

The Case of the Dead Man's Hand

A Rippers Adventure by Pythagoras (<http://www.hardpoints.de>)

1 Introduction

This adventure is an investigation/research adventure that can be played if the PCs are looking for a villain whose trail they have lost. It takes them to Paris, where a ghostly killer trails an eccentric group of gamblers.

2 Adventure Hook

The PCs investigate their nemesis and find that he had a close ally in the past – a voodoo witch doctor called Guillaume Crâne. The doctor was known for his trademark; leaving a hand of four Jokers on the bodies of the people he killed. However, Crâne was slain by the Paris lodge 4 years ago. While this information seems to be a dead end an interesting news item from Paris catches the PCs' eyes:

Bizarre Gamble Ends Tragically

Yesterday, M. Jaques Hulot, a man of considerable wealth, was found dead in his apartment in Paris. Apparently, he had died of a heart attack but, terribly enough, he held four Poker cards in his hand, each a Joker.

The bizarre death has caused the friends of M. Hulot to fear for their lives. Members of the rather tasteless Club Morbide, the three nobles made a bet with Hulot that the one to live longest should inherit the belongings of the others.

Originally intended as a morbid joke, the bet now turns into a deadly serious business. The police has the other three men under surveillance and is investigating the possibility of a murder case.

3 Investigations in Paris

The other three members of the Club are found easily enough but each is dogged by a policeman in civilian clothing (Constable, pg. 119) who will be suspicious of people wearing heavy coats and ripper claws.

- Charles Laplace is a middle aged man with fine but spoilt clothing. He is a gambler and a drunk, currently half-mad with fear for his life.
- Gustave Chevalier de Pulette is a violent military man beyond the prime of his life. He will react aggressively but without any real power.
- Napoleon Escroc is a small and weasel-like man, who pretends to be afraid but who is really behind the whole thing (Innocent, pg. 119 but with Persuasion d8, Notice d8, Investigation d8). Background research reveals considerable gambling debt.

4 The Real Story

Escroc hired a group of goons to help him kill off his friends to pay his considerable debt. The goons are not allies of the Cabal but have gained control over the ghost of Guillaume Crâne. They found a voodoo doll that the vile mage used to save his spirit from hell and stay in this world. Unfortunately, this anchor allows those who hold it to control the dead man.

Crâne was used to scare Hulot to death. Since leaving his signature was such a trademark of the voodoo master, his ghost is able to manifest old wrinkled Joker cards and does so by reflex.

However, Crâne is not happy with his current state and if the PCs help him, he is sure to pay them back.

Guillaume Crâne, Ghost

Wild Card

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d12, Strength -, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d6, Intimidation d12, Spellcasting d8

Charisma: +0, **Pace:** 8, **Parry:** 6, **Toughness:** 5

Special Abilities:

▀ **Aethereal:** only affected by magic, can walk through walls

▀ **Fear (-1)**

▀ **Ghostly Touch:** Deals d12 damage

▀ **Spellcasting:** 30 power points, Armour (green glow), Burst (ice storm), Entangle (sudden freezing creates ice crystals)

Tactics: Cast Armour and Entangle before entrance. Then pick off anybody still mobile before closing in on the entangled ones.

5 Strike and Counterstrike

When Escroc finds out that the PCs are investigating, he has his allies send out Crâne against the PCs. The latter should be able to subdue the ghost who will beg for his life and tell the PCs how he is used.

The PCs can easily find the home base of the villains, an abandoned warehouse just outside the city and on the banks of the Seine. The warehouse is manned by 2 crooks per PC (treat as Cossack guards, pg. 122) armed with rifles and knives. Half of them is on guard, gaining cover from the windows.

6 Wrap-Up

Once the PCs control the voodoo doll, they also control the ghost and can interrogate him. They might also make a deal with him and release him in some area where he can do no harm. In any event, the ghost knows the aliases of his former partner, one of which leads the PCs on their trail again.