



Nightmare

The Film Works Presents a Gray Brothers Film

DESCRIPTION

This one-hour documentary is a filmmaker's investigation into the experience of nocturnal attacks by supernatural entities. Is it a brush with something beyond our physical world, or is it a psychological enigma that taps our most primal fears?

SYNOPSIS

Five percent of the world's population has had the experience of awaking paralyzed while a supernatural entity climbs onto their chest suffocating them, inducing a level of fear that is beyond imagination. These attacks have been known to erupt in epidemics, resulting in mass panic, post-traumatic stress disorder, and sudden unexplainable death. Even the baffled scientific community is divided between psychological and metaphysical explanations.

In Roman times the entity was called *The Succubus*. In Russia it was known as *The Vampyr*. In Newfoundland it is called *The Hag*. The Vikings simply called it *Night Mara*, meaning "The crusher that comes in the night". Its face and name may change but it has always been with us... lurking in the shadows, waiting for us to fall asleep.

Haunted by his own recurring encounters with a malevolent entity, documentary filmmaker Adam Gray sets out on a journey to understand this terrifying enigma. From the foggy shores of Newfoundland to the steaming jungles of Zanzibar we will see where the Night Mara has left its mark. We will hear from those who have survived the experience, and the families of those that did not. We will meet the scientists, psychologists, and folklorists on the front lines of the battle for understanding how something without material form can traumatize and even kill those that encounter it.

Nightmare is a fascinating exploration of a phenomenon that suggests that the only difference between hallucination and the supernatural... is belief.



Adam Gray 613 969 9439

Paul Stephens 416 779 0292



TOPICAL TREATMENT

“For those who believe, no explanation is necessary; for those who do not believe, no explanation will suffice.”

- Joseph Dunninger

THE EXPERIENCE

Before you open your eyes you know that there is something in the room. You feel its thick dark presence, unnatural and malevolent. You try to move, but cannot. Complete paralysis. With great struggle you manage to open your eyes, and there it is, standing at the foot of your bed, watching you. Slowly but deliberately it moves towards the bed. You try to scream, but cannot. Helpless. Cold deathly weight... as it crawls onto your chest. The primal terror that consumes you is... indescribable. This is not happening. This cannot be possible. Yet there it is, its inhuman eyes inches from your own.

This is the experience that 1 in 25 people will have in their lifetime. It is happening on your street. It is not a dream. Those who have the experience are awake, paralyzed and fully aware that what is happening to them goes against the very laws of science. Their belief systems are profoundly changed. Some, like myself, may never sleep with the light off again.

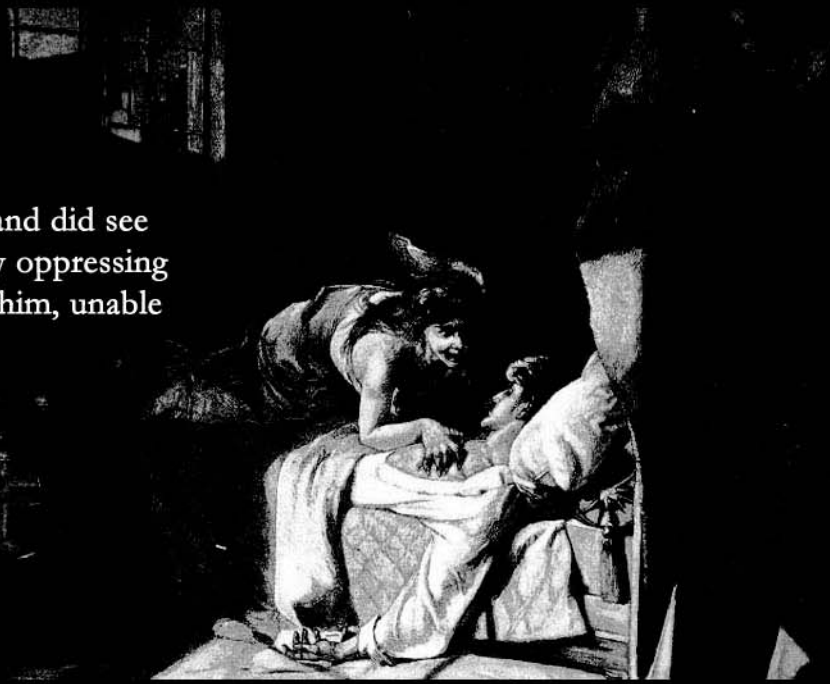
Though the effects are undeniably real, only the victims can perceive these supernatural entities. While most major religions refer to the experience as demonic assault, psychologists have categorized it as a hallucination. Now with a greater understanding of Quantum Physics and altered states of consciousness, some of the leading scientific experts believe this could be an encounter with a non-material being.

