

# Succubus

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## Succubus

**Primary Disciplinary Field(s):** Mythology, Folklore, Demonology, Psychology

### 1. Core Definition

The **Succubus** is a profound figure within global **demonology** and **mythology**, traditionally conceptualized as a female demon who engages in sexual activity with sleeping men. This nocturnal activity is typically portrayed as detrimental, leading to physical exhaustion, mental deterioration, and, in severe accounts, even the death of the victim. The Succubus serves as the female counterpart to the **Incubus**, which is a male demon said to perform similar actions upon sleeping women. Both figures are central to understanding certain historical explanations for nocturnal emissions, unexplained illness, and dreams perceived as violations.

### 2. Etymology and Historical Development

The term **Succubus** derives directly from the Latin verb *succubare*, meaning "to lie beneath," reflecting the traditional position the demon is presumed to take relative to the sleeping male victim. This etymological root emphasizes the passive role of the victim and the dominating, invasive nature of the encounter. Historically, the depiction of the Succubus has varied widely across different cultural and chronological contexts.

In traditional medieval demonological texts, the Succubus was often described as a frightening, grotesque demonic entity, reflecting its purely malevolent nature and divine condemnation within Christian frameworks. However, as the concept evolved through literature and art into the modern era, the representation shifted significantly. Contemporary portrayals frequently cast the Succubus as an extraordinarily attractive and seductive enchantress, often blurring the lines between pure demon and captivating **femme fatale**, although the underlying purpose--the draining of vital energy or semen--remains a consistent theme across most narratives.

### 3. Key Characteristics

Folklore offers specific, often terrifying, details regarding the appearance and methods of the Succubus, illustrating the widespread cultural fear these creatures generated. Jewish folklore, in particular, provides vivid descriptions that emphasize deceit and concealment. According to these traditions, the Succubus may initially appear as an exceptionally beautiful young woman, capable of fully masking her demonic identity. However, upon closer inspection or during the act, her true nature is revealed by the presence of distinctly animalistic features.

**Deceptive Beauty:** The primary characteristic is the ability to assume a highly seductive human form to lure the victim, often targeting men of moral or spiritual weakness.

**Physiological Drain:** Repeated sexual activity with a **Succubus** is consistently described as leading to severe physiological and psychological consequences for the victim, including profound weakness, physical decline, and the deterioration of mental health.

**Hidden Animal Features:** Traditional accounts often reveal animalistic characteristics that betray the demon's true nature, such as the presence of a snake-like tail, indicating a connection to primordial evil, or claw-like fingers, suggesting physical menace.

#### 4. Psychological and Scientific Interpretations

While the **Succubus** is rooted in mythology and the supernatural, modern science and psychology offer compelling explanations for the experiences traditionally attributed to the demon, often connecting them to common yet terrifying neurological phenomena. These interpretations do not negate the cultural significance of the myth but provide a basis for understanding the sensory input reported by alleged victims.

One of the most prevalent scientific explanations involves the phenomenon of sleep paralysis. Sleep paralysis is a transitional state of consciousness occurring when a person is either waking up or falling asleep, characterized by an aware mind but the temporary inability to move the body. During this state, individuals frequently experience intense, terrifying hallucinations (hypnagogic or hypnopompic), including a palpable feeling of a crushing weight on the chest, difficulty breathing, or the sensation of a malicious presence in the room--sensations that align remarkably well with historical descriptions of a demonic sexual attack.

Furthermore, clinical psychology suggests that such apparitions can manifest as symptoms in individuals suffering from severe mental illnesses. There have been recorded clinical reports detailing patients diagnosed with schizophrenia who experience vivid, distressing hallucinations of being sexually assaulted or attacked by entities such as the Succubus or Incubus. A notable historical case involves an 18-year-old male patient who was fully convinced that a "witch" was repeatedly touching his private parts against his will, demonstrating the intensity and conviction of these hallucinatory experiences in profound psychological disorders. These cases illustrate how deeply embedded cultural fears can intersect with pathological symptomology.

#### 5. Further Reading

[Succubus \(Wikipedia\)](#)

[Sleep paralysis \(Wikipedia\)](#)

[Schizophrenia \(Wikipedia\)](#)