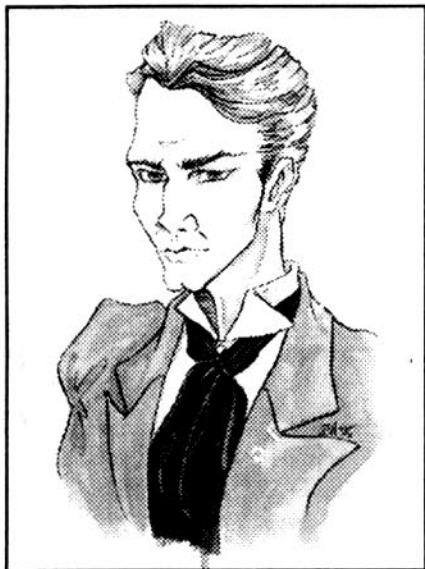




FROM THE
GM'S FORGE

The Good,

Artwork by Bonnie Hill © 1995
Written by Donald Bryneisen © 1995

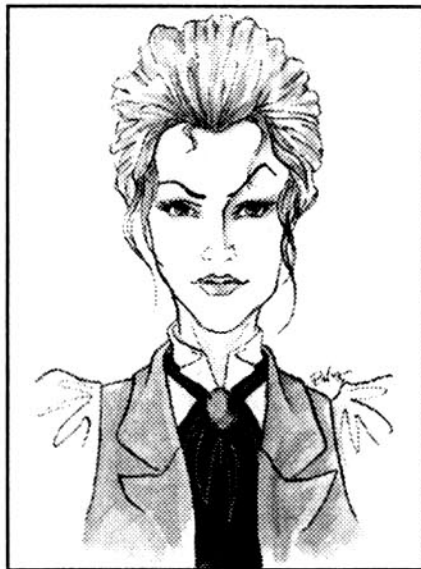


Dr. Quentin Talbot

Occupation: Archaeologist
Skills: Archaeology, Ancient History/Writing
Motivation: Acquiring Knowledge
Weakness: Academic Zeal

Dr. Talbot is the youngest son of a prominent British family. He earned a Doctorate at Cambridge where he taught for several years. In his 37th year Talbot went on an extended sabbatical from his teaching position to join an expedition in search of the tomb of the fabled Egyptian mage Ramna-Tor. The tomb, when found, contained many artifacts including several scrolls. The sarcophagus of the mage, however, was empty.

Soon after the discovery of the tomb, a rash of mysterious deaths swept the expedition's camp with the victims' bodies found in attitudes of extreme agony with looks of utter terror on their faces. Fearing the outbreak of some new plague, the expedition hurriedly packed up and returned to London. The deaths followed it there, with most of the victims coming from the slums and other lower-class sections of the city. Several of the expedition members have also met with gruesome ends, the most recent being a Professor Ashbury-Brighton, a close friend and colleague of Talbot's, who died with his wife when their brand new horseless carriage inexplicably swerved off a bridge into the Thames. At the funeral, Talbot was reported to have been unaffected by the death of his friend, and expressed the desire to get back to his study of the scrolls brought back from Egypt. He has locked himself in his study in order to accomplish this, refusing to see anyone, including the police, who are investigating the rash of deaths. □



Lindy Monroe

Occupation: Crusading Newspaper Reporter
Skills: Investigation, deductive reasoning
Motivation: To find the truth
Weakness: Kind-hearted, impulsive

Lindy, an investigative reporter for the *New York Daily Sentinel*, was sent to work for the paper's branch office in London. Although her superiors, wary of upsetting the wrong people, tried to limit her assignments to "Ladies-Oriented" subjects, Lindy still managed to find time to uncover some juicy scandals among the upper crust. She also made lasting friendships with several prominent women, and is reputed to be romantically involved with an English peer. It is because of this that she is able to move about virtually unimpeded among the higher social echelons.

