



THE SHANDLER CHRONICLES

New Cthulhu fiction! Supernatural skullduggery runs amok in this continuing series of writings culled from the archives of occult investigator Phillip Shandler, as transcribed by Call of Cthulhu author Monte Cook.

SHANDLER INVESTIGATIONS

Phillip Shandler
188 Gibson Lane
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Dear Thomas,

April 5, 1930

Still in Fairfield, Wyoming. I've continued investigating the now-lost town of Lastbridge, where a strange cult called the Fellowship of the Risen God disappeared.

A week ago, I would have used words like "destroyed" rather than "lost" and "died" rather than "disappeared." But I'm getting ahead of myself, and I don't have the fortitude to tell you more at this time. Yet I want to get this letter in the mail as soon as possible to ask you a favor.

Please send me any notes or copies of anything you have from the Pnakotic Manuscripts. (Make copies for yourself first, but please hurry.) Also send anything else you have on Nyarlathotep.

I'm afraid the book you sent me was stolen, and I need to reference that material more than ever. I'm very sorry that I am responsible for the loss of your book.

I'll explain later after I get some rest.

Sincerely,

Phillip

Dear Thomas,

April 7, 1930

First of all, let me apologize for the brevity of my last letter. This has been a trying week and I was in no mood to explain before. Now, with a little rest and time to reflect, I think I can. But secondly, let me apologize again for the loss of your copy of the Pnakotic Manuscripts. I know that it was important to you and I betrayed your trust. As I mentioned before, it was stolen.

Please allow me to explain.

As I wrote previously, local records regarding Lastbridge are scarce. After speaking with an old man named Jacob Chesterfield about Simon Carlisle, the cult's leader, and the book that he carried with him, the *Necronomicon*, I drove out to the site where he said the town stood 150 years ago or so, next to the Powder River. He told me that the tornadoes that destroyed the town left a strange impression in the earth—a huge eye with three lobes. I couldn't find any such pattern, but figured that after all this time the fields are so overgrown and whatnot that it's probably gone. Or perhaps seen only from high above.

So I sat in the truck, listened to the wind howl, and paged through the book you sent me. I



must admit, I could only understand small parts of it. Much of the text described things I did not understand, and really — truth be told — did not care to.

Eventually, however, I found a reference to a "tri-lobed eye." I wasn't surprised at all to find that this reference was directly related to the appearance of the being known as Nyarlathotep. Or at least, one of the forms that he takes. Apparently, according to the text, he takes many forms. One is a strange being with a tri-lobed eye. The other, a terrible man made of darkness. There were others, but both of these resonated with so many things that I'd been running afoul of in the last few months, all the way back to the Witch Cult in Arkham.

A sudden, loud banging sound startled me from my reading. Someone was outside the truck. He was banging on the hood with his hand. The figure was tall and broad, wearing a tattered and dirty coat

that fluttered in the gusting wind. Once he'd got my attention, he stared me in the eye and didn't move.

I opened the truck door about half way, pushing against the wind to do so. I stuck my head out and said, "Yeah, what do you want?"

"What are you doing out here?" His voice was gruff and he clipped his words. His face was dark complexioned and wide-his skin leathery. It seemed to me at the time that he looked like he spent a lot of time in this wind, and it had taken its toll. His eyes and hair were dark as well.

"I'm just looking at a map," I lied.

He paused for a while, just staring at me. Finally he said, "Let me see" as he circled around the front of the truck to the door.

"No, really. It's OK." I pulled myself back in the truck and pulled on the door, which wasn't necessary, since the wind slammed it.

Who was this busybody?

Before I could react, he'd reached the door and opened it wide. The wind blew in, exciting the pages of the Pnakotic Manuscripts and my own notebook. He took one look at the pages of the old book and reached into the cab with a thick, meaty hand.

I tried to pull away but he was both fast and strong. With a single yank he pulled me out of the truck and onto the ground. Now, I'm no sack of potatoes. You can imagine, Thomas, that flinging me around like a rag doll is no easy task.

Who was this guy?

I struggled to my feet, and by the time I did I saw the book and the notebook in the man's hand. He was turning around.

"Hey, those are mine!" I shouted as I grabbed the arm that held them. He finished turning, though, and I saw that he had an old Colt revolver in his other hand. He must have pulled it out of that old coat. I backed away a few steps and held up my hands.

Before I could do anything else, he stepped forward and struck me across the head with the weapon. I blacked out.

When I woke up, through bleary eyes I saw that night had fallen. It was extraordinarily dark, and cold. I had to climb to my unsteady feet, and stumble around to confirm that not only was the strange man gone, but so was the truck. I gingerly felt the side of my head. My hair was matted with dirt and sticky blood. I knew I had to get back to Fairfield and get some medical attention.

I tried to figure out which way to go, and then began to make my way slowly in that direction. My world was all blurry pain and cold. I have no idea how long I stumbled around out there before I heard them.

The sound of a choir echoed over a hill to my right. My first (probably delirious) thought was

that it was angels—and I was dead. But I could not recognize any of the words. At least, not at first. But then I heard one I did recognize. One that chilled me more than any cold, blustery wind could.

Nyarlatotep!

I struggled up the hill and saw them. I know, Thomas—maybe I was delusional in my condition, but I saw them. I know it.

The congregation of the Fellowship of the Risen God!

They were no longer men and women (and children!) but malformed creatures that floated above the ground. Their bodies drooped from a single, luminous core like ragged tendrils. They bore no feature of their former shapes other than human mouths with human tongues, singing to the dark, starless sky. Singing praises, or perhaps invocations, to none other than Nyarlatotep. One of them stood in the middle, clutching a black book in its appendages. I saw it in only the eerie, otherworldly radiance given off from the creatures themselves, but I knew it had to be Simon Carlisle, or rather, what he had become since his dark master had taken him away to some unearthly realm almost 150 years ago.

Upon seeing this, I was gripped with something between madness and fear, Thomas. I turned and ran into the darkness. I ran and ran, driven only by the need to get away from the sound of that choir. Eventually, I collapsed. Luck, however, was with me for a rancher found me the next day lying in a gully on his property. He and wife — a quiet but caring woman — took care of me that afternoon and brought me back to Fairfield that evening. That was two days ago, when I asked you to send any notes you had on Nyarlatotep. I'm driven now, Thomas, to decipher some of what that horrible choir was singing, and to learn what they were doing out there. I know it must be dire. I must find out everything I can about Nyarlatotep and that odd language they sang in. And of course, I've every intention—now that I'm feeling more myself—to find that thug who stole the book and the farmer's truck. I must now reimburse the farmer for his vehicle, so my funds are very low. Is there any chance you can send me some cash? I know this whole case is becoming a terrible drain on both of us. I'll write again tomorrow, perhaps transcribing some of the words the choir used. Maybe it is a language you can identify. As always, I am in your debt for any help you can pass along.

Sincerely,

Phillip