



# Sleep Paralysis: Night-mares, Nocebos, and the Mind-Body Connection (Studies in Medical Anthropology)

By Professor Shelley R Adler

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*Sleep Paralysis* explores a distinctive form of nocturnal fright: the "night-mare," or incubus. In its original meaning a night-mare was the nocturnal visit of an evil being that threatened to press the life out of its victim. Today, it is known as sleep paralysis—a state of consciousness between sleep and wakefulness, when you are unable to move or speak and may experience vivid and often frightening hallucinations. Culture, history, and biology intersect to produce this terrifying sleep phenomenon. Although a relatively common experience across cultures, it is rarely recognized or understood in the contemporary United States.

Shelley R. Adler's fifteen years of field and archival research focus on the ways in which night-mare attacks have been experienced and interpreted throughout history and across cultures and how, in a unique example of the effect of nocebo (placebo's evil twin), the combination of meaning and biology may result in sudden nocturnal death.

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#### Review

"A fascinating and engaging book. Drawing upon multiple sources, including art, literature, work by other researchers and her own fieldwork, Adler adroitly weaves a cogent narrative which provides insight into this pervasive yet under recognized affliction."

(*Journal of Clinical Sleep Medicine* 2011-08-19)

"*Sleep Paralysis* is a mind-bending exploration of how what you believe interacts with how your body works."

(Alexis Madrigal *The Atlantic* 2011-09-14)

#### About the Author

SHELLEY R. ADLER is a professor in the department of family and community medicine and director of education at the Osher Center for Integrative Medicine at the University of California, San Francisco.

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