

= Slender Man =

The Slender Man (also known as Slenderman) is a fictional supernatural character that originated as an Internet meme created by Something Awful forums user Eric Knudsen (a.k.a. " Victor Surge ") in 2009 . It is depicted as resembling a thin , unnaturally tall man with a blank and usually featureless face , wearing a black suit .

Stories of the Slender Man commonly feature him stalking , abducting or traumatizing people , particularly children . The Slender Man is not confined to a single narrative , but appears in many disparate works of fiction , mostly composed online . Fiction relating to the Slender Man encompasses many media , including literature , art and video series such as Marble Hornets . Outside of online fiction , the Slender Man has had impact on popular culture , having been referenced in the video game Minecraft and generated video games of his own , such as Slender : The Eight Pages and Slender : The Arrival .

Beginning in 2014 , a minor moral panic occurred over the Slender Man after readers of his fiction were connected to several violent acts , particularly a near @-@ fatal stabbing in Waukesha , Wisconsin .

= = Origin = =

The Slender Man was created on June 10 , 2009 on a thread in the Something Awful Internet forum . The thread was a photoshop contest in which users were challenged to edit everyday photographs to appear paranormal . A forum poster with the user name " Victor Surge " contributed two black and white images of groups of children , to which he added a tall , thin spectral figure wearing a black suit . Although previous entries had consisted solely of photographs , Surge supplemented his submission with snatches of text ? supposedly from witnesses ? describing the abductions of the groups of children , and giving the character the name " The Slender Man " :

The quote under the first photograph read :

We didn 't want to go , we didn 't want to kill them , but its persistent silence and outstretched arms horrified and comforted us at the same time ?

The quote under the second photograph read :

One of two recovered photographs from the Stirling City Library blaze . Notable for being taken the day which fourteen children vanished and for what is referred to as ? The Slender Man ? . Deformities cited as film defects by officials . Fire at library occurred one week later . Actual photograph confiscated as evidence .

These additions effectively transformed the photographs into a work of fiction . Subsequent posters expanded upon the character , adding their own visual or textual contributions .

Victor Surge (real name Eric Knudsen) claimed that he was inspired to create the Slender Man by legends of the shadow people , the writings of H. P. Lovecraft , Zack Parsons , and Stephen King (particularly The Mist) , and the surrealism of William S. Burroughs . His intention was , he claimed , " to formulate something whose motivations can barely be comprehended , and [which caused] unease and terror in a general population . " In an interview with the Slender Nation podcast , Knudsen cited the Tall Man from the film series Phantasm as an inspiration for the Slender Man .

Other pre @-@ existing fictional or legendary creatures often thought to have inspired the Slender Man include : the Gentlemen , black @-@ suited , pale , bald demons from the Buffy the Vampire Slayer episode " Hush " ; Men in black , many accounts of which grant them an uncanny appearance with an unnatural walk and " oriental " features ; and The Question , a DC Comics superhero with a blank face , whose secret identity is " Victor Sage " , a name similar to Knudsen 's alias " Victor Surge " .

In her book , Folklore , Horror Stories , and the Slender Man : The Development of an Internet Mythology , Professor Shira Chess of the University of Georgia connected the Slender Man to ancient folklore about fairies . Like fairies , Slender Man is otherworldly , with motives that are often difficult to grasp ; like fairies , his appearance is vague and often shifts to reflect what the viewer wants or fears to see , and , like fairies , the Slender Man calls the woods and wild places his home

and kidnaps children .

== Development ==

The Slender Man soon went viral , spawning numerous works of fanart , cosplay , and online fiction known as " creepypasta " : scary stories told in short snatches of easily copyable text that spread from site to site . Divorced from its original creator , the Slender Man became the subject of myriad stories by multiple authors within an overarching mythos .

Many aspects of the Slender Man mythos first appeared on the original Something Awful thread . One of the earliest additions was added by a forum user named " Thoreau Up " , who created a folklore story set in 16th @-@ century Germany involving a character called Der Grossman , which was implied to be an early reference to the Slender Man . The first video series involving the Slender Man evolved from a post on the Something Awful thread by user " ce gars " . It tells of a fictional film school friend named Alex Kralie , who had stumbled upon something troubling while shooting his first feature @-@ length project , Marble Hornets . The video series , published in found footage style on YouTube , forms an alternate reality game describing the filmmakers ' fictional experiences with the Slender Man . The ARG also incorporates a Twitter feed and an alternate YouTube channel created by a user named " totheark " . As of 2013 , Marble Hornets now has over 250 @,@ 000 subscribers around the world , and 55 million views . Other Slender Man @-@ themed YouTube series followed , including EverymanHYBRID and TribeTwelve .