“We’re dealing with a phenomenon which violates our sense of reality, and which operates in this gray area between the physical world and the subjective or mythic or other-realm world. We're being asked to prove this by the methods of the physical sciences alone. But those methods will not yield its secrets.”

- Harvard professor John Mack

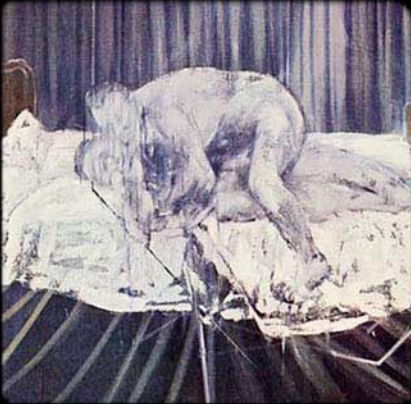
“He did awake in the night by moonlight, and did see clearly the likeness of this woman grievously oppressing him, in which miserable condition she held him, unable to help himself, until near day.”

- Salem Witch Trials, 1692



HISTORY

Tales of these attacks go back for thousands of years. The Vikings called this supernatural entity the Night Mara. According to Viking lore this shape shifting being was **VISIBLE ONLY TO ITS VICTIMS**. The Mara had the ability to enter rooms through keyholes, open windows or slip through cracks in the floor. Upon entering a bedroom it would paralyze its victims while climbing onto their chest, suffocating them, feeding on their life force. A severe attack could result in demonic possession or death.



Nearly every culture on the planet has a name for the Mara. Written descriptions of their attacks can be found as far back as the Old Testament. Both Buddha and Mohammad encountered the Mara. During the Salem witch trials women believed to be responsible for conjuring the attacks were burned at the stake. In Rhode Island in the 19th century bodies of the dead were exhumed in the night, their hearts cut out and burned in desperate attempt to stop an outbreak. Before science dictated that there was nothing beyond our physical world, the Mara was accepted as a common fact of life. In some parts of the world it still is.

DEPICTIONS IN ART

The Mara is deeply engrained in our culture and mythology. Descriptions of Mara like attacks can be found in classic literature. From Beowulf to Bram Stoker. Herman Melville, Ernest Hemingway, Henri Fuseli, Francis Bacon, and many other artists have depicted the experience. The tradition continues today in films like *The Entity*, *The Grudge*, and *The Exorcism of Emily Rose*.



“I woke up paralyzed and panicked because I felt like there was a ghost in the room with me, then I saw it. The black shadow floated toward me and it entered my body through my chest (I saw it!) I felt an electrical buzz surging throughout my body and head... I felt the most uncontrollable fear imaginable. I thought this time I would surely die of fear if not a heart attack first.”

- Victim's description (University of Waterloo's research files)

THE NIGHT HAG OF NEWFOUNDLAND

In Newfoundland the Mara has been well known since the European colonization. There it is known as the Night Hag. In 1982 Dr. David Hufford completed a breakthrough anthropological study on the phenomena. Hufford became interested in the Night Hag after experiencing an attack himself while studying for his Doctorate in Newfoundland. Frightened and confused by the experience, he told no one. Later while studying local folklore he came across the stories of Hag attacks and became fascinated.

Dr. Hufford found that approximately 20% of his Newfoundland community had experienced the attacks of The Hag. Most had never spoken about the assaults, as they feared others would think they were losing their minds. Many did not even believe in the supernatural until the attack, rather it was after the attacks the victims became believers. Hufford's research electrified both the worlds of psychology and parapsychology, and soon numerous scientists across the globe began to dedicate their careers to studying the world wide phenomena.



THE ZANZIBAR EPIDEMIC

In Zanzibar the Mara is known as the Popo Bawa. In 1995 an outbreak of Popo Bawa attacks swept through the African island bringing communities to the brink of hysteria. Villagers became so terrified that they began to sleep outdoors by fires in large groups for safety. Young men were hospitalized with broken ribs and other physical injuries they claimed were results of the attacks. One man who was believed to be responsible for bringing the demons to the community was hacked to death with machetes by an angry mob, another was burned alive. In April of 2007 the attacks began again.



“Every night I would hear countless screams across the countryside. One night while biking home I heard a chilling “Allah! Acha Popo, acha! Nenda Popo!” coming from someone's home. Translation: “Oh God! Stop Popo, stop! Get away Popo!”

