

“The Brunholt Head” © 2002

By Michael C. LaBossiere, ontologist@aol.com

Call of Cthulhu

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Introduction

This adventure is set in the modern day but with suitable modifications it could be played in any time period. The adventure sends the investigators into the Maine woods in search of a mysterious metal head. The adventure is written based on the assumption that the investigators are associated with an investigative TV show, but this is not essential to the adventure: it can be run on its own.

Keeper's Background

Sometime in the 13th century in Germany an unknown artisan created a brazen head and trapped within it a Servitor of the Outer Gods. This head was owned by various people until it was finally put up for auction by the House of Ausberg in the 1920s. The head was stolen by ghouls at the direction of a man named Hunderprest (see “The Auction” in Chaosium’s *The Asylum & Other Tales*, 1983). The head was recovered by investigators but its exact fate has been lost to history.

Throughout history, many were interested in the head. One man, a recent American immigrant named Hans Brunholt, had researched the head extensively and had even corresponded with Hunderprest about the artifact. Brunholt had also corresponded extensively with an Englishman named Harold Greshem. Greshem knew little of the head but fascinated Brunholt with his theories about the life energy of living creatures. Greshem sent Brunholt numerous diagrams of devices he had designed that were intended to capture and store said life energy in the way a battery stores electrical energy.

Greshem decided to conduct his experiments in a big way—he constructed several apartment houses in London in 1910 and equipped them with various versions of his “batteries.” He then arranged for people to die in the houses and examined the results. Unfortunately for Greshem, the authorities were somehow able to connect him with some of the deaths and him and his fellows were arrested in London. His houses were troubled places for years, at least until the Nazi bombings in WWII destroyed all but one of the them.

Brunholt, who was not involved directly in Greshem’s schemes, continued his research into both the secret of the head and Greshem’s batteries. To facilitate the “special” nature of his research, he purchased a patch of land in Aroostook County, Maine and had a small house built there in 1917.

Brunholt conducted his researches with fervor and dedication and even created several devices he patented and then sold. He used the money to purchase more equipment. In 1921 he had a graveyard set up on his property using the cover story that he was bringing the remains of his ancestors to his new home. This was thought odd, but his generous cash flow deterred serious inquiries.

In 1927 Brunholt created a refined version of one of Greshem's batteries and used it to trap the life energy of three people he had murdered by sealing them into the "crypt" in his "graveyard." Much to his delight, although it almost resulted in his own death, the specially prepared dead bodies were able to still move. After his risky observation, he resealed the tomb and set out to create the head.

Brunholt met with numerous failures in his attempt to create the head, some of which almost cost him his own life. Finally in 1931 he managed to create a functional head-one that would trap the life energy of a victim within it and preserve the victim's intelligence and memory. Unfortunately for Brunholt, he accidentally activated the head while admiring his work-his life energy was drained into it and his lifeless body fell to the floor.

With the location of the house unknown, Brunholt's body remains undiscovered until 1951 when a young hunter, Donald Trask, stumbled upon the house. Seeing the head resting on the table, Trask enters and touches it. The touch gives Trask a severe burn and he decides to leave the head alone.

Getting the Investigators Involved

It is assumed that the investigators are associated with an investigative show, Beyond the Unknown. The show examines various mysteries and presents their findings (in a diluted format) to the viewing masses. The investigators can work various roles associated with the show-the most obvious being field investigators.

At the end of every episode of Beyond the Unknown the host asks viewers to let the producers know about any strange things they would like to see investigated. Donald Trask will see an episode of the show, coincidentally a show on the mysterious brazen head, and call in. The important part of the conversation is: "I think I might have something interesting for you. Years ago, back in the 1950s, I saw something like one of those heads that I saw on your last show. It was pretty weird. Thought you might be interested." The producer will be interested, if only for a follow up, and will send the investigators to talk to Trask in person. Naturally, the show will pick up the tab for traveling.

If the campaign being run by the Keeper does not have the investigators involved with a TV show, then a new method will be needed to get the investigators involved. One option is to have the investigators researching the brazen head and managing to come across some information that leads them to Trask. Alternatively, they might know Trask and hear him relate the story.

Investigation

Initially the investigators will have little to work with-only what Trask can tell them. Further efforts might reveal more information.

Trask

Provided the investigators are friendly, Trask will convey the following story:

“Quite a few years ago, back when I was a young man, I was out hunting from a lodge in Aroostook county. I managed to find an old path someone had cut through the woods and followed it until I entered a rough clearing in the woods. There I saw an old house, a worn barn and what looked like graveyard. I took a look through the window of the house and saw this metal head resting on a table in then. Being young, I decided to go in and take a closer look. When I touched the head it felt like I was touching a burning chunk of ice-it felt both freezing and burning. Actually, it was even weirder than that-it kind of felt like something was chewing on my soul. Yeah it sounds weird, but that is how it felt. I still have the mark on my fingers-you can see that the skin on my fingertips is smooth.”

