape" approaching them or standing over them during an episode.

Meaning these visions might not be supernatural, but just a perception inside your brain. Others, like neuroscientists Baland Jalal and V.S. Ramachandran believe these hallucinations may have [neurological explanations](#) as well.

• People Recall Spooky Encounters With Shadow People While They Sleep



Photo: Unknown / [Pexels](#) / [Public Domain](#)

Here's a personal account of an encounter with a shadow person from [The Line Urj](#).

While lying there unable to sleep, I became aware of a presence and suddenly and silently a figure moved through our bedroom door and proceeded to our bed. Then rounding the corner of our bed took up a fixed position at the foot of our bed. I was aware that this entity was conscious of us and was intently watching us as we lay there. The entity can best be described as a something that had the appearance of black smoke or a shadow, however it was more material than either of these but less material than a real person.

The most odd thing about this is my lack of fear. Although I was acutely aware of this being and the fact it was not of this earth as we perceive it, it did not seem to arouse any fear response in me, I would say it aroused a feeling that would fit somewhere between "creepy, awed, and curiosity especially considering the fact that it was aware of me as I was aware of it. After some time I almost convinced myself that I was imagining it but then I became aware of the fact that my wife was no longer breathing like she was asleep but was breathing almost silently. I then said "Honey you awake?" to which she answered "Yes."

Then I said "do you see anything?" Expecting her reply to be "what do you mean?" but much to my surprise she said "You mean that thing standing at the foot of the bed?" At this time I did become somewhat "nervous". We laid there for about 10 minutes and then it was gone. It just over a period of about 10 seconds became less solid and our perception of it's presence became weaker until it just wasn't there any more. Then it was if it had never been there. Nothing like this has happened since and the only evidence it ever existed is my wife's and my memories of it.

• Shadow People Do Sometimes Attack



Photo: [Henry Fuseli](#) / [Wikimedia Commons](#) / [Public Domain](#)

In 2003, radio DJ and shadow person expert George Noory invited Heidi Hollis and Matt Moneymaker - a noted Bigfoot hunter - onto his radio show *Coast to Coast* to discuss [shadow people and the "Hat Man."](#) Noory told Hollis and Moneymaker he heard reports of shadow people attempting to "jump on their chest and choke" people. This would suggest shadow people actually have the ability to make contact with the physical realm.

Lena Townsend, a registered metaphysical practitioner, said while she's no expert with shadow people, she's studied instances where people said they felt antagonized by suspected shadow people. In such cases, she believes these shadow people are more than just your average spirit; [they could possibly have demons attached to them.](#) But she said she doesn't think all shadow people are malevolent or harmful.

• Some Believe They're Pure Evil While Others Believe They're Neutral Guardians



Photo: [Purityofspirit](#) / [Wikimedia Commons](#) / [Public Domain](#)

Kuna claims that most shadow figures are "parasitic, malevolent or evil," although on rare occurrences people claim to have encountered [shadow people with neutral auras.](#) Some describe shadow people as "benevolent" and guardian-like. However, shadow people with red or green glowing eyes are believed to be "extremely evil humans who have passed and transformed into this dark ominous form in order to continue their evil, malevolent ways. They are dark force 'discarnate' entities."

Townsend herself said the same thing: [Not all shadow people are evil,](#) but the ones that are *definitely* are. She said this is because shadow people feed off the energy they're given - so if their spirits are stuck because of a negative experience, they can become evil, while others living in a positive environment won't feel motivated to lash out.

• They Can Be Repelled By Invoking The Name Of Jesus



Photo: [Brocken Inaglorv](#) / [Wikimedia Commons](#) / [Public Domain](#)

Hollis told Noory on an [episode of Coast to Coast AM in 2006](#) that shadow people "can be repelled by various means, including invoking the Name of Jesus."

Kuna agrees on her website, "Just saying Jesus's name can be enough! They are instantly repelled and banished. The light is too strong." Kuna also provides a number of [alternative methods to banish shadow people](#), such as:

- say protective prayers - a super powerful one is the Archangel Michael Prayer of protection
- be very vocal, yell out to them. demand they leave, laugh out loud at it
- put on some loud music
- use sage, fully sage the area, yourself, all fam members and the home
- a banishing ritual

• 'The Nightmare' Is A Documentary About Sleep Paralysis That Features Reenactments Of Encounters With Shadow People



Video: [YouTube](#)

In 2015, director Rodney Ascher premiered his sleep paralysis documentary [The Nightmare](#) at the Sundance Film Festival. It features eight people who suffer from sleep paralysis and recreates their experiences with professional actors.

Many of the encounters involved The Shadow Man, who was played by Steven Yvette.

