



# 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

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Dear Thomas, January 20, 1939

These letters I write now just fill my satchel, as I have no way of mailing them to you. I hope that sometime soon I can find a way to post them. I wrote to you last night about the howls and moans from the dark night outside the drafty little house I and my companions use to shelter ourselves from the terrible snowstorm that has raged for days here in the Carpathians. We had been hoping to use this as a staging point from which to launch a recovery mission to regain the mystical stone taken from me by the Vrilya creature posing as the woman Adriana, companion of the now-possessed Aliester Crowley. Now, however, we can give little thought to her and her ancient castle home. Beginning yesterday, the snow drifted over the level of the windows.

"If the snow is that high, this damnable shack may collapse from all the weight that must be on the roof," Fitzsimmons said.

"I fear that we'll be trapped inside here whether the roof and walls hold or not," Fleming replied.

The men and I spent much of the day tunneling out a path from the door to the top of the snow banks, which reached eight feet by that time. Although the storm still raged, it felt good to see the sky again. But by that time, it was night, and all of us were weary. We agreed to get out and clear the roof tomorrow.

But as I wrote to you in that last letter, the howling moan returned in the night.

I put away the letter and listened, but did not hear it again. Yet I was certain it was not simply the wind. While the others slept in exhaustion, I opened the now-freed door. Snow had already accumulated in the tunnel, but I could still feel the winter wind blowing above me. I climbed out the tunnel, my hands still numb from the previous cold work.

A great, sharp blow sent me tumbling backward down from where I'd come. I struggled in the snow and fought my way back into the doorway when I heard a deafening blast. Clearing the snow from my face, I saw Fitzsimmons standing above me in the doorway with a glistening revolver. He pointed it past me, up the inclined tunnel of snow.

I clambered on all fours into the house as he slammed the door shut.

"What in the name of Christ was that?" He shouted. I saw that the others had all roused with the gunshot.

"I don't know. I heard the moan again. I went to investigate. What did you see?"

The man stared at me blankly and took his time lowering the pistol.

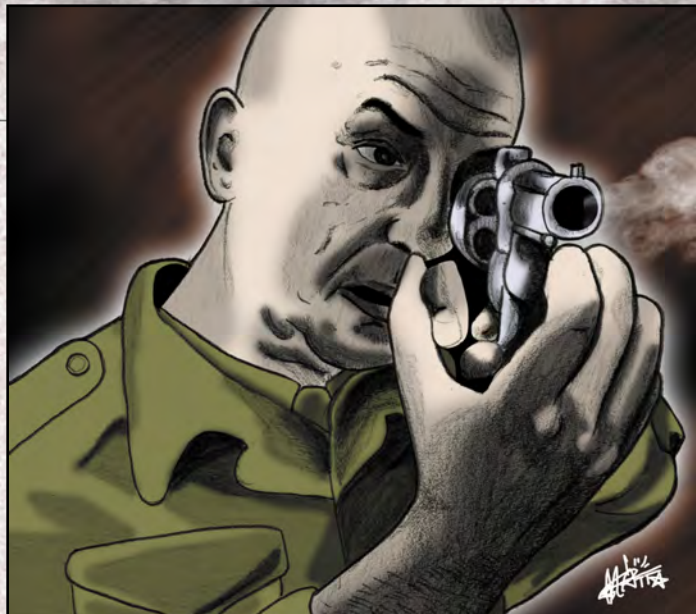
Finally he said, "Red eyes. White flesh like snow... no, like ice. Blue-white like ice."

"Red eyes," he repeated under his breath.

We all waited to see if the thing - whatever it was - would attempt to come through the door. But all that came was more wind.

"Did you hit it?" Fleming asked Fitzsimmons. He shrugged in reply.

"It's not interested in attacking us," I said, rubbing at the welt on my forehead where it struck me.



"It just wants to keep us trapped."

Fleming nodded. "Probably knows that the snow will crush us in here."

"What is it?" One of the men asked.

"Probably something sent by that witch," Fleming said. "She knows we're coming, clearly."

Someone cursed.

"We should get out of here," I told Fleming.

"And go out into that infernal storm?"

"You said it yourself. From the outside, it can probably tell that the roof will collapse on us eventually."

Eventually, he had to agree. They all did. We gathered our supplies and bundled into our coats and gloves and hats. Fleming and Fitzsimmons drew sidearms. Two of the others had rifles. Crowley and I would bring up the rear.

But the door would not open.

Fleming ordered two of the men to put their shoulders into it, but still it would not budge.

"It's like the hand of God himself is holding the other side," one of them said.

"Or the Devil," Fitzsimmons added.

Fleming and Fitzsimmons then emptied their revolvers into the door. It did not make any difference.

"Tear the door down!" Fleming shouted. No one had an axe or hatchet, but other tools were gathered and the men set upon the door. They dismantled it from the hinges to the jam, board by board.

Behind it was a wall of solid ice, shimmering and white.

Using whatever we could find, we chipped and hammered upon the ice, but even as I write this, well into the next morning, we are still trapped here. We are all exhausted so that we cannot even stand.

I fear we are truly trapped here in the ice. Created by whatever it was that howled in the cold wind? I do not know. But trapped nonetheless.

Sincerely,

*Phillip*