Trask is willing to tell the investigators where the house is, but will say that without him guiding them they probably won't find it (which is true). He's willing to go along with them to act as a guide. If asked if he has been back to the house he will say “No. That scared me. I'm only willing to go back now with you since I'm getting old and want to find out what was really going on.”

The House

If the investigators enter the lab they will find some intact papers and letters that will reveal the following: Brunholt was apparently obsessed with a legendary brazen head that would answer questions put to it. Brunholt seemed to be convinced that the way to create such a head was to trap the spirit of a person within a special metal head. The spirit, it was alleged, would have access to special knowledge and would convey that knowledge to the head's owner.

There are also scraps of letters from various people around the world dealing with occult and technical matters. The majority are from a man named Harold Greshem. These letters include many technical drawings and descriptions of devices, most of which will seem to be utter nonsense to anyone with knowledge of electronics and physics. The overall gist of these letters is that Greshem is describing how to build batteries for holding the souls of the dead.

There are also a few letters from a German named Hunderprest. These letters, in German, describe a brazen head that is supposed to answer questions put to it. The writer expresses confidence that his “special allies” will be able to secure the head for him. Hunderprest invites Brunholt to Europe in anticipation of having the head in his possession.

Some interesting scraps include:

“I am pleased to hear that you have overcome your reluctance to work on human beings. It is natural to feel some dismay-I, too, had to overcome some qualms. But you must bear in mind that we are in a great quest for knowledge and the things we do will be justified a thousand times over by our discoveries.”

-Letter from Greshem

“I have made another breakthrough in my battery design. I believe I was able to store part of the life energy of a subject for a short period of time. I simply must find some way to connect a means of communication to the battery-it will be the only way to be sure.”

-Letter from Greshem

“The head is a most wondrous item. It is said that it can answer any question put to it. I have tracked the head to its current location and have arranged for my special allies to acquire it...”

-Letter from Hunderprest

“The soul, then, as being immortal, and having been born again many times, and having seen all things that exist, whether in this world or in the world below, has knowledge of them all; and it is no wonder that she should be able to call to remembrance all that she ever knew about virtue, and about everything; for as all nature is akin, and the soul has learned all things; there is no difficulty in her eliciting or as men say learning, out of a single recollection -all the rest, if a man is strenuous and does not faint; for all enquiry and all learning is but recollection.”

-Plato's Meno

Maps

The following provides the details regarding the locations presented on the maps.

Area Map

The area map shows the area around the house. The area shown is in a wooded and isolated part of Aroostook County, Maine. The trees are predominantly pine-hence there is plenty of room between the trees with a thick layer of needles beneath them.

To The Lodge: The hunting lodge is located approximately two miles off the map to the south. The lodge is fairly rustic but is equipped with a radio, outhouses and two generators. It is usually empty of guests during the off season but is crowded during the hunting seasons.

The Hunting Trail: This trail has been worn down by years of hunting. It weaves among the trees and is fairly easy to lose without a guide or a keen eye.

The Old Path: This barely noticeable path was made years ago by Brunholt. Finding it without Trask would mostly be a matter of luck.

Pine Woods: The area is predominantly pine forest.

Clearing: This area was cleared by Brunholt. New trees have grown in but are considerably smaller than the older trees around them.

House: Brunholts house.

Barn: This structure was used by Brunholt to hold his livestock (going to town for milk, eggs and such would have been very inconvenient). The structure collapsed years ago under the weight of the Maine snows and is now a ruined shell. The bones of Brunholt's animals can be found within (they died of thirst).

Graveyard: Brunholt's graveyard. He buried those he killed in the course of his experiments here and he even went to the trouble to put up crosses. In the center of the graveyard is a well built

House Map

The house is an old structure and has clearly not been maintained for decades. The roof has collapsed into the attic.

House Basement

Cells 1-3: This is where Brunholt kept his victims. He had connections with very unscrupulous characters who were able to provide him with subjects for his experiments. The cells are empty. Each one is equipped with a padlock. The interior of each cell shows signs of escape attempts-the wood is scratched and worn.

Storage: This area was used to store food and supplies. Nothing useful is left here-squirrels and age have taken care of everything.

Lab: The lab is full of rusted equipment, dried chemicals and various other items. Some of it is recognizable as fairly conventional equipment and items but other items are odd contraptions of very unusual parts. There are sheaves of notes in the room, most are unreadable because of age and mistreatment at the paws of squirrels. However, there are some that are legible including a design for an incredibly efficient battery that could be worth quite a bit of money. Also in the lab are some surviving papers that might prove interesting to the investigators. These are detailed above.

House First Floor

Living Room: The living room contains a few items of rotted furniture

Table: A rough pine table on which sits the head. On the floor, amidst the debris, are the bones of Brunholt.

Fireplace: A stone fireplace.

Bedroom: The bedroom contains crude furniture. In the dresser is a badly rusted .38 revolver and a box of rusty shells.