• Shadow People Are Very Popular In Pop Culture

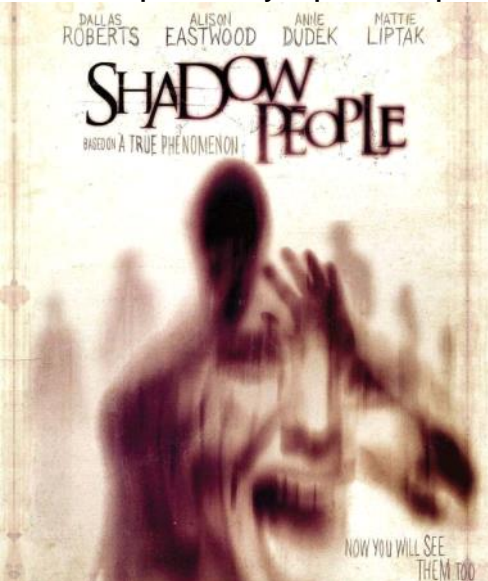


Photo: Shadow People Are Very Popular In Pop Culture / [Anchor Bay Entertainment](#)

Shadow people have been a hot topic in popular culture for years, dating back to an episode of *The Twilight Zone* in 1985 called "[The Shadow Man](#)," where a teenage boy discovers "The Man In The Hat" is living under his bed, and learns that, while shadow people can kill humans, they "[do not harm those whose beds they live under](#)."

In 2007, David Wong released a novel called *John Dies At The End* where shadow people had the power to erase humans from existence. Years later, it was developed as an indie film. In 2013, the horror movie [Shadow People](#) was released. The film was "based on true events" and followed a sleep study conducted in the 1970s where patients were visited by shadow people in their sleep.

From <<https://www.ranker.com/list/what-are-shadow-people/brandon-michaels>>

There Are Actually Several Classes Of Shadow People, And They All Want Something Different From You

[Shadow people](#) are intangible beings. If you've ever caught a glimpse of something moving just outside your field of vision in what you could have sworn was an empty room, you just might have met one. And if that was all you saw, you were probably lucky.

Nobody's exactly sure what these mysterious figures are or what they want but plenty of people have seen them. Their reports all describe shadow people as pitch-black apparitions that appear intelligent, move unnaturally quickly, and reach or walk through solid objects. Sometimes, these apparitions are content to lurk in corners or doorways without doing anything particularly unsettling and some may not even take notice of humans at all. However, many shadow people are far from benign. Witnesses have recounted sightings accompanied by feelings of overwhelming dread, auras of malice, and even physical attacks.

Whether they're ghosts, demons, or just symptoms of disordered sleep, there are a few distinct kinds of [shadow people with unique characteristics](#) that can tell you what to expect if you meet one. This guide will shed a little light on the different types.

• The Hat Man Shadow Watches Silently



Photo: Peter H / [Pixabay](#)

This type of [shadowy visitor](#) doesn't appear to mean any harm but he sure looks creepy. The hat man is one of the most commonly reported types of shadow person. Witnesses describe him as a faceless, dark man in an overcoat and a wide-brimmed hat who watches silently from doorways.

There aren't many accounts of malevolent behavior or attacks attributed to this type of shadow person but the hat man has been reported to induce feelings of apprehension or the inexplicable knowledge that witnesses haven't seen the last of him.

• Aggressive Shadow People Attack Sleeping Victims



Photo: Kate Dreyer / [Flickr](#)

Shadow people may have plenty of ways to terrorize you without becoming violent but some of them have no qualms about causing physical harm. [People have reported](#) being beaten, choked, and even picked up and dropped by aggressive shadow beings in their homes. These beings usually don't look much different from normal shadow people - featureless human-shaped entities - but they harbor some serious ill will.

Fortunately, they're also the easiest to scientifically explain, since [shadow figures and choking sensations](#) are some of the textbook symptoms of sleep paralysis.

• Red-Eyed Specters Can Sense Fear



Photo: Nick Klein / [Flickr](#)

Most shadow people are described as faceless black silhouettes but if you run into a red-eyed shadow person, you're in trouble. While they generally don't harm humans physically, red-eyed shadow people are about as menacing as they come. Their only discernible features are the glowing red orbs that peer out from their pitch-black faces.

According to [people who claim](#) to have encountered red-eyed shadow people, their gaze causes unadulterated terror and the more terrified the victim becomes, the stronger the shadow person will grow.

