



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

Derval Clipping Services
Carnegie East House
844 Second Avenue
New York, New York

Thomas Bode
765 Bullham Road
St. Louis, Missouri

Dear Thomas Bode,

Here is the newspaper clipping from the Boston Globe you requested, dated July 19, 1931.

Thank you for your patronage,

Derval Clipping Services

Calamity on the Waterfront

Boston, Mass. Three persons died, at least five others injured in a fire on Barrow Street late last night. As many as ten other people are missing, although it is still unclear if all of them were actually present at the time of the incident. The fire occurred in a building owned by an organization known as the Starry Wisdom, which according to some sources is a pagan cult. According to a statement made last October by police chief Arthur Card, however, the Starry Wisdom is simply a social club with many prominent and upstanding members of the community in its membership.

While the official cause of the blaze is unknown at this time, police are questioning locals regarding a suspicious figure seen skulking around the building. According to members of the organization, a man named Phillip Shandler had been harassing Starry Wisdom members for some weeks. Shandler, a private investigator, was not currently working on a case and operating alone. One of the victims bore credentials that identifies him as Phillip Shandler. The victim's body, however, was too disfigured for physical identification. The names of the other victims have not yet been released.

The fire occurred at approximately 9:45 PM. The fire department arrived quickly and was able to contain the blaze, extinguishing it by 1:30 AM. The Starry Wisdom building was entirely destroyed. Damage estimates may be as high as \$750,000 due to some unique structural innovations and enhancements in the building.

Dear Thomas,

September 27, 1931

Reports of my death, as the man said, have been greatly exaggerated. It was necessary to make the world believe I am dead, or, to be more specific, it is important that the Starry Wisdom cult believes me dead.

The cult is far larger than I had ever dreamed. The things I learned while in their headquarters in Boston... well, I am getting ahead of myself.

I am in Europe. Even though I have sent this letter by special courier and am fairly certain it is safe, I am still going to refrain from giving details of my exact whereabouts for now. I have met some of my patrons in the Thule Society, and they are providing me with a safehouse.

That night in July, I staked out the Starry Wisdom headquarters. No one really came or went until well after dark, but at that point - around nine o'clock - a number of people began to arrive. I used this as an opportunity to sneak up to a window. This was harder than it sounds, because it required that I shimmy up a drainpipe and get to the second storey.

From this vantage, I seemed to be peering into a darkened, empty office. Using my pocketknife, I jimmied the window open and crawled inside.

I turned on my flashlight, but I held it in my coat pocket to make the light as dim as possible. Looking around the office, I found all sorts of records of the cult's activities and missives from around the world-New Orleans, Great Britain (specifically London and someplace called the Severn Valley in England), and eastern Asia. There seemed to be a lot of discussion about events in the South Pacific, and geological considerations involving the possible re-emergence of a sunken island.

I had been in the office, searching papers and files for about fifteen minutes when I first heard the chanting. Being as cautious as possible, I crept out of the office to try and get an idea of what was going on.

I found my way into the center of the building, the sound of my footsteps muffled by the chanting. I saw what must have been three dozen figures in red, hooded robes surrounding a large rectangular pool. The large chamber was mostly dark except for lit candles held by each cultist.

It was clear that the floor of the room had been specially designed so that it could move, revealing open water beneath it. I am sure that it was a channel directly to the adjacent harbor and not an isolated pool, because the smell of brine was thick in the room.

I crouched on an upper balcony and looked down on all of this. I could not understand the chants, but I can tell you that it chilled the very core of my soul to hear it nonetheless.

Among the worshippers taking part in what was obviously some dread ceremony, I saw one figure holding a black book in gnarled, almost skeletal hands. I needed no further clue as to who it was.

Simon Carlisle!

I drew my pistol.

Suddenly, as I watched, I saw the water begin to roil. As if in answer to the call of the chant, other figures began to climb up out of the pool, but they wore no robes. In fact, they were not human at all. These things were more fish than man, their bloated, pale green bodies covered in scales rather than flesh. Bulbous eyes and a wide mouth made them look like something from the darkest depths of the sea. At least a dozen of these abominations rose from the water and joined the ranks of the cultists.

