



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
Providence, Rhode Island

Dear Thomas,

June 10, 1931

What a strange man I met today. As I wrote to you last time, my new patron from Europe, Aldo Falke, recommended that I speak with a writer here in Providence named H.P. Lovecraft. I finally caught up with Mr. Lovecraft earlier today.

This old gent, and though I say "old," the truth is that he acts the part of a much older man than he really is, writes strange fiction for publications in magazines. Pale like a fish and thin as a rail, Lovecraft was a polite gentleman to me, even as he told me of some of the strangest things I had ever heard. And you, more than anyone else, Thomas, knows that that says quite a bit.

We sat with our tea in the sitting room of a musty old house, decorated more in the style of what you would expect of a little old lady than a divorced bachelor. There, he told me of mountains in Antarctica where things far older than man sleep in vast caverns and backwoods lunatics that have befouled themselves with creatures from the sea to produce offspring that appear human but are most definitely not.

I was confused as to where he got his information. Sometimes he mentioned eldritch tomes and other times he referred to terrible dreams. I, however, could identify with both and listened with interest. After such disturbing tales from him, I did not hesitate to ask him what he knew about beings like Azathoth and Nyarlathotep. Surprisingly, or perhaps not, both names were familiar to him. He even seemed to have some working knowledge of the Necronomicon and showed me some handwritten notes regarding the strange history of that terrible book that contained details that I had never known.

Perhaps most importantly, at least in regard to my current lines of inquiry, Mr. Lovecraft told me that the secretive congregation of the Fellowship of the Risen God in Boston also goes by the name Starry Wisdom.

He warned me that they consorted with all manner of unsavory characters, both human and inhuman. Lovecraft believed them to be some of the most dangerous individuals he knew of, although he had never met any of them directly. The real danger, according to him, however, was the risk of actually understanding the dread secrets that they knew and not becoming as mad. They understood more about the real truth of the universe than anyone else, he said, but that the truth was enough to shake a man to his soul.

I think I know a little of what he speaks. I did not mention to him that I had actually studied the Necronomicon, because I didn't want to tell that whole sorry tale, and I also did not want him to worry about my own sanity.

I worry about that enough on my own.

I hoped to perhaps consult with him again someday, and so rather than press him for more information or reveal things to him that might make him question whether or not he should trust me, I took my leave.

His house had a peculiar odor that I didn't really recognize until I left. It smelled strangely of fish.

Sincerely,

Phillip

Dear Thomas,

July 14, 1931

Sorry to hear about your troubles at the university. I am sure that everything will work out in time.

As for myself, I have spent the last few days digging up whatever I can on the Starry Wisdom. I thought you would be very interested to learn that one woman who is linked to the group, by the name of Harriet Westbrook, was also a founding member of another organization known to the both of us - the Silver Moon Society. Harriet is a wealthy widow and was linked to the Starry Wisdom a few years ago when they purchased a large waterfront property in Boston. She also provided financial assistance to the Silver Moon Society.

My investigations showed that she lives in a wealthy section of Boston. I suspect that she may be my most important lead. We already know that the Silver Moon Society in St. Louis was involved with terrible things, dealing with that creature called a yithian from the dim recesses of the past. You know, in so many of my investigations - with the cult in Wyoming, the mad doctor in Maine, the ancient Mayan temple, and of course the Silver Moon Society in St. Louis - it always seems that the past is coming into the present to haunt us like the spectre of something so ancient that it was entirely forgotten. (Mr. Lovecraft would probably say that our forgetting such things is what enables us to live in a sane world today.)

There is even more to that than I had originally realized, I think. All these things that happened in the unrecorded depths of time are

coming to fruition now, all of a sudden. Inhuman things like yithians, the piper in Mexico, and whatever that horrible thing was in the barn in Wyoming, that no one today had ever known even existed seem to seep into my path with disturbing regularity. Is it coincidence or something worse? Nyarlathotep, remember, is the harbinger of the Old Ones. His appearance, supposedly, foretells the coming of these ancient beings of incalculable power and motives that surely could – and most likely would – destroy our world without even giving it a thought. Is something dire on our horizon? Are the events that I have experienced and endured over the last year or so the portents of something to come? Aldo Falke and the Thule Society seem to think so. He told me that these Old Ones are remorseless beings who might end humanity simply for their lack of realization that we matter. (In the vast scheme of things, in this perspective, we don't.) The sickening passages of the Necronomicon agree with him.

I am out of my depth here. I think I shall stick with investigation of provable facts and the actions of people rather than elder gods which may or may not exist. I have already bought a train ticket for Boston, where I plan on learning more about Harold Westbrook.

Could you look into the Silver Moon Society down there and find out if there are still any remnants of the organization still in operation? I would like to know the full extent of what I am dealing with. The Fellowship is long gone in Wyoming, but if the cultists in Boston have links to the members of a still-functioning group in the Silver Moon Society, I'd like to know. Further, it might suggest the organization has connections elsewhere as well. Both Lovecraft and Falke mentioned world-wide conspiracies of cultists, but I have never been one to believe in such things without some evidence.

Sincerely,

Phillip

Dear Thomas,

July 16, 1931

My train trip was uneventful, although it has grown quite hot here in the last few days, even for July. Even as I sit in the hotel room in the evening, the paper on which I write grows damp with my perspiration. "A two-hanky day" as my father used to say.

Once I arrived, I wasted no time. A taxi took me to the wealthy residential part of town where Harriet Westbrook lived. A large, stately manor of great age, her home was surrounded by a tall iron fence. I noted two large mastiffs chained in the yard as I approached the house, neither of



whom seemed all too keen on my approach. Still, I knocked on the door, which was answered by a young man with broad shoulders and a wide face.

I introduced myself and showed my credentials as a private investigator, and then asked to speak with Mrs. Westbrook. He refused with an economy of words and a stern expression. When I pressed him, he told me that his employer was not at home, but you don't question people for as long as I have without picking up the tell-tale signs of an obvious lie.

I thought about asking him for a glass of water to help against the heat, and thought even further about sneaking into the house while he fetched it, but I ruled out both.

I had already learned a great deal from that visit.

You see, Thomas, hanging there on the wall in the grand entry hall was a photograph of two people posing for the camera. One was a round-bodied elderly lady I assumed to be Mrs. Westbrook. The other was a gaunt elderly man dressed in black with a wide-brimmed hat to match, and a black leather book clutched under his arm.

Simon Carlisle.

I left, and I found a hotel room despite the fact that I knew that I would not be sleeping tonight.

Sincerely,

Phillip