• Hooded Shadow Figures Radiate Sheer Hate



Photo: PublicDomainPictures / [Pixabay](#)

This type of shadow person is featureless except for its hooded cloak. Like the hat man, this creature isn't known to attack humans directly. It prefers to stand at doors or bedsides and stare silently. However, while the hat man is usually described as more curious than malicious, cloaked or hooded shadow people almost certainly aren't paying friendly visits.

[Descriptions](#) of hooded shadow people [usually](#) include [the same sinister detail](#): an undeniable sensation of seething hatred.

• **Watchmen Shadow Figures Stare Obsessively**



Photo: StockSnap / [Pixabay](#)

These types of shadow people aren't as malevolent as [some other kinds](#) but it's still no fun to feel like you're being watched. They watch humans and they don't care if you like it or not. This shadow person isn't particularly imposing; it won't attack you but according to witnesses, there's just something viscerally creepy about the way it lurks around.

• **Misty Black Shadow People Move Like Smoke**



Photo: Wendy Huff / [Flickr](#)

Not all shadow people actually look like people. Even [regular humanoid shadow beings](#) are reported to move in ways that are too quick and fluid to be natural but misty shadow people appear as clouds of black smoke. Despite their weird forms, they give off the unmistakable impression that they are intelligent. According to [some accounts](#), these black shadowy masses are attracted to people or places that give off negative emotions.

• **Elusive Shadow People Will Vanish If Spotted**



Photo: ga3lle / [Flickr](#)

Though [most types of shadow people](#) are known to stare incessantly, there's one type that prefers to snoop unnoticed. The elusive shadow people prefer to peek around corners and blend in with the shadows. If noticed, they will disappear immediately. Like the benevolent shadow people who make their observations more obvious, these elusive shadows don't incite any negative feelings but some people believe that they serve as [scouts for more malicious entities](#). Others, though, feel that [they are just playful and curious](#).

• Shadow Animals Exist, Too, But They're Tricky To See



Photo: Jennifer C. / [Flickr](#)

Shadow people normally manifest as inky outlines of humans or shapeless clouds of black mist but plenty of people have claimed to see shadow animals as well. [Shadow animals](#) don't show up as often as shadow people and they're [more difficult to spot](#) because they stay low to the ground and move astonishingly quickly. Shadow cats are the most common type of shadow animal but there have also been alleged encounters with [shadow rats, birds, spiders, and even apes](#).

They don't appear to pose any more danger to humans than real animals do. However, some shadow cats, like real cats, aren't afraid to make life difficult for people or animals that they don't like.

• Benevolent Shadows Just Want Company



Photo: viscosita / [Flickr](#)

With so many [unnerving accounts of shadow people](#) stalking, terrorizing, and even physically attacking witnesses, you might be surprised to hear that [some shadow people](#) actually just want to help and be in the presence of living beings. Like their malevolent counterparts, benign shadow people can be seen watching from bedsides, doorways, and corners. However, they don't mean any harm and witnesses report no feelings of fear or anger from them. Instead, these shadow people are just curious onlookers who might even be more afraid of us than we are of them.

• Forest Shadow People Aren't Beholden To Homes Or Buildings



Photo: RichardJames1990 / [Flickr](#)

While most shadow people appear indoors, some accounts describe encountering [shadow people in forests](#). These black figures, like their counterparts, watch silently from the shadows without so much as breaking a twig. Forest-dwelling shadow people also have a tendency to mimic the people they encounter (stopping at the same time, for example).

[Some claim](#) that these shadow people are actually guardians of the forests that they inhabit, while others speculate that they're the ghosts of people who got lost amongst the trees. Whatever their origins, they're generally perfectly happy to follow and watch without causing harm.

• **Rambling Shadow People Completely Ignore Humans**



Photo: vk-red / [via flickr](#) / [CC BY-NC-ND 2.0](#)

These shadow entities, unlike most otherworldly beings, aren't interested in observing, following, or interacting with humans. In fact, [rambling shadow people](#) don't care much about us at all. They're usually described as [walking straight from one place to another](#), sometimes even through walls, as though they have somewhere to be or something to do.

Whether their business is nefarious or not, they're more preoccupied with getting it done than with spying on us

From <<https://www.ranker.com/list/different-classes-of-shadow-people/maggie-clendenin>>

