

Far Side of the Shadow Screen

By

M. Thomas Champion

P.O. Box 4970

Santa Fe, NM 87502

505-983-8459

Email: tom4champion@gmail.com

Indonesia

Decisions and destinies are not for man; they are for the Gods and a God's alone. Good and evil walk this earth and man must tread a narrow path between them. Throughout a man's life there is day, night, and the task at hand. Day is for struggling to fill his empty belly, to silence the cries of his starving children, to toil unceasingly until the sun goes down. Night is the time to pray, to offer sacrifice that the Gods may choose mercifully man's fate. And as the sun falls in the night sky, the Gods begin their eternal war for possession of the earth and the souls of all mankind. Survival is man's task, obedience his obligation.

Choice is a rich man's folly. There is no choice but to endure the day, survive the night. There is the realization that fate is in the hands of the Gods who

rule the night inhabiting dreams. That is why most Indonesians fear the night more than they dread the coming of another day's struggle to survive.

And now, it is night...

*An Indonesian proverb

Darkness wrapped hot and wet around the Javanese rain forest, filling in the cracks and crevasses until jungle and night were inseparable. Traversing the heavens wispy veils of blackened clouds grew in a conspiratorial nature until they obscured the creamy face of the crescent moon. In the darkness devils clad in ebon loincloths crept silently across the smooth black basalt of the courtyard. But darkness did not concern these assassins, these “setans.” They were creatures of the night. The jungle would never reveal their presence, nor now the moonlight betray their pernicious wickedness. Their evil reached beyond earthly dimensions for they were under the direction of an ancient god.

A litany of sacred spells from magic tomes raised these corporeal forms beyond the reach of human perception. An enveloping cocoon spun from filaments of the netherworld provided concealment. Mystical tattoos shrouding their bodies transported the invading physical beings into a realm undetectable by any mortal sense of awareness. Hidden in the black of night, of stone, of magic; hundreds steadily advanced toward the large dark structure dominating the far side of the open circular plaza.

There was no sense of urgency in this attack, no rush to proceed. Invisibility insured secrecy and the magic of eternity flowing through each man’s veins assured ever-lasting life. Halting, they massed about their leader who took each man singly, staring into his soul to see for himself their measure of dedication to

the way. Throats offered to the shining blade he waved, they gave themselves up to him and to their holy mission. Commitment was life. Any measure less meant instant death.

When all had passed this final test, a single howling cry split the darkness as the leader of the setans announced their charge. Taking human form, the devils fell upon the unsuspecting guards; for devils must occupy the same physical realm as their intended victims in order to do physical harm. The purpose of this mission was most assuredly to harm, to kill; but more importantly, to reclaim the universe.

A small detachment of Indonesian Regular Army guarded the shrine. Caught momentarily unaware they froze at the death cry coming from the empty darkness. But these were modern highly trained soldiers, not simple peasants believing in either invisible monsters or invincible magic. As targets materialized the troops brought the muzzles of their Soviet-made automatic weapons to bear. The sharp bark of the AK-47's reverberated off the stone as a lethal swarm of lead tore into the attacking horde. But the first wave of devils refused to fall. Their magic was strong. A dukin's spell detached the setans' souls from their bodies placing the spirits of the warriors in the underworld realm of Lord Batara Kala.

Empty soulless flesh drove forward absorbing the blasts, shielding those behind from harm. Such a noble death guaranteed a place of honor in the next life

and a glorious rebirth in this world. Soon the magazines in the assault weapons were spent. The Indonesian Regulars cast down their empty rifles, drew survival knives and bundled themselves closer together. Falling back into a tight group they sought protection in one another as a living army silently picked its path over the mountain of bloody corpses littering the plaza and steadily advanced toward the defenders. Again a scream tore through the night and the setans descended upon the guards.

