



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 or
Whoever Finds This,

January 4, 1940

I fear for my sanity more than for my life here, trapped at the bottom of the world with the thing called Hastur. Everywhere the horrible piping music – a shrill, discordant tune only a madman could call anything but grating – resonates and carries across the snow and ice.

Winged things flitter over the stark landscape. They are large, and more bat than bird, but perhaps more reptile than mammal. I don't know. I'm no expert. But this I do know – they are not of this Earth nor any other holy or natural place. I'm not certain where the music is coming from, but their wingbeats surely keep time to the hideous and complex melodies.

Today I ventured back into the camp. I wish I had not.

Apparently, some of the Thule Society members and the Nazi soldiers made it back to the camp after I left. They took shelter there, but it failed them as such. Something had torn the roof of every building off with obscene power. Debris scattered across the snow, and worse. The gore. Oh, the gore. Whatever hunted these people didn't eat them. There was too much of them left. But it dismembered them in horrific ways. People were strewn across the camp in ways that I wish I did not know were possible.

I didn't know when this horror had happened, but I realized that I hadn't heard any of the commotion it must have caused because of the infernal piping. I kept as quiet as I could as I crept through the wreckage of the camp. I peered into the empty shells that had been buildings of wood and metal. Traces of clothing and insignia told me who the slaughtered victims here had been. But then, who else could it have been? There was no one else here in this frigid continent.

"Hello, Phillip," said a voice behind me. Or rather, two voices speaking as one. I knew before I turned around that I had indeed forgotten who else was here.

The two androgynous Vrill-Ya stood before me. A bit of blood splattered across their clothing, but although I could see that it was not their blood, it was not in enough quantity to suggest that they had been responsible for the butchery that had occurred here.

"We lost track of you there for a time," they said in unison. "How do you disappear from our senses like that? We had to find you with... our eyes this time."

"Go to Hell." I thrust my hand in my pocket.

"It is time for you to... end, Phillip Shandler," they said. In a blink, they had long knives in their hands, with ancient blades of carved stone. But it happened so fast, it seemed like their hands had become knives. Moving as they spoke – as one – they lunged at me.

My hand clutched at the Star of Unseen Stars as a frightened child might grasp at his mother's arm. Reflex, rather than intention, guided my actions and thought. Ancient instincts.



There was a flash of violet light. A splash of liquid fire shone in the never-setting sun.

They recoiled. "The Master Stone," one of them cried. "Where – " the other began, but was cut off by a horrific gurgling sound, like the last gasp of a drowning man.

I watched as the two of them burned and suffocated in violet fire that splashed about not at all like fire, but like a thick, viscous liquid might. Except that rather than gathering in pools after it settled upon the ground, it vanished. I watched, at first unaware that I was the perpetrator of this insanity. Or perhaps more correctly, the stone was. My hand clutched it outside of my pocket now, and in fact I saw that the lower part of my coat was just gone, the remnants in seared tatters.

When my conscious mind caught up with my actions, the fire sputtered out. But it had done its duty. The two inhuman things that had posed as people for who knew how long now lay decidedly (and horrifically) dead on the ground before me.

I stood, mouth agape, for long minutes, trying to ascertain what had happened. These monsters were dead, and for that I felt no remorse, but that I could be at all involved with calling forth such dire power terrified me. I thought to drop the jewel and be rid of it.

But I did not.

The jewel was mine by right, and I had need of it. Now more than ever. Bolstered by an inner fire as real as that which had just flared before me, I knew that we would accomplish what we needed to do now. Together.

Sincerely,

Phillip