Sleep Paralysis

Sunday, March 7, 2021 4:24 PM

Sleep paralysis is a state, [during waking up](#) or [falling asleep](#), in which a person is [aware](#) but unable to move or speak.^{[1][2]} During an episode, one may [hallucinate](#) (hear, feel, or see things that are not there), which often results in [fear](#).^[1] Episodes generally last less than a couple of minutes.^[1] It may occur as a single episode or be recurrent.^[1] The condition may occur in those who are otherwise healthy or those with [narcolepsy](#), or it may run in families as a result of specific [genetic](#) changes.^[2] The condition can be triggered by [sleep deprivation](#), [psychological stress](#), or abnormal [sleep cycles](#).^[2] The underlying mechanism is believed to involve a dysfunction in [REM sleep](#).^[2] Sleep paralysis is commonly experienced by lucid dreamers; some lucid dreamers use this as a method of having a [lucid dream](#).^[2] Diagnosis is based on a person's description.^[2] Other conditions that can present similarly include narcolepsy, [atonic seizure](#), and [hypokalemic periodic paralysis](#).^[4] Treatment options for sleep paralysis have been poorly studied.^[4] It is recommended that people be reassured that the condition is common and generally not serious.^[4] Other efforts that may be tried include [sleep hygiene](#), [cognitive behavioral therapy](#), and [antidepressants](#).^[4] Between 8% and 50% of people experience sleep paralysis at some point in their life.^{[2][4]} About 5% of people have regular episodes.^[2] Males and females are affected equally.^[2] Sleep paralysis has been described throughout history.^[4] It is believed to have played a role in the creation of stories about [alien abduction](#) and other [paranormal](#) events.^[4]

Signs and symptoms

The main symptom of sleep paralysis is being unable to move or speak during awakening.^[1] Imagined sounds such as [humming](#), [hissing](#), [static](#), [zapping](#) and buzzing noises are reported during sleep paralysis.^[1] Other sounds such as [voices](#), [whispers](#) and [roars](#) are also experienced. It has also been known that one may feel pressure on their chest during an episode.^[1] These symptoms are usually accompanied by intense [emotions](#) such as [fear](#) and [panic](#).^[1] People also have sensations of being dragged out of bed or of flying, [numbness](#), and feelings of electric [tingles](#) or [vibrations](#) running through their body.^[1] Sleep paralysis may include [hypnagogic](#) hallucinations, such as a [supernatural creature](#) suffocating or terrifying the individual, accompanied by a feeling of pressure on one's chest and [difficulty breathing](#).^[2] Another example of a hallucination involves a menacing shadowy figure [entering](#) one's room or lurking outside one's window, while the subject is paralyzed.^[2] Pathophysiology The pathophysiology of sleep paralysis has not been concretely identified, although there are several theories about its cause.^{[1][4]} The first of these stems from the understanding that sleep paralysis is a [parasomnia](#) resulting from dysfunctional overlap of the REM and waking stages of sleep.^{[1][4]} Polysomnographic studies found that individuals who experience sleep paralysis have shorter REM sleep latencies than normal along with shortened NREM and REM sleep cycles, and fragmentation of REM sleep.^{[1][4]} This study supports the observation that disturbance of regular sleeping patterns can precipitate an episode of sleep paralysis, because fragmentation of REM sleep commonly occurs when sleep patterns are disrupted and has now been seen in combination with sleep paralysis.^{[1][4]} Another major theory is that the neural functions that regulate sleep are out of balance in such a way that causes different sleep states to overlap.^[4] In this case, cholinergic sleep "on" [neural populations](#) are hyperactivated and the serotonergic sleep "off" neural populations are under-activated.^[4] As a result, the cells capable of sending the signals that would allow for complete arousal from the sleep state, the serotonergic neural populations, have difficulty in overcoming the signals sent by the cells that keep the brain in the sleep state.^[4] During normal REM sleep, the threshold for a stimulus to cause arousal is greatly elevated. Under normal conditions, medial and [vestibular nuclei](#), [cortical](#), [thalamic](#), and [cerebellar](#) centers coordinate things such as head and eye movement, and orientation in space.^[4] In individuals reporting sleep paralysis, there is almost no blocking of exogenous stimuli, which means it is much easier for a stimulus to arouse the individual.^[4] The [vestibular nuclei](#) in particular has been identified as being closely related to dreaming during the REM stage of sleep.^[4] According to this hypothesis, vestibular-motor disorientation, unlike hallucinations, arise from completely endogenous sources of stimuli.^{[1][4]} If the effects of sleep "on" neural populations cannot be counteracted, characteristics of REM sleep are retained upon awakening. Common consequences of sleep paralysis include headaches, muscle pains or weakness or paranoia. As the correlation with REM sleep suggests, the paralysis is not complete: use of [EOG](#) traces shows that eye movement is still possible during such episodes; however, the individual experiencing sleep paralysis is unable to speak.^{[1][4]} Research has found a genetic component in sleep paralysis.^{[1][4]} The characteristic fragmentation of REM sleep, [hypnopompic](#), and [hypnagogic](#) hallucinations have a heritable component in other parasomnias, which lends credence to the idea that sleep paralysis is also genetic.^{[1][4]} Twin studies have shown that if one twin of a monozygotic pair ([identical twins](#)) experiences sleep paralysis that other twin is very likely to experience it as well.^{[1][4]} The identification of a genetic component means that there is some sort of disruption of a function at the physiological level. Further studies must be conducted to determine whether there is a mistake in the signaling pathway for arousal as suggested by the first theory presented, or whether the regulation of melatonin or the neural populations themselves have been disrupted.