Despite advanced training in hand to hand combat, the guards' skills were no match for the setans' magic. Ancient magic provides no spell to stop a bullet traveling at 3,000 miles per hour from rending human flesh. Many devils had fallen to the barrage of lead. But the Indonesians have waged war for centuries with blades of iron and steel. Against these weapons the setans possessed invincible power. No blade forged by man could cut or tear the flesh of the invaders. And so, the devils fell upon the soldiers hacking them to pieces with their gleaming krises.

When the carnage ceased and the blood lust quelled, the attackers split into two groups. The setan leader took his forces into the shrine, reappearing moments later with the treasures. As the skies cleared and the moon reappeared overhead the other group, led by the "leyaks", witches, prepared a sacrifice to the old gods for granting success to their mission.

A kidnapped female child, a virgin just blossoming into womanhood, lay naked on the cold black stone. Frozen in the witches' trance thoughts of escape could not manifest in her mind. Magic bound her tighter than iron. The eldest leyak approached her. Circling in a clockwise fashion he sang a spell destined for the ears of the ancient gods of Java. He called on his master, Batara Kala, to receive the soul of this maiden, to pass a piece of her spirit to each man present strengthening those souls in their missions to come. Holding his kris high above his head, letting the crescent moon dance along the dagger's wavy blade, he prayed aloud for Batara Kala to destroy all other gods, especially Buddha here at his Temple of Enlightenment.

"Batara Kala," he screamed, "we give you blood."

The witch stabbed downward piercing the child's chest and severing her aorta. A geyser of blood spewed out, issuing forth with every beat of her young heart. The eager hands of the leyaks swept it up, smearing it liberally on their bodies to absorb its life force thereby blinding Buddha's awareness of their unholy actions.

Now obscured from Buddha's sight they gathered bowls of blood and raced about the courtyard painting magical hand signs on dozens of stone Buddha statues encircling the plaza. With Buddha blinded, Batara Kala might yet destroy his holy

power at this shrine. As Buddha's influence fell inch by inch all over the lands of Indonesia, the path of Batara Kala's return would be assured. Fearing Buddha could not stand against the old gods, how could the simple peasants here not accept the return of the old ways? Kala would return and make them kings.

Abandoning the child's lifeless form, the leyaks slipped back into the jungle's silence. Gathering up their stolen treasures and their dead, the setans vanished into the night air. Borobudur, the Temple of Enlightenment, sat as it had for the previous 500 years – empty, devoid of life, deathly quiet in the darkness of the Indonesian night.

A Balinese Legend

“There are three levels of the universe – The Underworld, the Middle World, and the Upper World. The Underworld is the realm of demons ruled by Batara Kala and his goddess, Seysuyara. The Middle World is what man calls Earth – the realm of the living. The Upper World, highest of all, comprises several levels. Closest to Earth lays the level of the Clouds. Here the God of Love dwells. Next is the Atmosphere, the dark blue sky where the Sun and Moon reside. The bird, Tjak, and the Serpent, Takasaka, dwell with the Stars in the upper perfumed sky. Higher still is found the Gringsing Wayang, the flaming heaven of the ancestors, whose spirits guide and protect us. Above all live the great gods watching over the heavenly nymphs.

Greatest of all is Lord Siva, and Batara Kala, the demon, is his son. Batara Kala, the offspring of Siva’s sperm, fell to Earth as Siva made love to his wife, Uma, when she was in an angry mood. Lord Siva wanted to destroy the sperm and ordered the lesser gods to kill it with their magic arrows. Unfortunately for all they missed and Batara Kala grew into a mighty, fearful giant with an insatiable hunger for human flesh. Siva commanded Batara Kala to teach the human creatures of the Middle World a lesson for they behaved like savages. But evil Batara Kala decided to devour the human race. Siva, seeing this, recalled Batara Kala and cast him down into the Underworld. Then Siva sent the lesser gods to teach men how to

behave – to grow food and to follow his religion. Siva saved the humans from Batara Kala, but legend says someday Batara Kala may return.

