

Rake it up

JD, you're a creative, have you ever made an exquisite corpse?

Let's begin with a description.

Standing 6 feet tall, deathly skinny with pale, clammy skin and sunken, dark eyes.

You might think I'm talking about myself and lying about my height, but I'm actually describing the Rake.

The cryptid known for stalking suburban neighborhoods, feeding on nightmares and tearing people apart with the long, sharp talons that give the creature its name.

Given the Rake's height I'm classifying it as a Ghoul on the I Scream You Meme height chart of terror.

I want to take a minute to do what almost every YouTube video on the Rake does, and break down the legend.

While evidence the Rake dates back to the 12th century, the first written account of the Rake come from a Mariner's log in 1691 (insert sea shanty music here):

"He came to me in my sleep. From the foot of my bed I felt a sensation. He took everything. We must return to England. We shall not return here again at the request of the Rake."

The creature came up again in an 1880 Spanish journal:

"I have experienced the greatest terror. I see his eyes when I close mine. They are hollow. Black. They saw me and pierced me. His wet hand. I will not sleep. His voice (unintelligible text)."

A suicide note in 1964 made mention of the Rake. Ending the note with:

"Dearest Linnie, I have prayed for you. He spoke your name."

The Rake really crept into prominence in 2003, when a series of sightings in upstate New York started to gain media attention.

But shortly after the first reports there was an apparent media blackout and the existing coverage was destroyed, it seemed that all evidence of the Rake was suppressed.

Almost as if the Government didn't want us to know the truth about the Rake.

The Rake did not break its cone of silence again until 2006, when a woman, also in upstate New York, posted about an encounter she had with the cryptid.

The post detailed her experience, waking up in the middle of the night and seeing:

"At the foot of the bed, sitting and facing away from us, there was what appeared to be a naked man, or a large hairless dog of some sort. Its body position was disturbing and unnatural, as if it had been hit by a car or something."

The creature stared at the woman and her husband for a couple of seconds before quickly crawling towards the husband, pausing mere inches from his face.

It paused, before running towards their children's rooms.

By the time they chased the creature down their daughter was badly injured.

The father accidentally drove into a lake while taking their daughter to the hospital, killing them both.

The daughter's last words were "he is the Rake."

The story was never published in the local news and the police had no answers.

The woman claimed that after several months she was able to uncover stories of other people's encounters with the Rake.

She learned the Rake could speak, and would visit the same people repeatedly.

With this information the woman set up a noise activated recorder in her room and within three weeks was able to capture the voice of the Rake.

Though she said she was too scared to transcribe or listen fully to what it said in the recordings.

These are fun stories, but you know what this show is.

Before I get into the real story of the Rake you know I need to nitpick some inane bullshit.

So, the creature is called the Rake because of the long claws.

Personally, If I saw a 6 foot tall naked man with 10 long claws, I would probably not think of rakes, which have, like way more than 10 rakey-bits.

We have a cultural touchstone already for long fingered killers in Freddie Kruger.

JD, quick sidetrack, what do you think the scariest piece of lawn equipment is?

Statistically, ladders are actually the most deadly, so creamers, always check to make sure you're stable.

But, speaking of rakes as tools, they are very old concept, but the rakes that we commonly see in stores, with their long metal or plastic tines, are a recent invention.

Earlier rakes did not have long teeth, they were more like two pieces of wood or bamboo in the shape of an upper-case T, with smaller, short teeth used for the actual raking.

But the rake that is the clear inspiration for the Rake, the one you see at any store, with very long tines extending outward from a point on the handle, was only patented in 1929.

So, I think we might have an anachronism on our hands, because I don't know how 1691 sailors were able to associate the creature with an invention from 300 years in the future.

I guess, that since the Rake can talk, maybe that's just its name, and the fact that modern rakes exist is just a coincidence.

Or, big brain time, maybe rakes were inspired and named after the Rake.

Okay, tool talk is over, from here on out, I'm just talking the Rake, and not, rakes.

The Rake is a fully baked cryptid, the bakers were 4Chan's /b/ board in 2005.