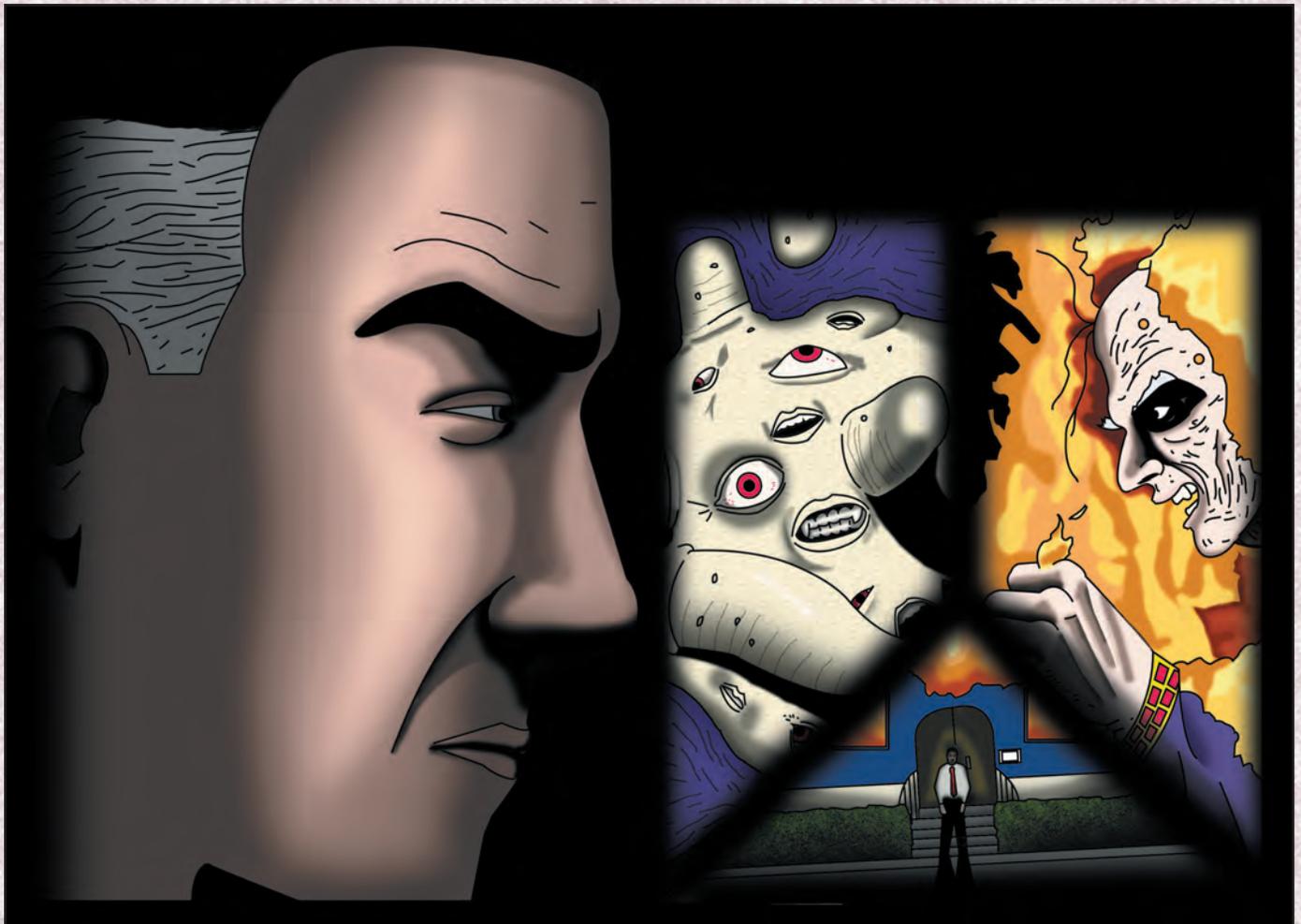
But still the chanting continued. In fact, these new horrors joined in with inhuman voices that grated upon my mind just for hearing them. The chant was not calling them, but something else. The roiling water increased its distress as if even it was dismayed by the presence of these terrible things.

Without warning, my heart leapt into my chest as a nightmare given form thrust itself up out of the dark water. Its bloated mass was crowned with flailing tendrils and covered in eyes and mouths and orifices I could not identify and would rather not speculate upon.