Let us pray and offer sacrifice he does not...”

And God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let him have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over fowl of the air, and over cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.” So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

Genesis 26, 27

“You are mine, Barong Sai,” the beast shouted. “I claim my birthright, both Heaven and Earth. Once again the flesh of mankind will feed my demon legions. Siva shall not stop me. You shall not stop me. I stretch out my hands and blot out the sun. It is only by my grace the children of earth shall see. I am supreme...”

As the demonic laughter trailed off, a giant fist swept down obscuring the universe. Darkness... Only darkness remained. In the emptiness Grant felt the hand of the beast slip inside his chest, closing about his heart.

“I have you,” the monster laughed out. “I have the book. The virgin is mine. I claim victory. Without Siva’s light you shall all submit to me or die.”

“No! Oh, God, no,” Grant screamed lurching up from bed. “Get away from me.”

“Peter,” she said shaking him. “Pete? Wake up, honey. It’s okay. You were having a nightmare. Peter?”

The soft concern she voiced reached down into his dreams. Consciousness touched him, then identity. Thought slowly formed in a fog, a swirling mist... A dream? It had been too real; the nightmare or hallucination? The ghostly vapors... The voice... The beast standing in the swirling mists between heaven and earth... Images... Grotesque scenes of screaming human victims torn limb from limb... Blood... Blood in the twilight’s last gleaming... The life blood of humanity oozing

from the corners of the beast's mouth... The taunting... It called to me. Challenged me... Mocked me... Me? Not me... No, not me...

“Peter, are you alright babe? You are scaring me. You don't really want me to go, do you?” she whispered rocking him with a gentle shove.

If not me; then who was he calling? And who is this? Who is she, Grant wondered? Where the Hell am I? I danced with her at the fraternity party. But... Oh, shit... My head...

“No, I don't want you to go. I'm okay now,” he heard himself lie. Terror and confusion still gripped him. Bruises from the beast's grip pained his heart. “Just go on back to sleep. Honest, I'm fine.”

She is beautiful ran through his mind as his eyes took her in. Lovely... The thought calmed him. Her sighs as he gently caressed her naked shoulder released his tension. A nightmare? Peter Grant does not have nightmares, he told himself. Wrong image... And image is everything.

She pulled at him, coaxing lust to displace fear. Her hands played his flesh and the strategy began to take effect. Horror slipped back into his sub-consciousness lubricated on its journey by a liberal dose of post-adolescent hormones. Her desires held him captive by his ego. No place for beasts or virgins in the web she spun. His

only conscious goal became conquest, the only demand – appreciation of his performance on her playing field.

You are so lovely. You make me feel incredible. Who are you? Not that it matters. Don't say a name. Don't say the wrong name. What is your name, pretty thing? You are beautiful. Beauty should have a name. You should have a name. They should make you all wear name tags to avoid just such embarrassing situations. "HI... YOU ARE SLEEPING WITH..."

The nightmare faded into oblivion with the climactic explosion of their lovemaking. She rolled over breathing heavily and slipped off into dreamland. Grant stared at the ceiling trying to recall the night's events... Her name...

I shouldn't get so drunk, he told himself. Of course, any job worth doing... No, I shouldn't get so... Sai... something Sai? No. Shit. I don't know. 'What do you say to a naked lady, what do you say to a naked lady, what do you say to a naked lady early in the morning?' It won't matter in the morning anyway. Let her get up and leave for class first. See, simple solutions for simple problems. The most important thing, never let them see you sweat.

Closing his eyes he became vaguely aware of another presence in the room; his room, but not her lovely warm presence beside him. This had a cold malevolence Grant refused to acknowledge. Pushing it aside he drifted off... "...to sleep, perchance to

dream." "A rose by any other name would smell as sweet." Her name is Rose. I love you, Rose... at least tonight I love you.