Hallucinations



A picture of a [succubus](#)-like vision, in contrast to the incubus. *My Dream, My Bad Dream*, 1915, by Fritz Schimbeck

Several types of hallucinations have been linked to sleep paralysis: the belief that there is an intruder in the room, the presence of an [incubus](#), and the sensation of floating.^{[1][4]} A neurological hypothesis is that in sleep paralysis the mechanisms which usually coordinate body movement and provide information on body position become activated and, because there is no actual movement, induce a [floating](#) sensation.^{[1][4]} The [intruder](#) and incubus hallucinations highly correlate with one another, and moderately correlated with the third hallucination, vestibular-motor disorientation, also known as [out-of-body experiences](#),^{[1][4]} which differ from the other two in not involving the threat-activated vigilance system.^{[1][4]}

Threat hyper-vigilance

A [hyper-vigilant](#) state created in the [midbrain](#) may further contribute to hallucinations.^[4] More specifically, the emergency response is activated in the brain when individuals wake up paralyzed and feel vulnerable to attack.^{[1][4]} This helplessness can intensify the effects of the threat response well above the level typical of normal dreams, which could explain why such visions during sleep paralysis are so vivid.^{[1][4]} The threat-activated vigilance system is a protective mechanism that differentiates between dangerous situations and determines whether the fear response is appropriate.^{[1][4]} The hyper-vigilance response can lead to the creation of endogenous stimuli that contribute to the perceived threat.^[4] A similar process may explain hallucinations, with slight variations, in which an evil presence is perceived by the subject to be attempting to suffocate them, either by pressing heavily on the chest or by strangulation.^{[1][4]} A neurological explanation holds that this results from a combination of the threat vigilance activation system and the muscle paralysis associated with sleep paralysis that removes voluntary control of breathing.^{[1][4]} Several features of REM breathing patterns exacerbate the feeling of suffocation.^{[1][4]} These include shallow rapid breathing, [hypercapnia](#), and slight blockage of the airway, which is a symptom prevalent in [sleep apnea](#) patients.^[1]

According to this account, the subjects attempt to breathe deeply and find themselves unable to do so, creating a sensation of resistance, which the threat-activated vigilance system interprets as an unearthly being sitting on their chest, threatening suffocation.^[4] The sensation of entrapment causes a feedback loop when the fear of suffocation increases as a result of continued helplessness, causing the subjects to struggle to end the SP episode.^{[1][4]}

Diagnosis

Sleep paralysis is mainly diagnosed via clinical interview and ruling out other potential [sleep disorders](#) that could account for the feelings of paralysis.^{[1][2][4]} Several measures are available to reliably diagnose^{[1][2][4]} or screen (*Munich Parasomnia Screening*)^{[2][4]} for recurrent isolated sleep paralysis.

Episodes of sleep paralysis can occur in the context of several medical conditions (e.g., narcolepsy, [hypokalemia](#)). When episodes occur independent of these conditions or substance use, it is termed "isolated sleep paralysis" (ISP).^{[1][4]} When ISP episodes are more frequent and cause clinically significant distress or interference, it is classified as "recurrent isolated sleep paralysis" (RISP). Episodes of sleep paralysis, regardless of classification, are generally short (1–6 minutes), but longer episodes have been documented.^[8]

It can be difficult to differentiate between [cataplexy](#) brought on by narcolepsy and true sleep paralysis, because the two phenomena are physically indistinguishable. The best way to differentiate between the two is to note when the attacks occur most often. Narcolepsy attacks are more common when the individual is falling asleep; ISP and RISP attacks are more common upon awakening.^{[1][4]}

Differential diagnosis

Similar conditions include:

- [Exploding head syndrome](#) (EHS) potentially frightening parasomnia, the hallucinations are usually briefer always loud or jarring and there is no paralysis during EHS.^{[1][4]}
- [Nightmare disorder](#) (ND); also REM-based parasomnia^{[1][4]}
- [Sleep terrors](#) (STs) potentially frightening parasomnia but are not REM based and there is a lack of awareness to surroundings, characteristic screams during STs.^{[1][4]}
- [Nocturnal panic attacks](#) (NPAs) involves fear and acute distress but lacks paralysis and dream imagery^{[1][4]}
- [Posttraumatic stress disorder](#) (PTSD) often includes scary imagery and anxiety but not limited to sleep-wake transitions^{[1][4]}