Lindy was assigned to cover the rash of deaths in London's slums when she was contacted by one of her friends. The woman, whose husband financed the expedition to Egypt, informed Lindy that Dr. Talbot had mentioned being on the brink of attaining "Unimaginable Power" at a dinner party some days back, and had witnessed the deaths of Ashbury-Brighton and his wife, and was reported to have laughed as he watched their car sink into the Thames taking them with it. Lindy was also directed to a mental hospital where Talbot's former Chambermaid Sarah is being kept under observation. Based on the testimony of these two women and others, Lindy suspects that Talbot is somehow involved in the rash of deaths and is currently seeking evidence to prove his guilt. □



Sarah Templeton

Occupation: Housemaid
Skills: Cleaning, serving
Motivation: To live comfortably
Weakness: Romantic daydreams

Sarah has been secretly in love with the dashing Dr. Talbot for years. Her affections have not been returned in any way by the doctor, yet Sarah is blinded to this by her romantic notions and has often told her fellow servants that "one day he'll be able to freely admit his love for me, and then we can be married!"

When Talbot returned from Egypt, he was a changed man, preoccupied with deciphering the recovered scrolls to the exclusion of all else, and he no longer smiled or gave his customary kind word to Sarah or other members of the staff. The doctor also began receiving an increasing amount of late-night visitors who were always accompanied by "a smell like out of a charnel house!" It was during one of these visits that Sarah witnessed the event that drove her temporarily insane. Investigating a crash from her master's study, she saw two young girls strapped securely in chairs while her master stood reading from a scroll in the corner. A shadowy figure materialized and enveloped the girls, and when it departed, they were dead, their bodies reduced to emaciated husks. This proved too much for Sarah's fragile mind and she fainted away screaming. She awoke in St. Catherine's Asylum babbling about the devil loose in Cambridge and stealing souls. Her rantings were considered to be delirious until she was discovered by Lindy Monroe, who talked to her and began to piece together exactly what was occurring in the Talbot house. □



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The Bad,

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Ramna-Tor

Occupation: Ancient Egyptian Mage

Skills: Dark Magic

Motivation: To enslave mankind

Weakness: Weak from passage of centuries

Ramna-Tor was a mage of the first dynasty in Egypt where he served as advisor to the Pharaohs and used his magic to insure their victory in battle. Growing tired of serving those he saw as inferior, he gathered an army of both the living and the dead, and was only defeated by an alliance of wizards. He was interred with honors appropriate to his former position, but the warding spell which had kept him from this plane was broken by Talbot's 1893 expedition. Tor immediately drained the life energies of several people in the camp in order to revitalize his powers and to reanimate his mummified corpse, and would have killed Talbot too if he had not realized he would need a guide of sorts in the strange new world of the late 19th century. Using mind control techniques, he directed the Doctor to have his mummy shipped in secret to England along with several artifacts from his tomb, including the scrolls.

Tor regularly has Talbot bring victims to his home, as venturing too far from his body weakens Tor severely. Often this is not possible, and Tor must venture out into the city to hunt, appearing before his victim as some horrible nightmare creature; this is how he dispatched Professor Brighton when the Professor began to suspect Talbot. Tor has planted in Talbot's mind the idea that the scrolls brought back from Egypt contain the secrets of immortality and cosmic power, which help him maintain his hold over the Doctor. □



Lady Regina Ashton

Occupation: Titled Noblewoman

Skills: Seduction, Deceit

Motivation: Lust for power

Weakness: Overconfidence, Braggart

As a child, Lady Regina was coddled and pampered to the extent that she became quite spoiled. Seeking to somehow tame their wild offspring, Lord and Lady Ashton arranged for Regina to marry the son of a neighboring landholder. The marriage was a loveless one and ended three years later when Regina's husband was killed during a hunt, leaving his young wife to inherit his vast holdings. Scarcely two months after her husband's death she shocked her family by embarking for Africa with a man of questionable reputation for a year long trek across the continent. Her family and most of polite society turned their backs on Lady Regina, but she didn't care; her late husband's estate would support her comfortably for the rest of her life, and for companionship she gathered about herself a group of women who shared her ideals, including Lindy Monroe.

Lately, Lady Regina has been a strong advocate for equal rights for women. However, her plans do not stop with merely obtaining the right to vote; no, Lady Regina has plans for the rise of a matriarchy that would rule over the Empire. Lady Regina made the acquaintance of Dr. Talbot at the home of a friend and learned of the scrolls. She is aware that they grant their possessor great cosmic power, although at present, she is ignorant as to what the power may be. She does know that it is only a matter of time before Talbot falls under her spell enabling her to learn the scrolls' full secrets. □