The old man, dressed in simple homespun peasant garb, hobbled across the bamboo floor. Dead eyes rolling inside useless sockets kept beat to his wobbly gate. He needed no eyes. A lifetime of familiarity fixed each object's position in the room. An aura emanating from the power of his spirit searched out this world's presence. His vision scanned other universes.

Slumping down on the worn rattan mat in front of an opaque screen on the wall and pulling his gnarled legs toward his body, he began his trance ritual. Breathing slowly, expanding his consciousness outward with every inhalation, he recited his mantra, his magical incantation, calling on Bali's ancient gods.

As a heady lightness swept away all human bonds the blackness cleared. The ancient spirit rose from the earth and passed beyond the shadow screen barrier. As the universe of the body vanished, the dimension of the gods opened.

The wizard found himself kneeling at the huge clawed cat-like feet of Batara Kala, Lord of the Eight Hot Hells, the Eight Cold Hells, and all the neighboring Hells. Kala stood 40 feet tall, rising on legs as thick and heavy as banyan trees. Nutmeg brown fur covered his torso. Four arms protruded from the massive body, each undulating like a slithering python. Each arm ended in a gigantic sinewy hand, each finger tipped with a wavy knife-like blade for a nail.

A monkey-shaped head sat squarely on the shoulders, but this monkey had three eyes and the snout of a pig. Its teeth were fangs a foot long and yellowed ivory incisors curled upward like the tusks of an old boar. Around his neck the monster wore a necklace of human arm and leg bones. A crown of human skulls adorned his head. From his waist hung a wrap spun from the finest gold, but it did little to mask an immense throbbing erection. Saliva dripped from the huge jowls as Batara Kala waited for his priest to pay homage.

"Lord," the old man prayed, "I am here in answer to your summons. What do you require of me?"

"THE BOOK! Did you get the book?" the giant demanded.

"Yes, Master, we stole the spells as you instructed," the wizard answered.

"And the virgin? She is the key. You must find her."

"My apprentices search at this very moment. You must be patient. The Book is most specific about the..."

"PATIENT? Ten thousand years for this time to come... My patience ends. I wait no longer. Fail me and I shall flay the flesh from your bones and feed it to my dragons. Your damnable soul will be homeless, doomed to wander the sector of the hungry ghosts forever," the giant boomed.

"I shall not fail you, Lord. The Book tells all we need to know."

"Ah, yes, the spells of that old witch, Rangda. She thought herself a god. Humans exist as fools," Kala roared with braying laughter. "Your destiny is to wallow on your filthy world, content in misery, until death and the fires of cremation free your pitiful souls to the lowest levels of our domain. And this satisfies you. Only gods may walk in Heaven or rule on earth. Look about you, old one. Know your place."

"I feel your greatness, Lord Kala, and know my inadequacy. That is how it should be. The strength flowing through my veins is yours. I stand with you on the far side because you called me through my shadow screen. The greatness that is Kala taught me the way. Only by your leave may I walk in these dimensions as a servant, prostrate before you. I beg your indulgence. Give me time. The plan goes well. You have but to look..."

"I cannot look, Fool. Siva blocks my sight. His power here is great. I see little of the earth. That is why I sought you out at your window; also why the spell of Rangda must succeed. I need to be born into the world of man to be freed from Siva's curse. I shall then rule man and earth. Fail me not, fool."

"Trust me, Master. Put yourself in my hands..."

Again the giant roared with laughter. "At least you amuse me. Go on; touch my hand, fool, and burn with the flame of a god. Or fail me. That too surely brings your

Thank You for previewing this eBook

You can read the full version of this eBook in different formats:

- HTML (Free /Available to everyone)
- PDF / TXT (Available to V.I.P. members. Free Standard members can access up to 5 PDF/TXT eBooks per month each month)
- Epub & Mobipocket (Exclusive to V.I.P. members)

To download this full book, simply select the format you desire below

