

The Carnival Mask

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Recording session of AE:07-PE, carried out by Archival Research-Assistant Dr Jerome Reid on the 28th July, 20██.

Anomalous Entity number Zero-Seven dash PE, The Carnival Mask.

Zero-Seven is a two-toned, black and white carnival mask with two horn-like protrusions attached to its upper corners. A black tear drop pattern is noted on the white half of the mask. On the back, two fabric strips are attached, seemingly for tying the mask onto the wearer.

Comparison to standard carnival masks find that, with exclusion of the horns, Zero-Seven's base seems to pertain to Carnival stock characters; in this case, the design implies the stock character 'Pierrot'.

Samples taken from Zero-Seven during its rest state found the primary base of the mask fashioned with a mix of paper-pulp, animal leather, and animal glue. Further testing done on the samples found the leather, glue, and horns were derived from the ox breed 'Gendus Malti' or 'Maltese Ox'. Examination carried out by conservationists estimate the mask to have been constructed around the early to mid-19th century.

The item produces sound, seemingly constant save for two instances. This effect is observed by individuals within an estimated radius of one-point-five metres from Zero-Seven. Previous attempts to record this effect with conventional audio equipment have failed. Due to this, and agent testimonies following experiments, the Carnival Mask bears the item designation 'PE' due to the psychological and physiological effects observed.

Testing found the audio effect varied dependent on certain factors; these details can

be found within the test log regarding Experiment 07-PE-02, and will be provided further into the report as it is the most relevant information regarding Zero-Seven's audio effects.

Addendum 1: On the 11th and 12th February, two additional effects were noted:

On the 11th, hence referred to as Event 07-1, Zero-Seven secretes a red viscous liquid from the eye holes, simulating crying. Testing of this liquid has shown it to be a composite of ox and human blood. Attempts to identify its source have failed due to the chemical makeup of the samples being degraded. It is also noted the audio effect it produces is at its highest, being audible to any individual within the sphere of influence, not just those observed in testing.

On the 12th, hence referred to as Event 07-2, Zero-Seven enters its rest state, with the anomalous effect inert and the secretions having ceased.

Addendum 2: In Experiment 07-PE-05, an additional effect is observed should a subject wear Zero-Seven. Upon putting on the mask, the subject vocalises how they struggle to breathe and the audio effect becomes, quote, Deafening, end-quote. Prolonged exposure seems to form bruises and injuries consistent to a crushing event form across the wearer's body.

The test log pertaining to Experiment 07-PE-05, alongside additional notes, will be attached further into the report.

Hypothesis: Considering the significance of the event dates along with the effects observed in relation to the Anomalous Entity, it is not outside the realm of possibility that Zero-Seven is related to a historic event known as the Carnival Tragedy of 1823 on the island of Malta. Available records show this event to be a crowd crush incident whereby, Good Lord..., over one hundred lives were lost, primarily that of young boys. An accurate number of casualties from this event is not obtainable due to a lack of concrete documentation with various conflicting estimates. This absence of documentation is sadly not an uncommon occurrence, having been observed within many postcolonial governments.

However, further research is advised to confirm no malicious tampering through anomalous means.

Due to Zero-Seven bearing significant allusions to the incident, two hypotheses are proposed regarding the relationship between said event and the Carnival Mask itself:

Hypothesis A: Zero-Seven was created prior to the tragedy, and had influenced the event itself.

Hypothesis B: Zero-Seven was crafted following the event, and later obtained its anomalous properties.

With present evidence acquired by the Institute, Hypothesis A can be disregarded. Whilst there is a lack of primary sources relating to the Carnival Tragedy, what can be found in state archives and government documents indicate no observable link to the mask. Especially as, at the event itself, there was no mention of the anomaly present, nor reports of any of the observed effects. Ergo, Hypothesis B proves more likely.

Should any evidence be found which confirms or disproves one of these hypotheses, a supplement with the provided information will be attached at the end of this report.

Experiment 07-PE-02 Report

On the 15th of June 20██, the Institute's Board of Directors approved of the use of human test subjects to understand how exactly Zero-Seven's anomalous nature affects different individuals. This was decided following reports of inconsistent observations noted by staff and researchers assigned to Zero-Seven.

Initial experiment carried out by Dr Rayner Phillips had four agents stand individually at cardinal directions outside the Carnival Mask's area of effect before gradually walking towards it. Any agent who heard the effect was to stay on spot while others move further along.

The agents involved will be referred to by pseudonyms; North, East, South, West, respective of their location in the experiment. Information pertaining to the agents relevant to the test will be detailing where said agent was affected by the anomaly. All four agents were provided noise cancelling headphones so as to assure that what was heard was solely the anomaly and not outside interference.

Upon commencement of the test, Agent North stopped immediately upon stepping

into the area, hearing the effect at one-point-five metres from the Mask. Agent South stopped at one metre from the mask. Agent East stopped at approximately the zero-point-eight and zero-point-six metre mark. Agent West had to stand directly against the anomalous item.

After five minutes from when Agent West reached the Carnival Mask, agents were signalled to leave area of effect and be debriefed.