The thread where the Rake was created was started with the post "hey /b/ lets make a new monster."

Here's a post from that thread:

"Alright, this is for the people who like the three-eyes, no apparent mouth, pale skin one. Here's what we've got so far: Humanoid, about six feet tall when standing, but usually crouches and walks on all fours. It has very pale skin. The face is blank. As in, no nose, no mouth. However, it has three solid green eyes, one in the middle of its forehead, and the other two on either side of its head, towards the back. Usually seen in front yards in suburban areas. Usually just watches the observer, but will stand up and attack if approached. When it attacks, a mouth opens up, as if a hinged skull that opens at the chin. Reveals many tiny, but dull teeth."

As the thread progressed, the idea of the Rake refined down:

"6 feet tall is good. Humanoid pale grayish skin. 2 large eyes on the front of the head because of trips. And nature no nose mouth that is slightly visible, then opens on a

hinge hundreds of dull but not blunt teeth. Eats meat. Genitals don't matter because no interviews really talk about that. Seen in suburban areas minding its own business attacks when approached but mostly just stares at people looks human enough to be able to disguise with fedora and trench coat or similar."

Because yes, a fedora and trench coat is the perfect way to blend in . But anyway here's the final revision from the thread:

"Approximately 6' tall, but seen crouching. Humanoid Pale, grayish skin 2 slightly larger than human eyes. No nose. Mouth that is smaller than human, but when provoked or attacked, opens freely on a hinge down to the neckline, showing hundreds of dull, but not blunt teeth. Unknown origin. Unknown Diet. Seen in suburban areas. Opens its mouth and widens its eyes when provoked, attacks when approached. If not provoked or approached, just stares."

It was less than a year later, in 2006, that the lore was posted on Something Awful by Brian Somerville.

The post claimed to be the result of in-depth research into the history of the Rake.

The claim was that the 2006 "research" came from a group who was inspired by the 2003 news reports that were "scrubbed" and became part of a media blackout.

They allegedly found over "two dozen accounts."

The post claimed that the group of researchers had found mention of the Rake dating back to the 12th century, with written records naming the rake dating back to 1691.

So the Rake, as it appeared, was created in a 4Chan post, and the four stories I told earlier came from that same Something Awful post.

There was no group of researchers finding arcane knowledge and no series of government cover ups.

But shout out to the poster for making an excuse for why there was nothing about it before 2006.

Also, the most famous image of the Rake, which is a trailcam image of a creature on all fours staring into the camera, is a hoax marketing image promoting the 2011 video game we all know and love, *Resistance 3*.

Anyway, the creepy pasta was pasta'd, and over the years the legend of the Rake became a fixture of the online horror scene.

Despite the established lore, there's also a lot of theories floating around about what the Rake is.

Some say that it was once human but was cursed with immortality.

Others say that it's an alien.

Others say that it was brought into this dimension and controlled by Slenderman.

And some theories claim that it did not exist before it was created by our collective unconsciousness.

There's no shortage of YouTube videos dedicated to the Rake, either repeating the original legends or claiming to show encounters.

There's also plenty of videos about being chased by the Rake in Roblox, and animations of the Rake fighting Slenderman, shy guy or various other creepypasta characters.

The Rake has even been name dropped on our favorite journalistic institution, Paranormal Caught on Camera, who promoted the created by our collective unconsciousness theory.

But because it is a known work of fiction, the difference between sightings and the lore of the creature cause some controversy among cryptid fans.

On r/HumanoidEncounters, there are over 150 posts related to the Rake.

As I read through some of these posts I saw a lot of replies explaining that it was a fictional character.

I saw a couple different reactions from the original posters, some of whom seemed gracious and relieved to hear that there was no such thing as the Rake.

Others, generally those who claimed to have seen the Rake, seemed to get defensive at the implication that what they had seen didn't exist.

The figure of the Rake is still very much alive, and the fact that it is a creepypasta hasn't stopped the spread of the story.