In 2012 , the Slender Man was adapted into a video game titled Slender : The Eight Pages ; within its first month of release , the game was downloaded over 2 million times . Several popular variants of the game followed , including Slenderman 's Shadow and Slender Man for iOS , which became the second most @-@ popular app download . The sequel to Slender : The Eight Pages , Slender : The Arrival , was released in 2013 . Several independent films about the Slender Man have been released or are in development , including Entity and The Slender Man , released free online after a \$ 10 @,@ 000 Kickstarter campaign . In 2013 , it was announced that Marble Hornets would become a feature film . In 2015 , the film adaptation , Always Watching : A Marble Hornets Story , was released on VOD . In 2016 , Sony Pictures subsidiary Screen Gems partnered with Mythology Entertainment to bring a Slender Man film into theatres .

== Description ==

Because the Slender Man 's fictional " mythology " has evolved without an official " canon " for reference , his appearance , motives , habits , and abilities are not fixed , but change depending on the storyteller . He is most commonly described as very tall and thin with unnaturally long , tentacle @-@ like arms (or merely tentacles) , which he can extend to intimidate or capture prey . In most stories his face is white and featureless , but occasionally his face appears differently to anyone who sees it . He appears to be wearing a dark suit and tie . The Slender Man is often associated with the forest and / or abandoned locations and has the ability to teleport . Proximity to the Slender Man is often said to trigger a " Slender sickness " ; a rapid onset of paranoia , nightmares and delusions accompanied by nosebleeds .

Early stories featured him targeting children or young adults . Some featured young adults driven insane or to act on his behalf , while others did not , and others claim that investigating the Slender Man will draw his attention . The web series Marble Hornets established the idea of proxies (humans who fall under the Slender Man 's influence) though initially they were simply violently insane , rather than puppets of the Slender Man . Marble Hornets also introduced the idea that the Slender Man could interfere with video and audio recordings , as well as the " Slender Man symbol " , which became a common trope of Slender fiction . Graphic violence and body horror are uncommon in the Slender Man mythos , with many narratives choosing to leave the fate of his victims obscure . Shira Chess notes that " It is important to note that few of the retellings identify exactly what kind of monster the Slender Man might be , and what his specific intentions are- these points all remain mysteriously and usefully vague . "

= = = As folklore = = =

Several scholars have argued that , despite being a fictional work with an identifiable origin point , the Slender Man represents a form of digital folklore . Shira Chess argues that the Slender Man exemplifies the similarities between traditional folklore and the open source ethos of the Internet , and that , unlike those of traditional monsters such as vampires and werewolves , the fact that the Slender Man 's mythos can be tracked and signposted offers a powerful insight into how myth and folklore form . Chess identifies three aspects of the Slender Man mythos that tie it to folklore : collectivity (meaning that it is created by a collective , rather than a single individual) , variability (meaning that the story changes depending on the teller) , and performance (meaning that the storyteller 's narrative changes to reflect the responses of his / her audience) .

Andrew Peck also considers the Slender Man to be an authentic form of folklore and notes its similarity to emergent forms of offline legend performance . Peck suggests that digital folklore performance extends the dynamics of face @-@ to @-@ face performance in several notable ways , such as by occurring asynchronously , encouraging imitation and personalization while also allowing perfect replication , combining elements of oral , written , and visual communication , and generating shared expectations for performance that enact group identity despite the lack of a physically present group . He concludes that the Slender Man represents a digital legend cycle that combines the generic conventions and emergent qualities of oral and visual performance with the collaborative potential of networked communication .

Jeff Tolbert also accepts the Slender Man as folkloric and suggests it represents a process he calls ? reverse ostension . ? Ostension in folkloristics is the process of acting out a folk narrative . According to Tolbert , the Slender Man does the opposite by creating a set of folklore @-@ like narratives where none existed before . It is an iconic figure produced through a collective effort and deliberately modeled after an existing and familiar folklore genre . According to Tolbert , this represents two processes in one : it involves the creation of new objects and new disconnected examples of experience , and it involves the combination of these elements into a body of ? traditional ? narratives , modeled on existing folklore (but not wholly indebted to any specific tradition) .

Professor Thomas Pettitt of the University of Southern Denmark has described the Slender Man as being an exemplar of the modern age 's closing of the " Gutenberg Parenthesis " ; the time period from the invention of the printing press to the spread of the web in which stories and information were codified in discrete media , to a return to the older , more primal forms of storytelling , exemplified by oral tradition and campfire tales , in which the same story can be retold , reinterpreted and recast by different tellers , expanding and evolving with time .

= = Reasons for success = =

Media scholar and folklorist Andrew Peck attributes the success of the Slender Man to its highly collaborative nature . Because the character and its motives are shrouded in mystery , users can easily adapt existing Slender Man tropes and imagery to create new stories . This ability for users to tap into the ideas of others while also supplying their own helped inspire the collaborative culture that arose surrounding the Slender Man . Instead of privileging the choices of certain creators as canonical , this collaborative culture informally locates ownership of the creature across the community . In these respects , the Slender Man is similar to campfire stories or urban legends , and the character 's success comes from enabling both social interaction and personal acts of creative expression .

