

The Collector of Tomes

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

Overview

Use this adventure as an added complication to a research in ancient knowledge. The PCs hear about a mysterious collector of ancient tomes, who is said to have exactly the information the PCs are interested in. However, once the PCs arrive at the site, they find that the collector is also interested in collecting the brains of sages and other well-educated beings in his collection of jars.

Introduction

During a research project for historical or supernatural knowledge, the PCs find out that they require a certain rare medieval tome that is considered practically lost. However, an antiquarian claims to have sold many rare books to a certain Comte de Beautemps. This eccentric collector lives in the French town of Loches and might help the PCs to access the book.

Contacting the Comte

Contact to the Comte is easy enough, since the postal address is known. A telegram that in any way suggests that the PCs are

intelligent people or seekers of knowledge will get an excited answer. The Comte will be quick to invite the PCs to his manor in Loches.

A Quick History of the Comte de Beautemps

Abelard de Beautemps, then known as Comte de Beaux-sur-Tombes was a conservative noble quite active on the eve of the French Revolution. A cruel master to his peasants, the Comte was feared and hated. When the masses rose against the king, the Comte was using his vast fortune to equip soldiers that he used to eradicate rebels wherever he found them. He was executed on the Guillotine and his body thrown into the Seine. The next night, the wicked noble rose as a vampire, having his head sewn back on by a loyal servant. This very servant also became the first meal of the Comte.

Today the Comte lives in seclusion, hateful of the 3rd Republic. He uses money he steals from others to pay for his vast collection of books. He also abducts foreign sages and scientists to extract their brains. His goal is to create a powerful device



from these brains that can be used to invent powerful weapons to overthrow the government.

Local Opinion about de Beautemps

The Comte knows how to hide his hateful nature well and the locals all speak highly of the man. While he lives a secluded life, he pays well for the many things he buys from the locals, making him a popular customer to the merchants. Also, he is quite popular with the director of the local prison, because he hires many former inmates, which keeps them out of trouble. Unfortunately, this philanthropy has a sinister background. The supplies are used for his vile experiments and the inmates are the core of a powerful army of thralls.

Beautemps Manor

The manor of Beautemps is just outside the village of Loches. The building is old and looks somewhat decayed from the outside but is quite luxurious inside. An interesting feature is that most rooms are crowded with curiosities from all over the world. Also, most rooms contain at least one bookshelf.

Rooms

The following map shows the ground floor of the manor.



Map 1: Manor Ground Floor

The **Kitchen** is typically off-limits to guests. Here food is prepared and this is

also the place where the henchmen on duty typically stay most of the time.

The **Smoking Room** is a place for discussions, stout drinks, and – of course – the nasty habit of smoking. The place reeks of tobacco and anybody of low vigour is likely to feel sick after a while.

The **Dining Room** is the place where food is served. Typically, it is accessed via the gallery and left via the smoking room.

The **Gallery** is somewhat empty but the walls are lined with many small paintings of ancient French noblemen. The Comte claims to know little of his ancestors. In fact, some of them were even his contemporaries!

The **Stables** are filled with all kinds of trash. Hidden in one of the boxes are poisonous spiders, which are fed regularly by one of the servants.



Map 2: Manor Second Floor

The **Bedroom** of the Comte is reached by walking through his laboratory. The bedroom is an untidy mess without anything of real interest.

The **Laboratory** is the place where the Comte extracts the brains of those he slays. Only extensive search (*Notice-1*, at least 1 hour) and knowledge in medicine (*Heal-1*) will identify the purpose of this room.

There are three **Guest Rooms**. These are nothing special, except for one interesting feature. There is a small opening (*Notice-3*, -1 if searching actively), that allows the Comte to let a trained poisonous spider into the room to kill his guests.

The room with **Chemical Supplies** is really a storeroom for the extracted brains. The door to it is locked (*Lockpicking-1*)

and quite robust. It cannot be broken open without a lot of noise.

Forces of Evil

Within the house, the following opponents reside:

- ◎ The Comte himself (see below)
- ◎ 5 paid lackeys (Rippers, pg. 130), who act as butler, gardener, cook, stableboy, and manservant. All are “reformed” criminals and have rather clumsy manners. The servants really look like tough thugs that have been put into good clothing. They know the true nature of their master but stay with him for the money.
- ◎ 2 servitor mummies hidden in a crate in the stable. These are brought out when the need arises (see below). The mummies follow the command of the Comte and will become inactive once he dies.

The Vampire’s Plan

When expecting visitors, Beautemps will spend the day in a secret tomb about 10 kilometres from Loche to avoid strange questions. If the PCs arrive before nightfall, the servants will have them wait in the smoking room and give them food and drinks. The butler will tell the PCs that his master is in Orléans trying to buy a book.

Arrival

When Beautemps arrives (without a book!), he will tell the PCs how disappointed he is that somebody bought the book before him. If the PCs insist they can make a *Notice*-2 check to find out that this is a lie.

The Comte will spend the evening with the PCs eating and talking and revealing all kinds of interesting information about history and the supernatural (in which he claims not to believe). Ask the players if they want to go to bed when tired. If not, they will gain additional information but will also gain a level of fatigue due to the additional wine.

Spider Assault

When the PCs finally sleep, the Comte will have his servants activate the mummies in the stable and bring him the poisonous spiders. These will be put into the PCs’ rooms through a tiny opening. The spiders are trained to bite those in the room, so all PCs will have to make a Vigour-1 check. On a raise, there is no effect. A successful roll means another level of fatigue, a failure means 2 levels of fatigue.

Tactics

One mummy together with a servant will rush each of the two most dangerous-looking PCs. The other three servants and the Comte will work to contain the rest (fighting defensively) until the mummies are ready to take on the next person.

Comte de Beautemps

Beautemps looks like a French Einstein, wild hair, friendly smile and sloppy clothing. He is kind and soft-spoken, getting excited only when talking about books. This façade hides a bloodthirsty monster that is utterly selfish. The guillotine scar is hidden carefully under a woollen scarf.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d12, Vigour d10

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d8, Healing d12, Knowledge (Supernatural) d10, Knowledge (Books) d10, Persuasion d10, Stealth d8

Cha: +2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Tough:** 9

Special Abilities:

◎ **Bite** (d12+2)

◎ **Sire** (Rippers pg. 133)

◎ **Undead:** +2 vs. shaken, no wound penalty, no called shots, half damage piercing

◎ **Weakness (Garlic):** -2 Fighting

◎ **Weakness (Sunlight):** 2d10 per round

◎ **Weakness (Cold Iron):** +4 damage



