



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, Dec. 30, 1939

I remember so clearly those early days after I left Miskatonic University and sought employment in various venues. Eventually, of course, I started my own detective agency, believing that I'd spend the rest of my days chasing down missing persons and philandering spouses.

I certainly never envisioned that I would find myself in Antarctica, trying to stop madmen from calling an alien entity from beyond the stars in a bid to control the world.

"...instead, we shall bring him to us," the voice said. I couldn't see who it was, for I was only listening at the door. I had crept out from my hiding place in the ship and now crouched outside the building where they kept the Dark Man and the strange, symbol-covered machines.

"Adriana was a fool," another voice said. "It was far too dangerous to confront him in Vadoma." Although the conversation was in German, this voice had a strange accent. Perhaps one of the vril-ya?

"Yes," the first voice replied. "We have power here. We are ready for him."

"Although," the strangely accented voice said, "wisdom suggests we consider that we don't know exactly what happened there. We only know that Adriana failed."

"My machine will ensure that we can control the ancient one," said a third voice. This last was a woman's voice - very likely Dr. Stein.

Again the first man replied. "Yes. For the glory of the Fuhrer and the Fatherland, we shall have the might needed to win this war very quickly."

I saw a guard coming around the corner, and slipped to the side of the building. The Nazi guards were more alert than ever. And they were looking specifically for me, although I still don't know how they knew who I was.

I heard the guard knock on the door. It opened, and I heard the voice of the first man, who I was fairly certain was Major Holtz ask what was at issue. The guard replied, "We have another communique from Herr Jans. Their ship will be here day after next."

Holtz then said, loudly, "Our Thule companions will be here for the New Year!" This was followed by words of assent from the others in the lab.

I hadn't known that more people were still coming. I didn't know who Jans was, but I had heard the name Thule enough. Fleming had spoken of them numerous times. They were the secret, occult power behind the Nazis. Holtz and Stein were almost certainly Thule as well.

My bag was heavy with the explosives I had stolen. My plan was to destroy the ritual tower they had erected here. Now I felt I had to hurry.

Unlike the last time I ascended to the flat field of tramped snow where the tower stood, there were guards everywhere. Of course there were. I found a hiding place and tried to get the new lay of the land. Four guards. Three on perimeter patrol around the open space, and one stationary right at the base of the tower. And of course the camp was close enough that a single shout



would probably draw a dozen more soldiers here within a minute, maybe two. I figured I could perhaps shoot two of the guards before they knew what was going on - the one nearest me and the one at the tower. Then, with some luck I could reach the base of the tower and set off the explosives before I was cut down.

Yes, that's right. My plan didn't involve me surviving.

That was when I heard the crunch of snow behind me. Holtz and a half dozen guards stood behind me, weapons drawn.

"Mister Shandler, I think?" The major spoke in English.

Maybe I could have set off one of the blasting caps right then and there. And maybe it would have killed Holtz, but the tower would still be standing, the vril-ya would still be around to conduct the ritual, and Dr. Stein and her captive would be there to help them. It wasn't enough. It wasn't enough to give my life to accomplish. Not after all of this.

I raised my hands, and stood slowly. Holtz showed his yellow teeth as he grinned and told his men to take my pack and search me. Holtz stepped closer as they complied. They opened my bag and showed him the dynamite I'd wired together with the caps. This made him flinch - and rightfully so - my cobbled mess was likely pretty dangerous. They felt my pocket and pulled out my revolver. But then they felt my coat's other pocket and found... nothing.

The Star of Unseen Stars wasn't there. A million questions raced through my mind, but I tried to hide that fact from the still grinning Holtz.

"This little threat has ended." He said in German. In English, to me, he said, "If it were up to me, I would put a bullet in your head. But my friends want to talk to you first. So we will talk."

He stepped very close. His breath stank of alcohol. "And then I will put the bullet in your head."

"Take him away."

And thus now I am locked in a back room in their main building along with some sacks of flour and coffee. I've little to do but wait for what happens next, and wonder what happened to my jewel.

Sincerely,

Phillip