Although nearly all users understand that the Slender Man is not real , they suspend that disbelief in order to become more engrossed when telling or listening to stories . This adds a sense of authenticity to Slender Man legend performances and blurs the lines between legend and reality , keeping the creature as an object of legend dialectic . This ambiguity has led some to some confusion over the character 's origin and purpose . Only five months after his creation , George

Noory 's Coast to Coast AM , a radio call @-@ in show devoted to the paranormal and conspiracy theories , began receiving callers asking about the Slender Man . Two years later , an article in the Minneapolis Star Tribune described his origins as " difficult to pinpoint . " Eric Knudsen has commented that many people , despite understanding that the Slender Man was created on the Something Awful forums , still entertain the possibility that he might be real .

Shira Chess describes the Slender Man as a metaphor for " helplessness , power differentials , and anonymous forces . " Peck sees parallels between the Slender Man and common anxieties about the digital age , such as feelings of constant connectedness and unknown third @-@ party observation . Similarly , Tye Van Horn , a writer for The Elm , has suggested that the Slender Man represents modern fear of the unknown ; in an age flooded with information , people have become so inured to ignorance that they now fear what they cannot understand . Troy Wagner , the creator of Marble Hornets , ascribes the terror of the Slender Man to its malleability ; people can shape it into whatever frightens them most . Tina Marie Boyer noted that " The Slender man is a prohibitive monster , but the cultural boundaries he guards are not clear . Victims do not know when they have violated or crossed them . "

= = Copyright = =

Despite his folkloric qualities , the Slender Man is not in the public domain . Several for @-@ profit ventures involving the Slender Man have unequivocally acknowledged Knudsen as the creator of this fictional character , while others were civilly blocked from distribution (including the Kickstarter @-@ funded film) after legal complaints from Knudsen and other sources . Though Knudsen himself has given his personal blessing to a number of Slender Man @-@ related projects , the issue is complicated by the fact that , while he is the character 's creator , a third party holds the options to any adaptations into other media , including film and television . The identity of this option holder has not been made public . Knudsen himself has argued that his enforcement of copyright has less to do with money than with artistic integrity : " I just want something amazing to come off it ... something that 's scary and disturbing and kinda different . I would hate for something to come out and just be kinda conventional . " As of May , 2016 , the media rights to Slender Man have been sold to production company Mythology Entertainment .

= = Related attacks = =

On May 31 , 2014 , two 12 @-@ year @-@ old girls in Waukesha , Wisconsin allegedly held down and stabbed a 12 @-@ year @-@ old classmate 19 times . When questioned later by authorities , they reportedly claimed that they wished to commit a murder as a first step to becoming proxies for the Slender Man , having read about it online . They also state that they were afraid that Slender Man would kill their families if they did not commit the murder . The victim was able to crawl from the woods , where she had been left , to reach a roadside . A passing cyclist intervened , and the victim survived the attack . The purported attackers were charged as adults and are each facing up to 65 years in prison . One of the girls reportedly said Slender Man watches her , can read minds , and could teleport . Experts testified in court she also said she conversed with Lord Voldemort and one of the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles . On August 1 , 2014 , she was found incompetent to stand trial and her prosecution was suspended until her condition improved . On November 12 , 2014 , a doctor judged that her condition had improved enough for her to stand trial . On December 19 , 2014 , the judge ruled that both girls were competent to stand trial . In August 2015 , the presiding judge ruled that the girls would be tried as adults .

In a statement to the media , Eric Knudsen said , " I am deeply saddened by the tragedy in Wisconsin and my heart goes out to the families of those affected by this terrible act . " He stated he would not be giving interviews on the matter .

After hearing the story , an unidentified woman from Cincinnati , Ohio told a WLWT TV reporter her 13 @-@ year @-@ old daughter had attacked her with a knife , and had written macabre fiction , some involving the Slender Man , who the mother said motivated the attack .

On September 4 , 2014 , a 14 @-@ year @-@ old girl in Port Richey , Florida , allegedly set her family 's house on fire while her mother and nine @-@ year @-@ old brother were inside . Police reported that the teenager had been reading online stories about Slender Man as well as Atsushi ?kubo 's manga Soul Eater . Eddie Daniels of the Pasco Sheriff 's Office said the girl " had visited the website that contains a lot of the Slender Man information and stories [...] It would be safe to say there is a connection to that . "

During an early 2015 epidemic of suicide attempts by young people ages 12 to 24 on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation , Slender Man was cited as an influence ; the Oglala Sioux tribe president noted that many Native Americans traditionally believe in a " suicide spirit " similar to the Slender Man .