I didn't even realize that I was firing my pistol until the second or third shot. I had been aiming at the figure I was sure to be Carlisle, but in my distress, those first few shots went wide. I had struck one of the other cultists in the head, though, and his flailing form flew back into the darkness. The appearance of the creature utterly masked my attack. No one even noticed the shots or the dead cultist. I turned my gun toward Carlisle and fired, trying not to think about the hideous monstrosity rearing up from the waves. I fired my remaining rounds, and struck my target at least twice. The bullets passed through him, though, like the desiccated corpse I knew him to be. To my manic delight, however, the force jostled his hands enough so that he not only dropped the Necronomicon, but the candle flame caught his robes.

Simon Carlisle also burned like the desiccated corpse I knew him to be.

This caught the other cultists' attention, their leader (I presume) becoming a living, or



more accurately, unliving torch. When that happened, the chanting stopped. The scaly creatures panicked and leapt into the water with a slick grace. The tentacled horror, as if it were in some kind of trance before, began flailing wildly, grasping cultists and pulling them into the water with it. In the ensuing panic, discarded candles flew across the room catching dark draperies at the room's perimeter alight.

The terrible blaze you probably heard about began quickly and spread even faster, causing even more panic and bedlam. Amid the din, however, I heard a woman's voice yell my name. I looked around at the scene below, and saw Harriet Westbrook, her hood removed, pointing up to the balcony where I still crouched. At the same time, however, I saw another figure remove her hood - it was Fiona Carlisle. She stared at the flaming, writhing form of Simon and she looked as if, like the creature, she too had just come out of a trance. Simon crumpled to the ground, both he and the book still burning. Fiona followed Harriet's pointing finger and saw me. I still do not know how to interpret the look she gave me. Then, with a sudden burst of action, she reached for Harriet's robes and threw the older woman in the water where the monstrous thing still thrashed.

I knew I had to get to Fiona. I ran toward the stairs that could take me down to that level but was greeted by a man in red robes who had exchanged his candle for a long knife. He obviously had heard Harriet and followed her pointing finger as well. I hurled myself at the brute, grabbing his hood and pulling it down to cover his face. Then, we struggled over his knife, but the fact that he was blinded by his own cultist raiment gave me the advantage. I stabbed him without even considering any other option.

As I ran down the stairs, I stopped halfway down and looked around at the ceremonial chamber. The creature was still whipping its tendrils about like it was insane. The fire was spreading fast.

I couldn't see Fiona anywhere.

The flames forced me back up the stairs. I could hear the wood of the balcony beneath my feet groan, and felt it grow warm even through my shoes. There wasn't much I could do but run. But first, I pulled out my wallet and slipped it into the pocket of the cultist I had stabbed, pulling his robes all the way off as I did, so that I left him in his street clothes with my ID (I took his as well.)

The Starry Wisdom people knew who I was, obviously, and I wanted them to think I died in the conflagration.

I went out like I came in, and thought about trying to enter a different way. However, it was clear that the entire building was consumed in flames already. I couldn't get back in. Already a number of the cultists had run out of the burn-

ing building, fleeing into the night. I ran to a vantage where I could watch the scene, hoping to see if Fiona was among those that escaped. If she was, I did not see her.

Once again, I have lost her. I do not know if she is alive or dead, and if alive she most likely believes me to be dead. Ah well. Perhaps we will meet again if fate so wishes it.

In any event, I must end this message quickly so that I can get it to the courier in time.

I wish I could hear from you my friend. Unfortunately, you won't be able to contact me. But I will try to write again, perhaps next week or the week following.

Sincerely,

Phillip

Dear Mr. Bode,

December 13, 1931

Thank you for your inquiry. I apologize for taking so long to get back to you. Indeed, I am familiar with the Thule Society, but I believe your friend is mistaken regarding their outlook. All of my research, in fact, seems to indicate that the opposite of what he told you is true.

Outwardly an innocent club composed of persons who wanted to study and promote old Germanic literature, it is actually devoted to extreme nationalism, racial mysticism, and occultism. 'Thule,' in Nordic mythology, is the legendary kingdom from which the ancient Germanic peoples came.

The Thule Society was founded during The Great War by Rudolf Freiherr von Sebottendorff in München. The group supports the Pan-German dream of a new, powerful German Reich, accomplished using occult means serving ancient masters, or "Great Old Ones." It has strong ties to the political group, the National Socialist Party, otherwise known as the Nazi Party.

These seem like very dangerous people. I hope you or your friend are not involved with them in any fashion. If you can, please pass my warnings on to your associate. From what you say he has told you, he really seems to have no idea what he is getting into.

Yours,

Prof. Steven Merth

Professor Steven Merth