

The Millionaire's Special

by Adam Sauntlett

Sample file

TRAIL OF CTHULHU

The Millionaire's Special

The Millionaire's Special is a *Trail of Cthulhu* mini-adventure set on the RMS *Titanic* written by Adam Gauntlett.

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A *Trail of Cthulhu* scenario set aboard the Titanic.

HOOK

The protagonists are invited to a private viewing of one of the world's great curiosities: the mummy of Hettunaway, Priestess of Amun-Ra. Also known as the Unlucky Mummy, its owner, the newspaper magnate Jefferson Shaw, is taking it to New York to donate it to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Legend has it that those who look upon her face are doomed, but Shaw laughs at these superstitions.

THE AWFUL TRUTH

Shaw also has a device intended to contact the spirit of Hettunaway, which he has tried as an experiment. It had no result that he could see, but it did awaken something he can't control. The *Titanic* is about to hit an iceberg and all aboard will be in peril of their lives, but the protagonists face an additional problem: Hettunaway will try to strike them down before they have a chance to escape.

Pre-generated characters are included. If the Keeper would prefer to let players design their own characters, the only necessary stipulation is that they all be First Class passengers. That in turn suggests a Credit Rating of at least 5, and a suitable background.

SPINE

Luncheon with the Great and Good (Core): opening scene. Protagonists are shown mummy, meet Jefferson Shaw, manservant Soames, steward Poulson.

- *Further Inquiry* (Optional). The protagonists may choose to investigate Hettunaway's history, using the *Titanic's* resources or their own.
- *Luxury Accommodation* (Optional): The protagonists may choose to enjoy the delights the *Titanic* has to offer.
- *Hag Ridden* (Antagonist Reaction): Hettunaway makes her move. This can be combined with either of the optional scenes.

Unwelcome Attention (Core): While dining in the *Café Parisien* the protagonists witness an uncomfortable scene between Jefferson Shaw and an unknown woman. They also get the first warning of the tragedy that is to come.

- *A Woman of the Oddest Means* (Optional): The protagonists talk to Mrs Martin, and discover more of Hettunaway's history.
- *Psychical Society* (Optional): The protagonists may attempt mediumistic enquiry, either using their own resources or getting help from Soames or Poulson.
- *Hag Ridden* (Antagonist Reaction): Hettunaway makes her move. This can be combined with either of the optional scenes.
- *Options, People!* (Protagonist Action). In which the players strategize.

Amuse Yourself (Core): The *Titanic* has struck the iceberg, but as yet nobody knows how serious the problem is.

- *Priestess of the Black Pharaoh* (Antagonist Reaction): Hettunaway will strike out at those who blasphemed her, first victims possibly including Jefferson Shaw, Soames, Poulson. She will then move on to the protagonists.

Survival Instinct (Core): The *Titanic*

founders. The protagonists must try to stay alive

- *Priestess of the Black Pharaoh* (Antagonist Reaction): Hettunaway will strike out at those who blasphemed her, first victims possibly including Jefferson Shaw, Soames, Poulson. She will then move on to the protagonists.

Aftermath (Core): The surviving protagonists take stock of their situation.

THE SHIP THAT NEVER SANK

I don't propose to describe the entirety of the *Titanic* in a few paragraphs, if for no other reason than it would be a wasted effort. There are movies, books and internet sites which do a far better job of that than I could. However I will spend a little time talking about the ship in general terms, in the hope that the Keeper may find the information useful.

The *Titanic* is almost the last gasp of the Edwardian cruise ship era. These magnificent liners had been built to serve a specific purpose: they transported emigrants to America, in an age when immigration restrictions were minimal. Lady Liberty had promised a refuge for the tempest-tossed and Europe was supplying the huddled masses, but in order to get there they first had to cross the Atlantic, which was no easy thing. The liners serviced that trade, at a price.

Third Class passengers paid for everyone else's pleasure; though each Third Class passenger's ticket was

relatively low in cost (about \$20, which in real terms was a significant sum of money for the working poor) the sheer number of people willing to pay that price more than covered the cost of building and equipping these ocean monarchs, with a healthy profit margin besides. Until more restrictive immigration laws were passed in 1921, the liners transported over one million emigrants per year for over twenty years to New York City alone.

