

CASE REPORT

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The Man in the Mask

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ABSTRACT: A skeletonized body, wearing a black leather bondage mask, was found in a Revolutionary War smokehouse cave with two bullet holes in the back of the head. The body was skeletonized up to the maxillary area but the head region under the mask was well preserved and permitted a positive visual identification. There was evidence that the body had been eaten by small animals and subsequently burned. Investigations into this brutal murder revealed a tale of a bizarre sadomasochistic ritual that attained national prominence.

KEYWORDS: pathology and biology, homicide, deviant sexual behavior

Some of the weirdest and most brutal murders are those resulting from various sadomasochistic acts. One such case dubbed by the press as the "Man in the Mask" revealed a tale of a bizarre sadomasochistic ritual that attained national prominence.

Background

The scene was a cave-like structure (Fig. 1) constructed of rock located on the side of a hill in a wooded area about 125 ft (38 m) from a summer mansion located on the estate of a United Nation's official. The path along the south side of the mansion led downhill to the site of a historic Revolutionary Era Inn known as the "Erie Hotel" which was now represented only by a part of the foundation of the inn with some other intervening structures, all overgrown by the woods. The cave-like structure resembled either a root cellar or smokehouse-type structure, and a dead tree was located over the entrance (Fig. 1).

The skeletal remains of a human body lying essentially facedown was partially seen through the branches of the dead tree (Fig. 2). Following removal of the tree, a partially burned screen door was noted laying on top of the body within the cave. The south wall of the

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FIG. 1—*Cave-like structure where the body was found.*



FIG. 2—*Skeletonized body with leather hood lying face down on the floor of the cave.*

cave was coated with soot and articles on the floor consisted of charred pieces of wood and glass. A sock and a charred boot were found near the entrance of the storeroom. The skeleton was lying in a prone position parallel to the south wall in the south end of the storeroom, with the head pointing west and the feet pointing east near the door. The body was lying primarily on its left side with the legs flexed so that the knees were at the lumbar level. The right arm was straight and fanned out from the body and the left arm was flexed. A mild

surface carbonization was present over most of the skeleton with much of the distal tibia and fibula burned off. The left hand had been severely burned and was shrivelled up and carbonized. The right hand and distal aspects of the ulnar and radius bones were missing having been burned off up to this point. The head was covered with a bizarre black leather hood.

Autopsy Findings

Examination revealed a skeletonized body that was essentially devoid of flesh from the maxillary area to the distal extremities. The head region, however, was covered with a leather mask which had been drawn up to just above the lower teeth (Fig. 3). The mask was finely tailored with openings for the eyes and nose and a heavy-duty zipper in the mouth area (Fig. 4a). When the body was found, the zipper was in the fully "opened" position (to the



FIG. 3—The head region is covered with a leather mask which is drawn up above the lower teeth.

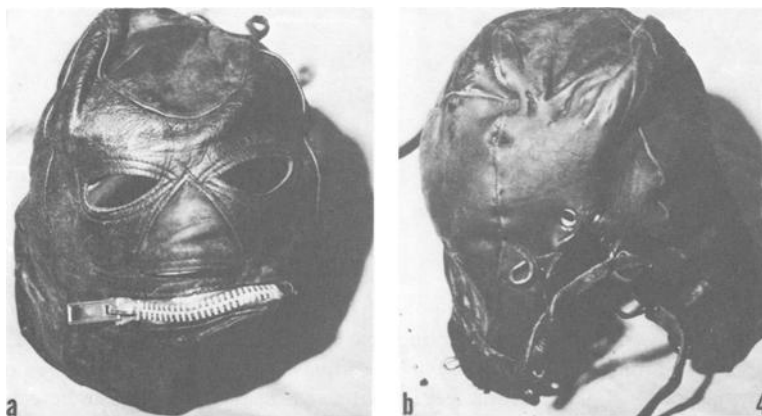


FIG. 4—Leather mask: (a) front of hood and (b) back of hood.

left). The back of the mask contained a series of metal grommets which were tightly laced with a leather tie (Fig. 4*b*). There was, however, a space between both edges of the mask, and light colored hair extruded through this space and out of the eye holes of the mask. The zipper region was displaced to eye level and the lower teeth appeared striking on a completely bared jaw. A carbon deposit was noted on the anterior surface of the jaw and extended up to the body of the jaw.

Following removal of the mask, it was noted that the jaws were bared just above the angles of the rami, bilaterally, and extended anteriorly to a point about 0.5 cm below the nose. The jaw was in an "open" position to about 25 to 30°. The features of the rest of the face were strikingly well preserved creating a bizarre contrast with the rest of the body (Fig. 5). The blonde hair was intact and parted from the right side and the eyelashes and the eyelids were still completely intact. There was bloody material in the right ear canal and over the entire external ear. A mass of caked blood was present just above the ala of the nose and extended over the bridge of the nose to the other side. The eyes were blue in color with slightly opaque corneas. The hair on the back of the head was saturated with dried blood.

