

THE #1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

ANNIE RICE

Author of
MEMNOCH THE DEVIL



TAMMOS

The entrancing story of
the Mayfair Witches that began with
The Wishing Hour continues....

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**“WHAT CAN I CONFESS?
I’M ASHLAR. I’M TALTOS.**

It’s centuries since I’ve seen one single member of my own species. Oh, there have been others. I’ve heard of them, chased after them, and in some instances almost found them. Mark, I say almost. But not in centuries have I touched my own flesh and blood, as humans are so fond of saying. Never in all this time....”

When Ashlar learns that another Taltos has been seen, he is suddenly propelled into the haunting world of the Mayfair family, the New Orleans dynasty of witches forever besieged by ghosts, spirits, and their own dizzying powers. For Ashlar knows this powerful clan is intimately linked to the heritage of the Taltos.

In a swirling universe filled with death and life, corruption and innocence, this mesmerizing novel takes us on a wondrous journey back through the centuries to a civilization half human, of wholly mysterious origin, at odds with mortality and immortality, justice and guilt. It is an enchanted, hypnotic world that could come only from the imagination of Anne Rice....

**“SIMPLY IRRESISTIBLE ... [An]
alluring supernatural romance.”**

—*Chicago Sun-Times*

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TALTOS

**LIVES OF THE
MAYFAIR WITCHES**

Anne Rice

THE RANDOM HOUSE PUBLISHING GROUP • NEW YORK

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DEDICATED WITH LOVE

to

Stan, Christopher, and Michele Rice,

to

John Preston

and to

Margaret and Stanley Rice, Sr.

THE GARDEN OF LOVE

I went to the Garden of Love,
And saw what I never had seen:
A Chapel was built in the midst,
Where I used to play on the green.

And the gates of this Chapel were shut,
And Thou shalt not writ over the door;
So I turn'd to the Garden of Love,
That so many sweet flowers bore.

And I saw it was filled with graves,
And tomb-stones where flowers should be:
And Priests in black gowns, were walking their rounds,
And binding with briars, my joys & desires.

From *Songs of Experience*,
William Blake

One

IT HAD SNOWED all day. As the darkness fell, very close and quickly, he stood at the window looking down on the tiny figures in Central Park. A perfect circle of light fell on the snow beneath each lamp. Skaters moved on the frozen lake, though he could not make them out in detail. And cars pushed sluggishly over the dark roads.

To his right and his left, the skyscrapers of midtown crowded near him. But nothing came between him and the park, except, that is, for a jungle of lower buildings, rooftops with gardens, and great black hulking pieces of equipment, and sometimes even pointed roofs.

He loved this view; it always surprised him when others found it so unusual, when a workman coming to fix an office machine would volunteer that he'd never seen New York like this before. Sad that there was no marble tower for everyone; that there was no series of towers, to which all the people could go, to look out at varying heights.

Make a note: Build a series of towers which have no function except to be parks in the sky for the people. Use all the beautiful marbles which you so love. Maybe he would do that this year. Very likely, he would do it. And the libraries. He wanted to establish more of these, and that would mean some travel. But he would do all this, yes, and soon. After all, the parks were almost completed now, and the little schools had been opened in seven cities. The carousels had been opened in twenty different places. Granted, the animals were synthetic, but each was a meticulous and indestructible reproduction of a famous European hand-carved masterpiece. People loved the carousels. But it was a time for a spate of new plans. The winter had caught him dreaming....

In the last century, he had put into material form a hundred such

ideas. And this year's little triumphs had their comforting charm. He had made an antique carousel within this building, all of the original old horses, lions, and such that had provided molds for his replicas. The museum of classic automobiles now filled one level of the basement. The public flocked to see the Model Ts, the Stutz Bearcats, the MG-TDs with their wire wheels.

And of course there were the doll museums—in large, well-lighted rooms on two floors above the lobby—the company showcase, filled with the dolls he'd collected from all parts of the world. And the private museum, open only now and then, including the dolls which he himself had personally cherished.

Now and then he slipped downstairs to watch the people, to walk through the crowds, never unnoticed, but at least unknown.

A creature seven feet in height can't avoid the eyes of people. That had been true forever. But a rather amusing thing had happened in the last two hundred years. Human beings had gotten taller! And now, miracle of miracles, even at his height, he did not stand out so very much. People gave him a second glance, of course, but they weren't frightened of him anymore.

Indeed, occasionally a human male came into the building who was in fact taller than he was. Of course the staff would alert him. They thought it one of his little quirks that he wanted such people reported to him. They found it amusing. He didn't mind. He liked to see people smile and laugh.

“Mr. Ash, there's a tall one down here. Camera five.”

He'd turn to the bank of small glowing screens, and quickly catch sight of the individual. Only human. He usually knew for certain right away. Once in a great while, he wasn't sure of it. And he went down in the silent, speeding elevator, and walked near the person long enough to ascertain from a score of details that this was only a man.

Other dreams: small play buildings for children, made exquisitely out of space-age plastics with rich and intricate detail. He saw small cathedrals, castles, palaces—perfect replicas of the larger