



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 22, 1940

It's still difficult to write, but I'll try to finish this now.

Somehow, after all that had happened, I found myself in Antarctica. The land was being changed all around me as I watched—changed by an entity Alhazred liked to call a Great Old One. The Thule madmen that had brought him to Earth called him Hastur, and the horrible piping music that came with him changed the fundamental rules of reality. The sky was a storm of color. The music pervaded every icy cranny of the continent. Winged things of horrific size flew overhead. Worst of all, the dead did not remain dead. The corpses of Nazi soldiers slain when all this started now trudged through the snow, hunting and killing anything alive that they could find.

The Star of Unseen Stars was my only companion, and I'd just realized that it was not my friend, but my enemy, working against me all this time.

Mad with hunger, exhaustion, and the cold, I hid from the horrific predators that now stalked the landscape as best I could. It took me hours, but I finally got my bearings enough to find my way back to the camp. The area where the ritual had taken place was in utter disarray. The tower had collapsed. Frozen corpses and bits of corpses lie everywhere, likely feasted upon by the flying creatures that moved in Hastur's wake. I had no doubt that if they would thaw, they would get up and move as best they could, hungry for murder.

I looked around for one corpse in particular. A man who was clearly the leader of the Thule Group had spoken to me briefly. He had a distasteful appearance and wore a white fur coat. I was fairly certain I remembered where he had stood when everything went to hell. Feet frozen, I made my way to that spot, probably looking like one of the living dead myself.

There were corpses in that spot, immolated by the violet lightning that had killed so many when Hastur appeared. Blackened limbs and faces protruded from the ice and snow, but not the ones I looked for. Hands numb with cold, I dug through the snow to see if he was perhaps buried, but this yielded nothing. After perhaps an hour of this, I heard a noise to my right and turned to see the object of my search—the man in the white coat—walking toward me. At first, I thought he had somehow survived the whole ordeal. But then I saw that half his face was missing, exposing a clot of frozen gore on the side of his head.

He shamled toward me. I stupidly realized that I had no weapon other than the stone, and I was loathe to use it again. That was when I saw that beneath the man's now-ruined fur coat, he had a large hunting knife in a decorative leather sheath. I tensed my body as he approached, and then relaxed just before I sprang. His unearthly strength was surprising, but he was mindless in this state. It was not difficult to shift his center of gravity and knock him onto his back, with me atop. I struggled for the knife.

He was faster than I had expected, and his hands found their way to my throat. They were cold and strong, more like metal clamps than human fingers. I wasn't certain if



he was trying to choke me or simply pull my head from my neck. Either way, I wasn't going to last long.

My hand found the knife's hilt, and I pulled on it, but it was clamped in the sheath and would not come loose. I had to try to get my other hand to the clasp, but I couldn't see what I was doing because of the way his grip forced my head up. I couldn't reach the knife.

I pounded at his face, but this did nothing. Then I remembered what had become of Major Holtz and got an awful idea. I brought both of my hands up to his. I knew my strength didn't match his—I could pry his hands loose. So I grabbed his index fingers and pulled. I pulled and wrenched until the brittle, frozen things came free with a horrible snap. There was no blood. He was frozen and desiccated all the way through.

I feared I might be about to black out, but I grabbed two more fingers and broke them from his hands as well. His grip loosened, and when I broken still more from his hands, I got free. Gasping for air, I rolled free from him. He rose, and lunged at me, but he had not quite gathered that he could no longer effectively grab me. This time, while he fumbled at me, I grabbed the knife with both hands and got it free.

I won't go into detail what happened next. It took a long time, but eventually the Thule man was in enough pieces that he presented no further threat to me. Only when I was certain of this did I search for what I had came for.

My gambit paid off. I found in his coat a sheaf of rolled up papers detailing the occult rites that had brought Hastur here in the first place. I also noticed that he wore an amulet with a large black stone, not terribly different in shape and cut from the Star of Unseen Stars, just different in color and smaller. On a hunch, I took that as well.

I'm too weak to go on now. I'll attempt to finish my tale tomorrow.

Sincerely,

Phillip