

The Rasputin Collection

Description: a set of platinum and blue sapphire jewelry (tiara, brooch, necklace, earrings, and ring). The style is clearly that of the 19th Century Russian jewelry firm the House of Bolin, but no records of the creation and/or sale of the Rasputin Collection survive. The provenance of the Collection since then is equally murky. All jewels of the Rasputin Collection are almost icy cold to the touch; they feel like they would do damage if worn against bare skin, but do not.

Should the Rasputin Collection be associated with, well, Rasputin? Well, the spirit that collectively inhabits the jewelry certainly thinks so -- oh, yes, this is one of **those** collections. Anyone who puts any item in the Collection on will very soon hear the whispers of something *claiming* the name of 'Grigori Rasputin' in her mind. Or his mind, but men find that wearing any item in the Collection rapidly becomes unpleasant. And the items in the Collection must be worn in order for their special powers to work.

And what are their powers? Primarily, easy and effortless contact with the spirit possessing them. 'Rasputin' has several helpful skills; 'he' speaks over a dozen languages

(all supposedly learned post-mortem), and perfectly remembers everything that either he, or a wearer of an item from the Collection, has ever seen or heard. Rasputin can also pass along messages silently from one wearer of a Collection item to another one (as well as let all Collection wearers know where the others are), can hypnotize most people through apparently sheer force of will, and has what is often euphemistically called a 'magnetic personality.' Having an item in the Collection can be very useful.

But it can also be very, time-consuming after a while. It's not that Rasputin saps the wills of the wearers of Collection items; it's that he's very persuasive and possibly even insidious, and if a wearer doesn't at least go along with Rasputin's schemes somebody will eventually come by to retrieve the Collection item. Assuming that Rasputin doesn't just hypnotize the errant holder into mailing the Collection item to a better candidate, which has been known to happen.

In the meantime, however, doing those little jobs for Rasputin can be quite interesting. Personally profitable, too: many of them involve acquiring luxury items for later use, after all. The less sybaritic missions *generally* look harmless enough, although asking too many questions is

generally a good way to have somebody else come along to claim a Collection item.

One last note: it is very unwise to murder the holder of a Collection item, and then loot her corpse. For one thing, Rasputin -- and the other Collection item holders -- will know exactly where the murderer is, from then on in (the murderer will **not** have the same advantage). For another; none of them will have any compunctions against going after the murderer, by fair means or foul. And 'fair means' is going to be a flexible term, in this context.

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