

## St Margaret Ward Catholic Academy

### English Department

#### Voodoo by Fredric Brown.

- Find out the meaning of the word 'voodoo'. What do you think might happen in a story with this title?
- Read the story and complete the tasks below.

Mr Decker's wife had just returned from a trip to Haiti – a trip she had taken alone – to give them a cooling off period before they discussed a divorce.

It hadn't worked. Neither of them had cooled off in the slightest. In fact, they were finding now that they hated one another more than ever.

'Half,' said Mrs. Decker firmly. 'I'll not settle for anything less than half the money plus half the property.'

'Ridiculous!' said Mr Decker.

'Is it? I could have it all you know. And quite easily too. I studied voodoo while in Haiti.'

'Rot!' said Mr Decker.

'It isn't. And you should be glad that I'm a good woman for I could kill you quite easily if I wished. I would then have all the money and all the real estate, and without any fear of the consequences. A death accomplished by voodoo cannot be distinguished from death by heart failure.'

'Rubbish!' said Mr Decker.

'You think so? I have wax and a hatpin. Do you want to give me a tiny pinch of your hair or a fingernail clipping or two – that's all I need – and let me show you?'

'Nonsense!' said Mr. Decker

'Then why are you afraid to let me try? Since I know it works, I'll make you a proposition. If it doesn't kill you, I'll give you a divorce and ask for nothing. If it does, I'll get it all automatically.'

'Done!' said Mr. Decker. 'Get your wax and hatpin.' He glanced at his fingernails. 'Pretty short. I'll give you a bit of hair.'

When he came back with a few short strands of hair in the lid of an aspirin tin, Mrs. Decker had already started softening the wax. She kneaded the hair into it, then shaped it into the rough effigy of a human being.

'You'll be sorry,' she said, and thrust the hatpin into the chest of the wax figure.

Mr. Decker was surprised, but he was more pleased than sorry. He had not believed in voodoo, but being a cautious man he never took chances.

Besides, it had always irritated him that his wife so seldom cleaned her hairbrush.

- Whose hair has Mr Decker brought back in the lid of the tin?
- Where did Mr Decker find that hair?
- How does Mr Decker feel about his wife's death?
- What does it mean to say that someone has been 'hoist on their own petard'? **CHALLENGE**  
– where does this term come from?
- Write your own story in which someone is hoist on their own petard.

In your writing, you must:

include dialogue;

use dashes for parenthesis;

use a simile;

begin at least two sentences with adverbs.