Liners became a significant source not just of revenue but also national pride. Germany was asserting herself in grand style; the *Deutschland*, *Kronprinz Wilhelm*, *Vaterland*, *Imperator* and *Kaiser Wilhelm II* lorded it over lesser ships. The Cold War of the mid 20th Century saw an arms race, and this was a similar contest: an escalating bid to dominate the seas, which promised incalculable financial rewards to the country to manage it.

In a bid to reassert dominance, the British Government subsidised Cunard's *Mauritania* and *Lusitania*, another tragic liner whose sinking during the War was to cause international outrage. The White Star Line, another British company and a chief rival of Cunard, built the *Oceanic*, *Olympic* and the *Titanic*. Rather than compete with Cunard's speedier vessels, White Star intended to beat Cunard in the luxury stakes, principally by offering Third Class passengers modest improvements: reading rooms, smoking rooms, stewards for the cabins and fresh, good food, as well as writing paper with the White Star emblem on it so they could send mail to their relatives at home about their voyage. It was all about competing for that vital Third Class revenue; other liners treated their Third Class passengers appallingly, giving them the worst accommodation and food, not providing for their medical wellbeing or comfort. One reporter even alleged that the staff aboard other liners sexually assaulted female Third Class passengers.

According to the report given to the Immigration Commission of the US Senate, that same reporter, Anna Herkner, said: *'the persons carried are looked upon as so much freight, with mere transportation as their only due . . . Generally the passenger must retire almost fully dressed to keep warm. Through the entire voyage, from seven to seventeen days, the berths receive no attention from the stewards . . . Wash rooms and lavatories, separate for men and for women, are required by law, which also states they shall be kept in a "clean and serviceable condition throughout the voyage." The indifferent obedience to this provision is responsible for further uncomfortable and unhygienic conditions . . . Considering this old-type steerage as a whole, it is a congestion so intense, so injurious to health and morals that there is nothing on land to equal it.'* These were the same passengers the shipping companies relied on for their generous profits. The emphasis on health in the report is no accident; the Senate and the government as a whole were deeply concerned that the immigrants they took in be healthy when they arrived, so as not to infect their new home. This was an age when epidemics claimed thousands yearly and antibiotics did not exist. They were terrified of the effect a viral contagion might have, particularly if conditions on board the liners were shown to be fostering a disease-prone environment.

That is why the White Star went the luxury route and applied it across the board. Not for them coughing migrants stuffed into unhygienic steel boxes. Their Third Class passengers would enjoy a pleasant, healthful cruise with amenities that were unheard of on other liners. The *Titanic* was the embodiment of that philosophy, but it was part and parcel of a bid to win revenue for the Line and with that, dominance over Germany and control of the Atlantic migrant trade.

Even so, the Third Class was very carefully segregated from their wealthier fellow passengers. They

might have their own smoking room and access to a lending library, but the Turkish Baths, located on F Deck along with the majority of the Third Class cabins, was off limits to them, as was the gymnasium and other accommodations provided for the enjoyment of First Class passengers only.

This is also reflected in the casualty report. To take one instance: of the children aboard, six were First Class and twenty four were Second Class. Only one of those, a child in First Class, died. Whereas in Third Class there were seventy nine children, of whom fifty two drowned; the rest were saved. This does not represent deliberate policy, whether of the Line or the *Titanic's* crew, but it is a sad testament to the blind spot they shared: to them, Third Class was not as important, and so not as carefully looked after, as the other passengers.

Since its sinking, the *Titanic* has become almost mythic. As if a tragedy wasn't sufficient, conspiracy theories abounded, one of which alleged that the *Titanic* never actually sank at all. Instead it was the *Olympic*, her sister ship, that had foundered. It was all part of a complicated insurance scam in which the ship would be deliberately scuttled at sea and the passengers conveniently rescued by ships that happened to be waiting nearby. Other less insane tales had to do with the luxuries available to the passengers. *Titanic* was already well provided for, what with its barber shops, telephone communication system, gymnasium and squash courts, in addition to its First Class *a la carte* restaurant and *Café Parisien*, a *haute cuisine* establishment run as a concession by Monsieur Gatti. However memories blurred, and in time people began inventing the most fantastic accommodations, including golf courses and a herd of dairy cows to provide fresh milk daily. From a Keeper's perspective, this does mean that you can invent any

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amount of decadent facilities, and they will be as 'true' as the survivor's own recollections.