Prevention

Several circumstances have been identified that are associated with an increased risk of sleep paralysis. These include [insomnia](#), [sleep deprivation](#), an erratic sleep schedule, [stress](#), and physical fatigue. It is also believed that there may be a genetic component in the development of RISP, because there is a high concurrent incidence of sleep paralysis in [monozygotic twins](#).^{[1][2]} Sleeping in the [supine position](#) has been found an especially prominent instigator of sleep paralysis.^{[1][2][4]} Sleeping in the supine position is believed to make the sleeper more vulnerable to episodes of sleep paralysis because in this sleeping position it is possible for the soft palate to collapse and obstruct the airway.^{[1][2]} This is a possibility regardless of whether the individual has been diagnosed with [sleep apnea](#) or not. There may also be a greater rate of microarousals while sleeping in the supine position because there is a greater amount of pressure being exerted on the lungs by gravity.^{[1][2]} While many factors can increase the risk for ISP or RISP, they can be avoided with minor lifestyle changes.^{[1][2]}

Treatment

Medical treatment starts with education about sleep stages and the inability to move muscles during REM sleep. People should be evaluated for [narcolepsy](#) if symptoms persist.^{[1][4]} The safest treatment for sleep paralysis is for people to adopt healthier sleeping habits. However, in more serious cases [tricyclic antidepressants](#) or [selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors](#) (SSRIs) may be used.^{[1][4]} Despite the fact that these treatments are prescribed there is currently no drug that has been found to completely interrupt episodes of sleep paralysis a majority of the time.^{[1][4]}

Medications

Though no large trials have taken place which focus on the treatment of sleep paralysis, several drugs have promise in case studies.^{[1][2]} Two trials of [GHB](#) for people with narcolepsy demonstrated reductions in sleep paralysis episodes.^{[1][2]}

[Pimavanserin](#) has been proposed as a possible candidate for future studies in treating sleep paralysis.^{[1][4]}

Cognitive-behavior therapy

Some of the earliest work in treating sleep paralysis was done using a [cognitive-behavior therapy](#) called CA-CBT. The work focuses on psycho-education and modifying catastrophic cognitions about the sleep paralysis attack.^{[1][2][28]} This approach has previously been used to treat sleep paralysis in Egypt, although clinical trials are lacking.^{[1][2]} The first published psychosocial treatment for recurrent isolated sleep paralysis was cognitive-behavior therapy for isolated sleep paralysis (CBT-ISP).^{[1][4]} It begins with self-monitoring of symptoms, cognitive restructuring of maladaptive thoughts relevant to ISP (e.g., "the paralysis will be permanent"), and psychoeducation about the nature of sleep paralysis. Prevention techniques include ISP-specific sleep hygiene and the preparatory use of various relaxation techniques (e.g. diaphragmatic breathing, mindfulness, progressive muscle relaxation, meditation). Episode disruption techniques^{[1][4]} are first practiced in session and then applied during actual attacks. No controlled trial of CBT-ISP has yet been conducted to prove its effectiveness.

Epidemiology

Sleep paralysis is experienced equally in males and females.^{[a][b]} Lifetime prevalence rates derived from 35 aggregated studies indicate that approximately 8% of the general population, 28% of students, and 32% of psychiatric patients experience at least one episode of sleep paralysis at some point in their lives.^[a] Rates of recurrent sleep paralysis are not as well known, but 15%–45% of those with a lifetime history of sleep paralysis may meet diagnostic criteria for Recurrent Isolated Sleep Paralysis.^{[a][b][c]} In surveys from Canada, China, England, Japan and Nigeria, 20% to 60% of individuals reported having experienced sleep paralysis at least once in their lifetime.^[a] In general, non-whites appear to experience sleep paralysis at higher rates than whites, but the magnitude of the difference is rather small.^[a] Approximately 36% of the general population that experiences isolated sleep paralysis is likely to develop it between 25 and 44 years of age.^[a] Isolated sleep paralysis is commonly seen in patients that have been diagnosed with narcolepsy. Approximately 30–50% of people that have been diagnosed with narcolepsy have experienced sleep paralysis as an auxiliary symptom.^[a] A majority of the individuals who have experienced sleep paralysis have sporadic episodes that occur once a month to once a year. Only 3% of individuals experiencing sleep paralysis that is not associated with a **neuromuscular disorder** have nightly episodes.^[a] Sleep paralysis is more frequent in students and psychiatric patients.^[a]