Three wounds in the back of the head were consistent with bullet holes and labeled, A, B, and C. Wound A was present in the mid-occipital region and was filled with gunpowder, but the area around the wound showed no evidence of powder deposition or tattooing; Wound B had a stellate appearance and was located below and to the side of the first wound. There was no powder within the wound and no stippling or powder deposition around the wound. Wound C was located 8.5 cm inferior and 1.2 cm lateral to the first wound and contained gunpowder within the wound but no stippling or powder were present around the wound. Large cephalohematomas were present in the occipital region around Wounds A and C (Fig. 6). The hole in the occipital bone corresponding to Wound A exhibited internal bevelling and periosteal tattooing. A small piece of lead was present under the scalp just below Wound



FIG. 5—Head of victim following removal of mask. The jaws are bared just above the angles of the rami. Note the excellent preservation of the features of the face.

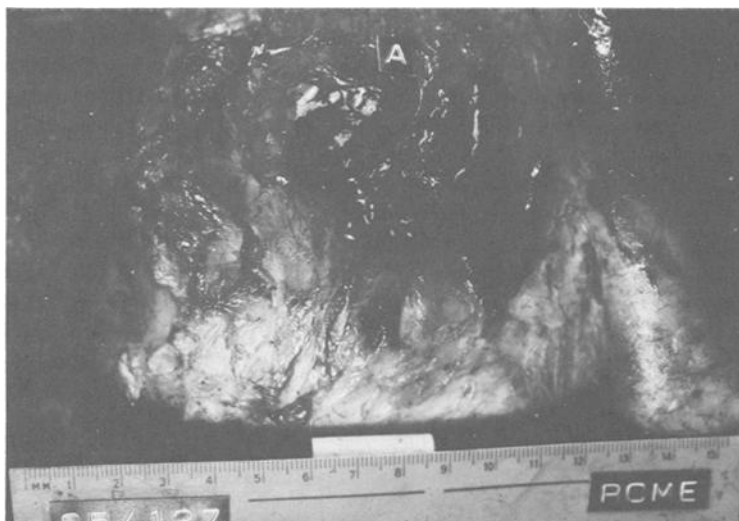


FIG. 6—*Cephalohematomas around gunshot wound.*

B and was shown to be a partial exit wound resulting from the shaving of the bullet during entrance in Wound A. The bullet of Wound A passed through the occipital lobe diagonally from superior-inferior to inferior-posterior then through the cerebellum to the posterior fossa where the remains of a small caliber bullet was found.

The spinous process and lamina of vertebra C2 were missing leaving somewhat jagged edges. The bullet in Wound C passed through the second cervical vertebra then through the spinal canal and exited through the anterolateral aspect of the second cervical vertebra. These edges were also very jagged and this area was infiltrated with blood. The spinal canal and the area around the wound were also filled with blood. A small part of the jacket of a bullet was present in the tract toward the neck region.

The entire skeleton contained a surface carbonization, but most of the bony areas in between showed no carbonization. The entire sternum, the cartilages of the ribs, and the anterior aspects of all the ribs, including many laterally placed, were missing—the ends of which appeared to be chewed or contained evidence of animal teeth marks. Straggly, frayed fibers characteristic of chewing were present all along the surface of the skeletal structures which included the ribs; areas of the humeri, tibia, and fibula; femur; and radius; and ulnar edges of the scapula and clavicles contained carbonized areas, but most of the areas inbetween were spared. A light carbonization was seen along the back, on areas where remnants of skin were present, and over the pelvic region.

A large loose, leather-like segment of skin, containing hair fibers containing a mild surface carbonization, was separated from the body and extended from the distal neck posteriorly to the lumbar region. The skin edges revealed a few straggly fibers and showed marked irregularities of the edges consistent with animal chew marks. There was also leatherized skin present on the dorsum of the left forearm which extended down to the finger region, the backs of which contained fine hairs. Leatherized segments of skin were also present over the right patella and left patella—both of which contained many hairs. Two transversely placed tears were present in the left patella region. Skin was also still present over the toes of the right foot. Most of the tibia and fibula of the left lower extremity had been burned off for a distance of about 230 cm from where the sole of the foot would have been located. The right

foot was almost totally disjointed from the tibia, being held together by skin on the fibula side. The toes showed evidence of burning with carbonization, and straggly fibers were present on the dorsum of the foot consistent with animal chew marks. A mild carbonization was also present in patches on the medial aspect. The distal phalanx of the fifth toe of the right foot and the tip of the fourth toe were missing. The ends of the ribs showed evidence of chewing by animals.

The left hand was severely burned, carbonized, and markedly shrivelled and the fingers were severely burned. A ring was present on the left ring finger and contained the etched letters "KdC" that was repeated continuously around the ring. The upper right extremity was burned off up to a point 75 cm from the distal aspect of the radial bone and showed carbonization only at the distal most aspect.

Toxicological Results

Toxicological examination of the brain revealed an ethanol concentration of 0.19%, the presence of lidocaine, and evidence of small amounts of cocaine.