Kitchen: A rough kitchen complete with a small stove.

The Crypt

The crypt is a well built structure composed of mortar and local granite. It seems much more solid than a typical crypt-almost bunker like. The door is made of very thick pine that is bound with metal straps. A large rusted padlock keeps the door secure. The lock can be broken fairly easily by striking it with a stout implement. Within the crypt are three special skeletons.

Action

The main action of the adventure will occur if the investigators decide to open the "crypt." If they do so, they will see the skeletons lying on the floor, wrapped in wire, with their finger bones worn down from scratching on the door. The skeletons will, of course, rise up to attack the investigators.

There should be little action in the house, unless one of the investigators decides to touch the head.

Conclusion

The adventure comes to an end when the investigators conclude their examination of the grounds. If the investigators deal with the "BP" skeletons they should receive a 1D3 Sanity Award. For recovering the head they should receive another 1D3 Sanity Award.

New Being

“Battery Powered” Skeletal Dead

Char	Rolls	Averages	#1	#2	#3
STR	2D6	7	8	7	6
CON	N/A	--	--	--	--
SIZ	2D6+6	13	13	12	11
INT	1D6	3	2	2	1
POW	1D6	3	4	3	2
DEX	3D6	10-11	12	11	9
Move:	7				
HP	See Below				
Average Damage Bonus:	None		--	--	--
Weapons:	Fist 1D3		50%	50%	50%
Sanity Loss:	0/1D6				

Description: These skeletons are similar to those on page 183 of the 5th edition of *Call of Cthulhu*. Like the “normal” skeletons, the “BP” Dead are immune to criticals, impales and such. Instead, each successful attack has a 4% chance per point inflicted of shattering the skeleton. Unlike a normal skeleton, a “BP” Dead is animated by stored life energy. Such Each skeleton has an odd metal device embedded in the base of its skull linked to wires that wrap around the other bones. Inspection of the device will show that it is similar in some ways to an old fashioned battery but that there are parts that seem to be utterly functionless yet truly odd (such as bizarrely shaped pieces of metal that seem to twist in impossible ways). There are also unusual marks on the wires and battery device. A successful Occult roll will reveal that the marks seem similar to occult marks from the 13th century that deal with controlling the spirits of the dead.

“BP” skeletons are created by attaching the special “battery” to the still living body of the intended victim. The victim is then killed. The battery absorbs and stores the life energy, which retains roughly one third of the intelligence and power of the living person. These creatures tend to feel great rage at their fate and will usually attack any living creature they encounter.

An examination of a “battery” by a suitably knowledgeable individual will reveal that according to known science and engineering, the battery simply should not function at all.

New Item

The Brunholt Head

The Brunholt head appears to be a human head and neck made out of a combination of iron and brass metal parts. The parts are held together by bolts and screws. The jaw is articulated and contains ivory teeth and a leather tongue. The eyelids are made of fine brass and retract to reveal glass eyes.

The head contains the trapped life energy of Brunholt (INT 17 POW 14). Brunholt, or what is left of him, can dimly sense the world through the mechanisms of the head and he can also cause the mouth and eyes to move. Brunholt can also drain life energy from those who touch the head-he expends a magic point and matches his POW against the

person and if he wins he does 1D3 points of damage (felt as a freezing burn) and gains 1D3 MP from the victim. The victim can avoid further attacks by simply letting go of the head.

Attempts to take apart the head will prove very dangerous-doing so will cause the equivalent of a psychic explosion inflicting 1D6 physical damage and 3D6 points of damage to the magic points of those within 30 feet. If the head is x-rayed it will be found to contain a bizarre collection of mechanisms and devices-some seem to be functional and comprehensible (such as the main battery-like unit) but others seem to be incomprehensible.

Seeing the head costs no sanity. Touching the head and being attacked by it costs 0/1D4 sanity.

Handouts

“I am pleased to hear that you have overcome your reluctance to work on human beings. It is natural to feel some dismay-I, too, had to overcome some qualms. But you must bear in mind that we are in a great quest for knowledge and the things we do will be justified a thousand times over by our discoveries.”

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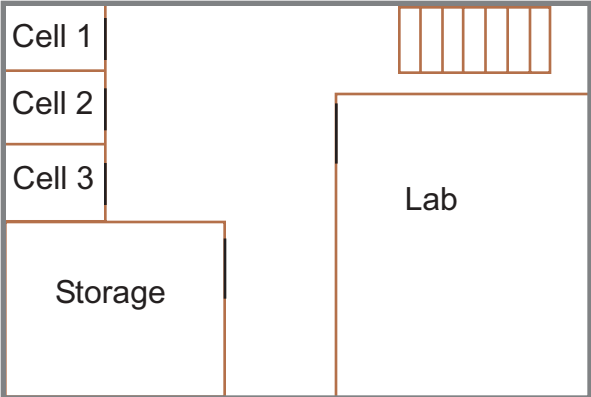
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Brunholt Head Maps



House Basement



House First Floor