Society and culture

Eymology



A 19th century version of *Füssli's The Nightmare* (1781)

The original definition of sleep paralysis was codified by **Samuel Johnson** in his *A Dictionary of the English Language* as *nightmare*, a term that evolved into our modern definition. The term was first used and dubbed by British neurologist **S.A.K. Wilson** in his 1928 dissertation, *The Narcolepsies*.^[a] Such sleep paralysis was widely considered the work of **demons**, and more specifically **incubi**, which were thought to sit on the chests of sleepers. In **Old English** the name for these beings was *mare* or *mære* (from a **proto-Germanic** **marōn*, cf. **Old Norse** *marg*), hence comes the *mare* in the word *nightmare*. The word might be **cognate** to **Greek** *Marōn* (in the *Odyssey*) and **Sanskrit** *Māra*.

Cultural significance and priming



Le Cauchemar (The Nightmare), by Eugène Thivier (1894)

Although the core features of sleep paralysis (e.g., atonia, a clear sensorium, and frequent hallucinations) appear to be universal, the ways in which they are experienced vary according to time, place, and culture.^{[a][b]} Over 100 terms have been identified for these experiences.^[a] Some scientists have proposed sleep paralysis as an explanation for reports of paranormal phenomena such as **ghosts**,^{[a][b][c]} alien visits,^[a] **demons** or **demonic possession**,^{[a][b]} **alien abduction** experiences,^{[a][b][c]} the **night hag** and **shadow people** haunting.^{[a][b][c]}

According to some scientists culture may be a major factor in shaping sleep paralysis.^[a] When sleep paralysis is interpreted through a particular cultural filter, it may take on greater salience. For example, if sleep paralysis is feared in a certain culture, this fear could lead to conditioned fear, and thus worsen the experience, in turn leading to higher rates.^{[a][b]} Consistent with this idea, high rates and long durations of immobility during sleep paralysis have been found in Egypt, where there are elaborate beliefs about sleep paralysis, involving malevolent spirit-like creatures, the **jinn**.^[a]

Research has found that sleep paralysis is associated with great fear and fear of impending death in 50% of sufferers in Egypt.^[a] A study comparing rates and characteristics of sleep paralysis in Egypt and Denmark found that the phenomenon is three times more common in Egypt versus Denmark.^[a] In Denmark, unlike Egypt, there are no elaborate supernatural beliefs about sleep paralysis, and the experience is often interpreted as an odd physiological event, with overall shorter sleep paralysis episodes and fewer people (17%) fearing that they could die from it.^[a]

Folklore

The night hag is a generic name for a folkloric creature found in cultures around the world, and which is used to explain the phenomenon of sleep paralysis. A common description is that a person feels a presence of a supernatural malevolent being which immobilizes the person as if standing on the chest.^[a] This phenomenon goes by many names.

Egypt

In **Egypt**, sleep paralysis is conceptualized as a terrifying **jinn** attack. The jinn may even kill its victims.^[a]

Cambodia

Sleep paralysis among **Cambodians** is known as “the ghost pushes you down,”^[a] and entails the belief in dangerous visitations from deceased relatives.^[a]

Italy

In the different regions of **Italy** there are many examples of supernatural beings associated with sleep paralysis. In the regions of **Marche** and **Abruzzo**, it is referred to as a *Pandafecche* attack;^[a] the *Pandafecche* usually refers to an evil **witch**, sometimes a ghostlike spirit or a terrifying catlike creature, that mounts on the chest of the victim and tries to harm him. The only way to avoid her is to keep a bag of sand or beans close to the bed, so that the witch will stop to count how many beans or sand-grains are inside it. A similar tradition is present in the **Sardinian** folklore, where the *Ammuntadore* is known as a creature that mounts on the people's chest during their sleep to give them nightmares, and that can change its shape according to the person's fears. In Northern Italy, specifically in the **Tyrol** area, the *Trud* is a witch that sits on the people's chest at night, making them unable to breathe; to chase her away, people should make the **sign of the Cross**, something that would need a great struggle in a situation of paralysis.^[a] In Southern Italy, sleep paralysis is usually explained with the presence of a **sprite** standing on the people's chest: if the person manages to catch the sprite (or steal his hat), in exchange for his freedom (or to have his hat back) he can reveal the hiding place of a rich treasure; this sprite has different names in different regions of Italy: Monaciello in **Campania**, Monachicchio in **Basilicata**, Laurieddhu or Scazzamurill in **Apulia**, Mazzmuredd in **Molise**.^[a]

