



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,

December 24th, 1939

Merry Christmas, I suppose.

Upon realizing that the Star of Unseen Stars was my only defense against the mental intrusions of the Crawling Chaos, I had to alter my plans. I had thought to just destroy it, and then the others that the Nazis and vril-ya had in their iron ritual tower. But now I knew I needed it.

Over the next few days, I grew fairly adept at sneaking around their installation, while still keeping my own "base camp" in the ship. Dr. Stein monitored the device that they held Nyarlathotep within while he was "in stasis." I got to know their comings and goings, and the layout of the complex - there was a main building, a barracks, a laboratory, a radio shack, and a storehouse. Up the hill lay the cleared area and the metal tower with the alien gemstones.

In addition to Dr. Stein and Major Holtz, there were four figures who I identified as vril-ya. They all had that look that reminded me of Ariana, which made my blood boil a bit. There were about 30 others in the encampment. Most were soldiers, but a few were technicians. Besides Dr. Stein and two of the vril-ya, there was just one woman. Even in the Antarctic summer, most everyone wore heavy clothing. It was still cold. No one noticed me as I skulked about, but why would they? From a distance, I looked like one of them. And most importantly, how could an intruder be here, the very definition of the middle of nowhere?

While I watched, I made my plan. First, I needed a few things.

Today I watched the storehouse closely all afternoon. Eventually, my break came late in the day. Two soldiers showed up and unlocked the door. They went inside, and each emerged with a heavy crate, walking toward the main building. Probably foodstuffs. I wondered if they were perhaps going to have some kind of Christmas feast. The idea seemed so... inappropriate. Regardless, they closed the door behind them but did not affix the padlock.

I darted down to the building quickly, and went through the door, closing it behind me. I held my breath once inside, hoping no one had seen me. I waited, expecting to hear a shout or footfalls coming my way. But none came.

I quickly looked around at crates, barrels, and more. Finally, I found some boxes marked "Dynamite." Just what I needed. What I had hoped for. I looked around again, and found a pair of ice picks which served me well in getting one of the wooden crates open. I filled my coat pockets with deadly sticks, and then found some detonators.

But it all took too long. The door opened.

I ducked behind the boxes, but blatant evidence of my presence was everywhere. The soldiers came in. I hoped that they would just lock the door. At worst, I'd be trapped in the storehouse overnight. But they entered, clearly looking to grab more supplies.

"What the hell?" One of them said.

"Someone's been in here!" The other exclaimed.

"The dynamite!" The first one said.

I had to take action.



I peered out from my hiding place, and saw that one of the two had his back to me. I didn't even realize that the star of unseen stars was in my hand until I cracked him across the back of the skull with it. The other looked at me with glaring eyes. He reached for his sidearm, but I was on him before he could open the holster. I grabbed his coat with my left hand and just kept punching and punching. The stone in my fist cut into my flesh, but I didn't stop to think about it.

I didn't stop to think about anything until I stood over the man as he lay on the storehouse floor. I closed the open door. I checked for breathing, and to my surprise, both soldiers were dead. I put the stone back in my pocket.

I've been in many fistfights in my life. You know that, Thomas. And I've never seen anything quite like this. Neither appeared to have suffered a wound or blow that I would have judged to be lethal. I can't truthfully say I felt any remorse, but it hadn't been my intention to kill either of them.

As I said, my hand was bloody. I'd taken my gloves off to handle the blasting caps before the soldiers came back in. I pulled out a handkerchief from one of the soldiers to wrap my wound. By the time I did so, however, my hand didn't bleed any longer. A yellow and purple crust had formed over the top of the cuts, but on my knuckle, which had struck each man, but also on the inside, where the stone had gouged my flesh. They were tender to the touch, and felt strangely warm.

I knew I would have to worry about that later. I hid the bodies in the back of the storehouse, knowing full well that wouldn't keep them from being found. I took one of the soldiers' pistols, a small revolver, and slipped out of the building with my explosives and back to my hiding place in the ship's boiler room.

I have most of what I need. But now the Nazis know that someone else is down here at the bottom of the world with them.

Sincerely,

Phillip