One such story, which has the benefit of being based on a grain of truth, is that of William Thomas Stead. Stead was a pioneering investigative journalist of the Edwardian era, and is credited for being the progenitor of what has become the tabloid press. He was also a world peace advocate and a proponent of women's rights, and wrote *The Truth About Russia!* and *The Americanization of the World*, among others. He was a spiritualist, the editor and founder of *Borderlands* quarterly, in which he propounded his psychical theories. He is one of the more famous victims of the *Titanic* disaster, and according to one report was last seen sitting alone, quietly reading in the First Class smoking room.

Allegedly he was also the owner of the British Museum's unlucky mummy, actually a painted sarcophagus board still on display at the Museum today. According to the myth, Stead bought the mummy that went with that sarcophagus board, a Priestess of Amun-Ra, a relic thought to have malignant properties and which was supposed to have caused the death of at least one person. Mindful of its reputation he smuggled it in with his car, only revealing its presence to some of his fellow passengers when the ship was under way, on the 14th April.

By the 15th, the *Titanic* was on the bottom of the ocean.

TITANIC TIMELINE

For the benefit of the Keeper, a sketch outline of the *Titanic's* last hours is included here. All real-world data has been sourced from Walter Lord's *A Night to Remember*. Important scenario events are also included, and those are given in *italic*. All times are given in 24-hour clock. Exact times are not given for some events following the sinking.

10th April 1912

1200: Leaves Southampton, narrowly avoiding collision with another liner.

1900: Stops at Cherbourg for passengers.

2100: Leaves Cherbourg bound for Queenstown (now known as Cobh), Ireland.

11th April

1230: Stops at Queenstown for passengers and mail.

1400: Leaves Queenstown bound for New York, with 1,316 passengers and 891 crew.

12th April

1200: *Luncheon with the Great and Good (Core)*

13th April

1200: *Unwelcome Attention (Core)*

14th April

0900: Liner *Caronia* reports ice, latitude 42 degrees North from longitude 49 to 51 degrees West.

0142: Liner *Baltic* reports ice.

0145: Liner *Amerika* reports ice.

1400: Temperature is 43 Centigrade.

1430: Temperature is 39 Centigrade.

1430: Liner *Californian* reports ice.

2100: Temperature is 33 Centigrade.

2130: Second Officer Lightoller warns carpenter and engine room to watch fresh water

supply, as the pipes were in danger of freezing. Also warns crew to keep watch for ice.

2140: Liner *Mesaba* reports ice.

2200: Temperature is 32 Centigrade.

2230: Sea temperature is 31 Centigrade.

2300: Liner *Californian* reports ice.

2340: *Titanic* hits iceberg.

2350: *Amuse Yourself (Core)*

15th April

0005: Orders are given to uncover the boats, muster the crew and passengers.

0015: First wireless call for help.

0045: First rocket fired. First boat lowered.

0140: Last rocket fired.

0205: Last boat lowered.

0210: Last wireless signals sent.

0220: Ship founders.

0220: *Survival Instinct (Core)*

0330: Liner *Carpathia's* rockets sighted by boats.

0410: First boat picked up.

0830: Last boat picked up.

0850: *Carpathia*, after some deliberation as to best course of action, heads for New York with the survivors.

New York newspaper *Evening Sun* runs banner headline: *All Saved From Titanic After Collision*. The report alleged that the passengers had been taken aboard the *Parisian* and *Carpathia*, and the *Titanic*, still afloat, was being towed to Halifax.

Carpathia radio silence keeps spread of news to minimum from this point until its arrival in New York. Several newspapers print accounts of the wreck, most of which were not factual.