Agent 'North' (forty years old): North at the time of the experiment was a registered foster parent and had recently finalised adoption of their second child. North also volunteered for community youth programs such as [REDACTED]. No records of biological children. Upon entering Zero-Seven's field of influence, North 'heard' the auditory hallucination, gradually increasing in apparent volume despite not leaving position. North commented that the voices began to quote, Sound like my kids, end-quote.

Agent 'South' (fifty-six years old): South has had little to no contact with their still living offspring for the past thirteen years. South claims to have a decent relation with their godchild. South commented that the audio effect sounded like their godchild. South admitted they also heard the sound of their deceased son as well.

Agent 'East' (thirty-one years old): East claims to have no living offspring, biological or otherwise. However, they had donated material to assist a friend who had reproductive issues. When asked regarding why they had shifted in position during the experiment, East claimed the audio effect they experienced seemed to have faded in and out. Quote, Like they were underwater or something, end-quote.

Agent 'West' (twenty-nine years old): On initial questioning as to why West went right up to the item, the agent claimed they heard nothing when approaching the anomaly. However, approximately four minutes into waiting, West claimed to hear whispering, though they could not properly discern the source or the words. With regards to offspring, West admitted to having given up a child for adoption fourteen years prior. West commented, quote, Kid's got their lives, I got mine. No reason to bother them, end-quote.

A commonality observed between the exposed agents was that the auditory hallucinations seem to be that of multiple voices screaming, with the apparent volume increasing over time within the affected area. Linguistic experts exposed to Zero-Seven identified the primary languages of the vocalisations as English, Italian, and Maltese.

Observation: From the above experiment, it can be observed that Zero-Seven's effect pertained more to those with overall positive relationships with children. It seems more focused on the more emotional connections rather than purely biological. As seen, especially, with Agent North having the most visceral reaction at the farthest affected distance despite having no biological offspring. Whilst Agent West had almost no immediate or notable reaction to Zero-Seven's effect even when being physically the closest one to Zero-Seven.

Whether this effect is purely due to the emotional aspect Zero-Seven latches onto, or as a more cynic agent would say, is just because it wants to 'hurt more', is pure speculation at this stage. Any further testing to understand what relations Zero-Seven deems 'effective' have been denied by order of the Ethics Department.

Honestly, I think that was for the best. I doubt there's any scientific justification that can be given to subject a parent to what Zero-Seven causes.

[EDITOR'S NOTE: DUE TO CONTENTS OF TEST LOG, DISCRETION IS ADVISED WHEN VIEWING. SHOULD ANY RESEARCHER FEEL DISCOMFORT OR ANXIETY, CEASE EXAMINATION OF THE REPORT AND PROCEED TO THE NEAREST PERSONNEL RESOURCES FOR ASSISTANCE]

Experiment 07-PE-05 Test Log:

Conducted on the 30th of August, 20██, Lead Researcher Dr Rayner Phillips carried out Experiment 07-PE-05 with the goal of understanding the physical effects of Zero-Seven should a subject don the mask. The subject of this experiment is listed as Agent [...]. It seems the agent's name had been redacted in the transcript, as such, when the agent is referenced to within this report, they will be hence referred to by the pseudonym 'Eleusis'.

Agent Eleusis had been selec— I mean, volunteered for this test due to having no offspring and living as a self-proclaimed 'isolationist'. With no living family nor close bonds outside of some colleagues within the Institute, Eleusis provided a control test subject to limit Zero-Seven's effects as solely from being worn.

Prior to the experiment, Zero-Seven had been removed from its containment cell and placed in Observation Room Gamma, allowing the research team to observe the experiment without risk of being exposed to the anomaly themselves.

At the beginning of experiment, Eleusis had entered Observation Room Gamma and approached Zero-Seven, vocally confirming with researchers that they could not hear the anomalous hallucinations induced by Zero-Seven, including when standing against the Carnival Mask.

At the one-minute mark of entering the chamber, Eleusis was instructed to place the mask against their face, yet not to tie the fabric straps in place. Eleusis proceeded as instructed, agent commented it was awkward to hold, still no audible effect noted.

Two minutes from entering the chamber, with no discernible reaction, Agent Eleusis was instructed to secure Zero-Seven to their face using the fabric straps attached to the Carnival Mask. Eleusis did so, though initial complaints vocalised, quote, You lot try tying a knot behind your head, end-quote.

Four minutes from entering the chamber, Zero-Seven had been secured to Agent Eleusis' face. The agent commented on hearing something, clarification given that it sounded like crying. The effect consistent with previous tests carried out.

Within five minutes, Eleusis commented further on how the crying was, quote, Getting louder, end-quote. The research team noted that at this point Eleusis began taking shallow breaths. When inquired, Eleusis said, quote, It's just a lot okay? And you guys turning down the lights doesn't help!, end-quote. It should be noted at no point had the lighting of the chamber been reduced, suggesting a possible visual hallucination in effect. Eleusis began to grow erratic, shouting at the research team before struggling to remove Zero-Seven. The agent's recorded vocalisations had been redacted due to containing language too explicit for the report.