Dimitri Stavros

Occupation: Dealer in Rare Antiquities

Skills: Deception, Stealth

Motivation: Desire for wealth

Weakness: Greed

Stavros runs a small, successful shop in his home village in Greece when not out working some dig, when the shop is overseen by his sister. The shop deals in rare artifacts which are eagerly snapped up by tourists. Most of the artifacts are carefully crafted forgeries designed to fool the uneducated, but the shop also has several genuine articles to sell for a premium price. Unknown to the general public is the fact that the shop also does a booming trade in fencing items stolen from museums and private collections. To protect himself, Stavros puts potential customers through a rigorous background check. Failure means that the client is turned away, or in some extreme cases, murdered. With a body toned by years of hard labor, and the looks of a classical Greek god, Stavros is a popular figure both with the ladies and with the leaders of archaeological expeditions who are impressed with his knowledge of times past. His beaming smile and jolly wit, however, hide the soul of a viper.

Recently, Stavros was approached by a group calling themselves the Black Order who desired that he obtain for them several items from the Talbot dig in Egypt, with an emphasis on the scrolls recovered. Stavros traveled to England and used contacts there to obtain a position as butler in the Talbot household, where he awaits his chance to steal the scrolls. □



FROM THE
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And The Ugly

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The Black Order

Occupation: Mysterious Cult

Skills: Mostly unknown, but ritual murder has been hinted at.

Motivation: Unknown

Weakness: Unknown

Very little is known about this group aside from the fact that they are quite secretive about their activities, and are purported to have members all around the world. Attempts to infiltrate the group have all failed, and the whereabouts of their headquarters remains a mystery. The sign of the order; a black pentagram with a clenched fist at the center has been found at the sites of several gruesome murders which has lead authorities to believe that the group may be a cult of assassins similar to India's Thuggee.

Members of the order, when they have been seen, wear long ebony robes with hoods that obscure the wearers face. Although the group is believed to be primarily male, some women may also be members as evidenced by an encounter with Police in 1894, in London. A member of the order was briefly cornered after the murder of a Magistrate and was described as speaking in a decidedly feminine voice. The voice was also described as being very cultured, which has lead to fears that the group may have members in the aristocracy and is planning an overthrow of the Government. □



Nightwalkers

Occupation: Undead servants of Ramna-Tor

Skills: Seduction, great physical strength

Motivation: Obtain life energies for their Master

Weakness: Fire, prolonged exposure to sunlight

Realizing that he would need agents, Ramna-Tor has turned many of his victims in the city's slums into Nightwalkers. The vast majority of these are prostitutes who use their seductive skills to draw in their prey.

Nightwalkers resemble normal living humans save for very pale skin tone and vacant staring eyes. Their minds are almost completely gone, taken over by the power of their Dark Master. Despite this, they can be made to recognize former friends and relations if Tor so desires, as well as interact with others as if still alive. Intensive questioning will reveal the deception, and the creature will attempt to kill its victim quickly, then escape. A Nightwalker will first gain the trust of its victim before striking, usually in a secluded place. It will then absorb the life energies of the victim into itself to be transferred later to Tor. Some of the energy is retained after this transfer in order to sustain the Nightwalker's "life." The victim either dies, or is turned into another Nightwalker.

Nightwalkers are also endowed with great strength in order to defend themselves. Due to their undead state, Nightwalkers are immune to most weapons, but can be destroyed by exposure to fire. Likewise, they must hide from the daylight as the sun can burn them after prolonged exposure. If a Nightwalker is "killed" while still retaining energies from a recent victim, this energy will be dissipated in an explosive manner. □



Hell Rats

Occupation: Animal Minions of Ramna-Tor

Skills: Stealth, speed, poisonous bite

Motivation: To gather intelligence for their master, kill his enemies

Weakness: Fire, most human weapons

Hell Rats resemble normal rats except that they are 25% larger and come from an alternate dimension. Ramna-Tor uses them as his "Eyes and Ears" to canvass the whole of the City of London as well as other areas he is interested in, such as Cambridge, where he uses them primarily to keep tabs on Dr. Talbot while he is engaged elsewhere. The rats either communicate back to Tor what they observe via telepathy or, in some cases, link their minds with his so that he sees what they see, hear what they hear.

Their bite contains a venom extremely poisonous to humans that kills within several minutes if not treated quickly. They attack either singly or in overwhelming swarms. In most cases, they will choose escape over confrontation if the intelligence they carry is in jeopardy. Their speed and stealth makes them extremely difficult to catch, but they can be killed using conventional means with the exception of poisons and baited traps. (They're too smart for that!) □