Here's a quote from a March 2022 post about the Rake on r/Humanoidencounters:

"Everyone knows that the Rake is nothing more than a creepypasta.. however! You cannot deny that people around the world are seeing and having legitimate experiences with this creature or rather one that resembles the being in the stories, myself included."

The post goes on to describe a friend's warning about a patch of woods near their house.

"I remember him asking me if I had ever saw anything strange in the large plot of woods across the street from his house, which at the time I had not however, long before it was brought up I always had a DEEP feeling in my chest about this plot of woods... My friend took out their phone and showed me the picture of the Rake that comes up with any google search, a very generic picture. I laughed it off as he warned me about the creature because I genuinely thought he was just growing marijuana or something in the woods and didn't want me to find it....I couldn't have been anymore wrong."

The story goes as you'd expect a Rake sighting to go, the poster says that they saw "A 6 foot tall naked creature with greyish white skin and long arms" running through the woods.

Again, I am 5'10" and I have an alibi.

But the evolution of the Rake is fascinating, we don't usually have the literal brainstorming session for a cryptid documented, but we know the phases that the Rake went through.

I didn't come across any encounters that mentioned the Rake's dream haunting, energy draining aspects mentioned in the stories.

But there are a lot of encounters on dark roads, deep woods and backyards.

There seems to be a trend to correct the Rake sightings as either a crawler or a walker, moving away from the name brand to a more generic model.

This correction reflects what I think is an important distinction, that the r/humanoidencounters community does not believe in the Rake, but do believe that the term is used to describe real phenomena.

The Rake isn't real, but they do believe that there are humanoid entities creeping around.

One poster compared the Rake and crawlers to E.T. and aliens, by their comparison the Rake is a fictional story based on actual sightings of crawlers.

I'd also like to note that a lot of times if the post mentions a creature crawling around on all fours they'll be referred to r/crawlersightings, so if you see a naked monster around your neighborhood be sure to go to the right subreddit, or just send **any** story to us at isrceamyoumeme@gmail.com

But I want to add a caveat.

I think we should look further into crawlers in the future, but it's difficult to find when the earliest reports of crawler sightings were.

The Fresno Nightcrawlers don't make finding information on plain crawlers any easier.

r/CrawlerSightings only started in 2016.

I think it's fair to say that crawlers are a relatively new category of cryptid, even if sightings of creatures that would be considered crawlers now has a deeper history.

The Rake, despite being an acknowledged work of fiction, is probably the best known creature in the crawler category.

There are way more videos claiming to show the Rake than videos about the more generic term crawlers.

I think this illustrates the importance of narrative and name in the spread of online folklore.

Even though most crawler sightings do not match with the lore of the Rake, the fact that the Rake has a name and a backstory to go with it makes for a more compelling creature.

I'm sure that it can be disturbing and unsettling to see something that you do not understand, such as a gaunt pale naked body crawling around your backyard.

At least that's what my partner tells me.

But having terms and conceptual categories to make the unknowable a little more known is an important part of processing the experience.

And because the Rake is more recognizable than crawlers, because the Rake has a backstory, a legend, and its own name, it is easier to come across information on the Rake, and to associate the Rake with whatever it is you may have seen.

I believe that it is because of this narrative and name that the Rake will continue to be the more common term to describe these encounters with unknown creatures.

I find it interesting that the Rake is a specific story or creation that has come to represent a larger category of cryptid.

In part i think this is because the braintrust on 4Chan's /b/ board concept for the monster became more general as they workshopped it.

It went from a three eyed creature with no other features on its face to the Greendale Human from the hit comedy series, Community.

The Rake was created as a blank slate.

But every part of it was created intentionally, whether by committee or by a singular poster fleshing out a backstory.

But the creation of the Rake only went so far as to root it into online folklore.

The Rake has changed, and it separated from its original lore.

Whether the Rake or crawlers win out as the preferred term, the idea of a creeping humanoid stalking the margins of our neighborhoods has taken hold.

So JD, I think the story of the Rake can serve a primer for when we create our own cryptid. What do you think?

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