- American Peace Corps worker Zanzibar



“The shaman tell us we have lost the protection of our ancestors and we are very vulnerable . . . But few people will talk with you about this. To talk about it is dangerous - you could become one of the next, the sleeping people.”

- Xoua Thao (Hmong Refugee)

SUDDEN UNEXPLAINED NOCTURNAL DEATH SYNDROME

Perhaps most frightening of all, scientists believe that the Mara experience can end for some victims in sudden death. The medical term for these deaths is Sudden Unexplained Nocturnal Death Syndrome (SUNDS). SUNDS became first known in Japan where hundreds of previously healthy young men began to unexplainably die in their sleep. Until only a few decades ago Japanese Doctors had ascribed these deaths to Kanashibari the Japanese name for Mara. In Manila between 1948 and 1982, 722 deaths were ascribed to SUNDS. Now some scientists believe that the Mara experience, be it hallucination or supernatural, is the cause of SUNDS.



The worst outbreak of these mysterious nocturnal deaths was in The United States. After the Vietnam War a large influx of Hmong refugees immigrated to the United States. The Hmong name for the Mara is Dab Tsog. Traditionally the Hmong had protected themselves from Dab Tsog attacks with ancient rituals performed by shaman. Once relocated to large American urban communities and isolated from their traditional culture, Dab Tsog attacks began to devastate the Hmong. More than 60% of the population reported attacks and **DOZENS OF YOUNG MEN BEGAN TO DIE** in their sleep, many with a fixed and terrified expression on their face. Later many of the Hmong moved out to rural locations and developed their own communities. There they returned to practicing their ancient ceremonies and the Dab Tsog attacks and deaths stopped.

The theory, as proposed by medical anthropologist Dr. Sherry Adler, is “The supernormal experience traditionally known as Dab Tsog acts as a trigger for Hmong Sudden Unexpected Nocturnal Death Syndrome. The power of this folk belief, compounded with such factors as the trauma of war, migration, rapid acculturation, and the inability to practice traditional healing and ritual, causes cataclysmic psychological, and subsequently physiological, stress that can result in sudden unexpected deaths”





MATERIALIST THEORY

In the last 40 years, tens of thousands of cases have been studied in Canada, Japan and the United States by a slew of scientists, psychologists, and researchers. Though all agree that a shockingly high percentage of the population experiences these nocturnal attacks, none have yet been able to conclusively explain why.

The name commonly given to describe the symptoms of the Mara attack is “SLEEP PARALYSIS”. This term refers to a natural state of paralysis that occurs during REM sleep, believed to stop us from acting out our dreams. In some instances people can awake, while the paralysis continues. During this waking state of Sleep Paralysis the individual is in altered state of consciousness, similar to a Voodoo trance. Dr. Allen Cheyne of the University of Waterloo believes that the paralysis causes fear and panic, and the brain, while searching for the cause of the paralysis, creates the hallucination of a predator.

NON-MATERIALIST ARGUMENTS

A hallucination may be categorized as an anomalous event, and could equally be labeled a vision or apparition. In the words of Dr. Allen Cheyne “... frankly, we do not ‘fully understand’ even ordinary perception.

Dr. Michael Persinger of Laurentian University believes that an altered state of consciousness like sleep paralysis may allow the mind to perceive other dimensions of reality. Recent studies in Quantum Physics suggest that there could well be numerous other dimensions of reality.

Dr. David Hufford believes that while science can describe the neurological components of the experience there is as of yet no scientific evidence that excludes the possibility that the Mara attack could be a supernatural encounter. The obvious paradox is that science cannot accept these entities as real because they have no physical substance.



CONCLUSION

Whether the Mara is created by its victims’ own minds or exists independently is a debate that may never be answered. What is known is that the experience for the victim is real, and that its impact on the world is real. Whether one chooses to believe is inconsequential. **THE ATTACKS WILL CONTINUE.**

THE TEAM

Producer/Mentor: Paul Stephens

Three-time Gemini award winning producer Paul Stephens has been producing major motion pictures and documentaries for the big screen and television for 30 years. His producer credits include: *Beowulf & Grendel*, *Such A Long Journey*, *The Arrow*, *Where The Spirit Lives*, and *Ordinary Magic*.

Directors: The Gray Brothers

Since graduating from film school in 2000, Adam and Andrew Gray have been producing, directing, shooting, and editing film and video for their two-man company Graymatters. The brothers have produced dozens of live concert DVDs and EPKs for musicians and comedians. Their “Twilight Zone-esque” short film *The Extremity* has played in numerous film festivals across the country, including The Montreal & Vancouver International film festivals. Their first HD documentary series *Pit Crews* is currently airing on RushHD in Canada and The USA.