Newfoundland

In **Newfoundland**, sleep paralysis is referred to as the Old Hag,^{[a][b][c]} and victims of a *hagging* are said to be *hag-ridden* upon awakening.^[a] Victims report being completely conscious, but unable to speak or move, and report a person or an animal which sits upon their chest.^[a] Despite the name, the attacker can be either male or female.^[a] Some suggested cures or preventions for the Old Hag include sleeping with a Bible under the pillow,^[a] calling the sleeper's name backwards^[a] or in an extreme example, sleeping with a shingle or board embedded with nails strapped to the chest.^[a] This object was called a Hag Board.^[a] The Old Hag is well-enough known in the province to be a pop culture figure, appearing in films and plays^[a] as well as in crafted objects.^[a]

United States

Sleep paralysis is sometimes interpreted as space alien abduction in the **United States**.^[a]

Literature

Various forms of **magic** and **spiritual possession** were also advanced as causes in literature. In nineteenth century **Europe**, the vagaries of diet were thought to be responsible. For example, in **Charles Dickens's** *A Christmas Carol*, **Ebenezer Scrooge** attributes the **ghost** he sees to "... an undigested bit of beef, a blot of mustard, a crumb of cheese, a fragment of an underdone potato..." In a similar vein, the *Household Cyclopaedia* (1881) offers the following advice about nightmares:

"Great attention is to be paid to regularity and choice of diet. Intemperance of every kind is hurtful, but nothing is more productive of this disease than drinking bad wine. Of eatables those which are most prejudicial are all fat and greasy meats and pastry... Moderate exercise contributes in a superior degree to promote the digestion of food and prevent flatulence; those, however, who are necessarily confined to a sedentary occupation, should particularly avoid applying themselves to study or bodily labor immediately after eating... Going to bed before the usual hour is a frequent cause of night-mare, as it either occasions the patient to sleep too long or to lie long awake in the night. Passing a whole night or part of a night without rest likewise gives birth to the disease, as it occasions the patient, on the succeeding night, to sleep too soundly. Indulging in sleep too late in the morning, is an almost certain method to bring on the paroxysm, and the more frequently it returns, the greater strength it acquires; the propensity to sleep at this time is almost irresistible."^[a]

J. M. Barrie, the author of the **Peter Pan** stories, may have had sleep paralysis. He said of himself 'In my early boyhood it was a sheet that tried to choke me in the night.'^[a] He also described several incidents in the Peter Pan stories that indicate that he was familiar with an awareness of a loss of muscle tone whilst in a dream-like state. For example, Maimie is asleep but calls out 'What was that....It is coming nearer! It is feeling your bed with its horns-it is boring for [into] you'.^[a] and when the Darling children were dreaming of flying, Barrie says 'Nothing horrid was visible in the air, yet their progress had become slow and laboured, exactly as if they were pushing their way through hostile forces. Sometimes they hung in the air until Peter had beaten on it with his fists.'^[a] Barrie describes many **parasomnias** and neurological symptoms in his books and uses them to explore the nature of consciousness from an experiential point of view.^[a]

From <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sleep_paralysis>

Personal Experience

Tuesday, March 9, 2021 5:20 PM

I had an encounter with the Hat Man, although at the time I was unaware of such a thing. I have a habit of seeing things when I'm in that state between sleeping and wakefulness, funny enough the Hat Man isn't the strangest thing I've seen.

It was probably about 2 AM, I remember waking up and leaping to my feet. In the doorway to our bedroom, a dark figure was illuminated by the lights in the hall. It wore a long coat (can't remember the style, but I want to say something Victorian) and had a puritans/witch hunters hat (Broadbrimmed, ending in a flat top).

It was just standing there, it seemed like it couldn't get in. Although I leapt to my feet, the more aware of it I became, the less I was able to advance, only managing to advance a few feet before stopping completely.. My wife awoke (as she often does when I leap out of bed) and asked me what was going on. I turned and replied "The man in the Hat, he can't get in the doorway..." as I was pulled into full wakefulness.

Once I was fully aware, I couldn't see it anymore, but I still felt my pulse racing. I know what I saw, but have no idea of what I saw. Even my statement of "...he can't get in the doorway.", was I stating a fact, that he was too big to get in (the top of his hat did touch the top of the doorframe), was I warning my wife that he can't get in here (otherwise something bad would happen) or was I altering the narrative by stating that he can't get in (with practice you can engage in Lucid dreaming which allows you to control what is happening in your dreams).

It wasn't until a few years later, when talking with Gary (the bigfoot guy) that he mentioned the Hat Man being a real thing after I mentioned my encounter that I became aware of how I wasn't alone in encountering it...and that it had a name.

Crazy board

Tuesday, March 9, 2021 8:03 PM