Identification

The body was identified as that of a young, Norwegian fashion student who had been reported missing. This was initially done by dental means because all family members were living in Norway. A visual identification was made a few days later by the sister of the victim which was made possible by the excellent preservation of the facial features.

Discussion

The following information was submitted to the law enforcement officials investigating the case:

1. The death was caused by small caliber gunshot wounds to the cervical cord and brain and the manner of death was ruled a homicide.
2. Both gunshot wounds were contact wounds.
3. The trajectories were both slightly downward in direction from postero-superior to antero-inferior.
4. The autopsy findings showed that the victim was shot while he was still alive.
5. The skeletonization was essentially the result of small animals eating the flesh rather than a result of the conflagration "per se" because
 - (a) the skeletonization was clean with only a very mild carbonization of most of the skeleton with many areas devoid of carbonization,
 - (b) there was a total absence of carbonized flesh between the bones and within the body cavities, except for the small patches of skin described above,
 - (c) there was evidence of chewing activity made by small animals all over the remains with no disarticulation of the skeletal parts, and
 - (d) there was no evidence of knife or tool marks on the bone surface to indicate that the flesh was dissected from the bones by instruments.
6. The carbonization was due to attempts to burn the skeletal remains after the flesh was bared by the animals for the same reasons indicated above and because of the intense burning of the distal extremities with relatively no burning proximal to these areas.
7. There was no way to determine definitively whether the body was initially burned, in addition to the final burning, after the flesh was bared from the bones.

It was hypothesized that a mild burning was likely initially and may have "cooked" the flesh, thereby attracting small animals like raccoons to the site. In our experience, we have never encountered a case where all of the flesh of a murdered victim was completely eaten from the body leaving the skeleton completely intact. The excellent preservation of the head region was due to the tight placement of the leather mask around the head, and the irregular displacement of the mask up above the jaw with baring of the latter suggested that attempts to dislodge the mask were made by animals, since the flesh was bared as far superior as the lower aspect of the mask and chew markings were evident.

Police Investigation

About two days after the victim was found, the 23-year-old son of the U.N. official who owned the property where the victim was found expressed concern that his .22 caliber AR7 rifle may have been stolen. During the week, he offered various theories to the police: (a) perhaps a small caliber gun had been used, (b) the murderer was probably a chicken hawk (an older homosexual interested in sex with young people), and (c) that the murderer probably killed before, and so forth. He then rendered a detailed unsolicited account of his whereabouts. The police, therefore, became suspicious of his behavior and arrested him as a suspect. This was followed by an accusation that a former classmate friend did the killing, which finally led to his own confession that he was the killer.

He confessed that he shot the victim twice in the head with a .22 caliber AR7 rifle following several hours of a master-slave sadomasochistic ritual. According to his confession, he, a second person who was homosexual, and the victim (a known gay Norwegian fashion student), voluntarily drove to the U.N. official's estate for a party to engage in the sadomasochistic ritual. According to his confession, the ritual consisted of whippings, strappings, and sadomasochistic acts of various types on the fashion student, including the use of paraphernalia—one of which was a large rubber dildo. He indicated later that he and the second person walked the fashion student down the path to the cave where the second person engaged in sadomasochistic acts with the victim, and then ordered him to shoot the victim. He shot the victim twice in the back of the head with a .22 caliber AR7 rifle and attempted to burn the body using gasoline and logs.

They then took the victim's clothing and some paraphernalia, including the dildo, and disposed them along the road somewhere off the Palisades Interstate Parkway. He also indicated that about a week later he attempted to burn the body again. Other witnesses painted an even grimmer picture. The former friend and classmate of the confessed killer testified that the killer told him that it was like the "Gates of Hell," that he was the keeper of the gates, that both he and his homosexual accomplice had cut open the body, stuck a cup inside and tried to drink the blood, but it was pulpy and he spit it out, and that he wanted to start a scrapbook of this killing and other people he might kill.

The witness further testified that the confessed killer allegedly told him that you have to kill without emotion like you are lighting a cigarette or driving a car, and that when he went home following the incident, he slept like a baby. Before trial, the attorney of the confessed killer alleged that the victim was stabbed to death twice by the individual who accompanied the killer and that the victim was already dead before he was shot in the head by his client. He declared that a person cannot be convicted for killing a dead man. This was refuted during trial, since the autopsy findings clearly showed that the victim was alive at the time he was shot (Fig. 6).

Conclusion

The confessed killer was subsequently convicted of murder two, although an insanity defense was attempted. He was sentenced to a maximum term of 25 years to life in prison. In

spite of a complete investigation, there was insufficient evidence to arrest the person who the confessed killer claimed had indulged in the sadomasochistic ritual with the victim before the murder and who initiated the order for him to kill the victim. This alleged accomplice agreed to cooperate with the prosecution, if he was granted immunity, but this was refused by the prosecution. When he was subpoenaed to testify at trial, he invoked the Fifth Amendment.