At approximately seven minutes into the experiment, Eleusis had collapsed, leading to a forced halt of the test. Zero-Seven had to be cut off the agent before medical intervention could be administered. Eleusis was tended to on-site before transferred to Medical for proper treatment.

Examination showed that bruises and minor fractures had manifested across the agent's body, particularly on extremities and torso. These injuries have been consistent with those observed on bodies of victims found in crowd crush and collapse events. Agent Eleusis had to be treated for oxygen deprivation.

Following treatment, and as of the time of this report, Agent Eleusis has made a full recovery.

The Carnival Mask was sent for restoration following the fabric straps being damaged to facilitate removal.

Observation: ... Apologies, I just... I needed a moment.

Following this experiment, two hypotheses had been proposed following the discovered physical effects of Zero-Seven.

The first proposal observed how it seemed that the Carnival Mask had 'latched' onto Eleusis to prevent removal, suggesting a level of sapience within the anomaly. This proposal was quickly dismissed as, on review, it was found that when Agent Eleusis had secured the mask in place, they had used a 'False Knot' commonly known as a 'Granny Knot'. This binding knot has known issues of either slipping open, or jamming in place when attempting to untie it. It would seem, in this case, the knot jammed, making removal difficult.

The second proposal on Zero-Seven's effects is observed when, in a follow up interview, the lead researchers took note of how Agent Eleusis was visibly uncomfortable when in an enclosed space. This is being suggested as evidence that Zero-Seven had induced claustrophobia on the agent via anomalous means. This, unlike the previous theory, is more plausible, if only just. In research papers, it was found that most survivors of crowd crush events would develop PTSD symptoms, with a recurring one being claustrophobia. As such, there is no confirmation whether this is an anomalous induced effect, or a natural response to the frankly traumatic event.

Proposals for further human testing on Zero-Seven's link to this claustrophobia effect have been suspended by the Ethics department until further notice.

Attempts made to track down and follow up with Agent Eleusis have proved difficult due to the redacted details. Although, considering what they had experienced, I don't quite blame them for wanting to forget this event. Regardless, a request was sent to Dr Phillips for any additional information to be provided if possible.

The current containment procedures advise that the Carnival Mask be locked within a standard anomaly containment cell, measuring no less than 5 metres across all sides. Zero-Seven is to be placed on a display stand in the centre. Personnel are instructed that no agent with close relations to children may be stationed near the cell due to possibility of being affected by the anomaly.

Despite containment within the [REDACTED] Quartz lined cell, Zero-Seven periodically acts up (note Event 07-1 and Event 07-2 for further details). As such, cleaning of the cell must be carried out. The substance produced by Zero-Seven is to be collected and subsequently disposed of, presumably via incineration, with exception of testing samples.

The fact that the [REDACTED] Quartz, a known dampener of Anomalous materials, seems to have no effect on the Carnival Mask is being researched further. Whether this is a unique trait of Zero-Seven, or whether the [REDACTED] Quartz is losing its neutralising effect, is vital information for the Institute, particularly if this could mean other, more volatile anomalies in containment might be 'resistant' to the [REDACTED] Quartz too.

Restorers who specialise in examining and conserving masks, particularly papier-mâché carnival masks, are to be brought in to examine Zero-Seven due to the potential damage which could occur following Event 07-1. Any requests for conservation intervention or repairs must be approved by both the Head Researcher and Site Manager.

At present, primary concern noted by conservationists has been the discolouration and moisture damage found where the secretions trail down the item.

Final Thoughts:

Considering Zero-Seven's effects and the obvious links to the aforementioned Carnival tragedy, it can be theorised that the Carnival Mask is meant to take the symbolic role of an effigy for grief.

This practice is fairly common; various cultures crafted effigies to be symbolically used to absorb painful emotions or even illness. A noted example of such practices could be found with the Saint Brigid's Crosses in Ireland, where the woven crosses were burnt at the end of the year to symbolise the cleansing of the homes they had been hung within.

This idea of the Carnival Mask being an effigy could be further argued with how the design of the base mask reflects the stock character 'Pierrot'. This character, originating from the early Italian theatrical genre of 'Commedia dell'Arte', was often linked in culture to the ideas of isolation and suffering.

The noted addition of the ox horns to the mask could be a way to further entrench a cultural link with the 1823 tragedy and the island where the event had occurred.

As observed with other Anomalous Entities such as Seven-Eight (The Photo Album) and Four-Nine (The Sweatpants), a variety of the specimens collected and examined within the Institute reflect concepts found within an archetypal image. In the case of Zero-Seven, the ox horns and carnival mask bring about a specific cultural idea, particularly in the context of the island it seemed to have originated from.

A running of wild beasts.

A trampling of starving children.

A stampede...

Of course, this is pure conjecture due to lack of supporting evidence. However, a copy of this report shall be sent to the Culture and Folklore Department to see if this avenue of thought is worth further exploration.

This has been Dr Jerome Reid's report on Anomalous Entity Zero-Seven dash PE, The Carnival Mask.

End of Report.