

# The LEYAK

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What does a tiger, a bald giant, a ball of light, a monkey with gold teeth, a giant rat, a riderless motorcycle, and a bird as big as a horse all have in common? They're all forms that the shape-shifting Vampire Witch from Bali uses. The *Leyak* is very dangerous in any form she may take.

During the day, she looks and acts just like everyone else. At night, she searches through cemeteries in hopes of finding human remains fresh enough to salvage. Using Black Magic, she makes a magical formula with them. If she can't find any suitable entrails, she'll get what she needs from a sleeping person.

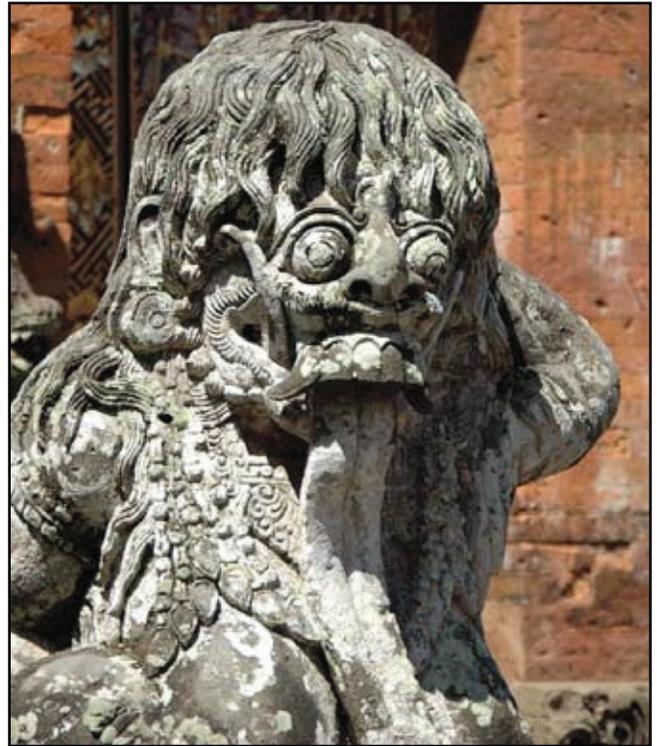
Her magical potion lets her shape-shift and rip her head off, flying around bodiless with her intestines, heart, and liver hanging behind her while searching for prey. Adding to the gruesome image of dangling innards, she has a very long pointed tongue and very sharp fangs.

She drinks blood from humans and animals, but loves the blood of women who have just given birth and their newborns. You can find her wandering back roads, crossroads, cemeteries, forests, ravines, and seashores. If you hear a dog whimper on moonless nights, it means she's close by. She can also make crops fail and cause famines and epidemics. She capable of possessing people; the possessed person is called a *Pengeleyakan*.

Leaving gourmet food on your doorstep will usually please her. As Balinese lore has it, a *Leyak* can only use her magic on the Island of Bali, so if you can get her to a surrounding island like Java, she'd be impotent.

There is a very elaborate ceremony called *Mecaru* that will bring her back to harmony with humans and nature. It does, however, require a blood sacrifice. There are three stages of the *Mecaru* ceremony. The first and lowest can be performed by the head of the household. He will give offerings of flowers, raw meat, shrimp paste, ginger, and onion. He acknowledges, and honors the spirits who then won't have any need to harm humans. If the household is so inclined, alcoholic drinks made with rice may also be given.

A *Pinandita*, the low-ranking holy man, can perform the middle-level ceremony. He offers black, red, white, and yellow rice seeds. In addition, a blood sacrifice from



A statue of Rangda, the queen of Leyak.  
(Photo by Shawn Allen.)

chickens or ducks is poured on the ground. The strangest part of this blood offering is the importance of the color of blood, not the number of animals. The *Pinandita* will decide how dark the blood offering needs to be.

The highest-ranking holy person, a *Pedanda*, is the only one who can perform the highest level of the ceremony. Hundreds of animals are sacrificed, like buffaloes, cows, pigs, and puppies. Color is again of the most importance, and only animals deemed worthy can be sacrificed because they are insured a higher place in their next reincarnation.

In Pura Dalem Penataram Ped, Bali, there's a temple dedicated to *Ratu Gede Mecaling* or *Ratu Gede Nusa*, the patron saint of all *Leyak* Witches. Locals go to the temple when they feel that Black Magic is the force behind misfortune or sicknesses. ♦