



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

Phillip Shandler
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Dear Thomas,

January 23, 1940

Exhausted, frozen, and pretty seriously injured, I examined the papers I had taken from the corpse-thing. It had very nearly squeezed the life from my throat and every breath was now a slice of extra agony.

I was, in fact, quite confident that I was probably doomed to die in the next few hours even without the intervention of the Great Old One and its servitors that now ruled the bottom of the world. Still, with blood-covered fingers stiff from the cold, I sorted through the papers. As I'd hoped, they were in German, which I could read. They detailed the ritual they had used to summon Hastur. The series of stones built into their metal tower were a make-shift replacement because they did not have the Star of Unseen Stars.

Which I still had in my pocket.

I don't know how long I remained there, studying the chaotic scribblings, but it was likely a long while. Everything I did seemed to take twice as long as it would normally. I found it difficult to understand everything I read. Only snatches of it made any sense to me at all, and I'm no stranger to the occult. But still, I was able to put together a plan. Or rather, I confirmed that this was the final piece to the plan I'd hatched some time earlier.

I gathered what reserves I had left. It wasn't much. I whispered my own name, just to test whether I had a voice left. It was hoarse and frail, as if it was spoken by someone else. But it was there, and thus I was ready. That, however, was when he showed up.

The Dark Man. This was the avatar of Nyarlathotep, the agent of the Nazis' undoing, whom they had brought to Antarctica themselves, thinking that they would use him for their own ends. He trudged through the snow, a tall, muscular man composed of darkness.

"Phillip Shandler, I am surprised to see life still within you. Not that such is a requirement for you to be upright. Not here. Not anymore." His smile was blacker than the utter darkness of his face, if that was possible.

I had no time, voice, or energy to waste. I pulled the jewel from my pocket, and ignored its alluring insistence that had beguiled and controlled me before—perhaps many times before.

"IAMBOL. CSHULAN. REGOM." The words I had hoped to find in the ritual papers.

The jewel suddenly flowed with more life than I had.

"Pitiful little man," the avatar said. "You don't even understand what you're doing. You can't send Hastur back like that."

That wasn't my plan, but I did not reply. I simply continued my words. "IAMBOL. CSHULAN. REGOM."

He stepped forward, a hand casually held out to snuff what little life I had in me. I lunged forward and touched the Star of Unseen Stars to his hand.

The Nazis had brought Nyarlathotep here to utilize his power. They just didn't understand that they couldn't control it. I used his power too, but never hoped to do



anything as careful or as long term as harness it. I only needed a spark.

The life in the stone exploded like never before. Utilizing a fraction of that power, my words reopened the door. A passage at the bottom of the world once again led to Vadoma, or Carcosa, or whatever cursed place Hastur had come from. But more significantly, the maelstrom of wind and lightning and insane piping that walked like a giant was suddenly there before the both of us, and the Dark Man was suddenly surprised. And perhaps even afraid? I could not tell. He disappeared like a fading shadow.

The vast thing that was Hastur was drawn to the stone. It called to him just as it called to all things native to the Outside. So I summoned the last iota of strength and will I had. I tossed it through the door. All went black.

I learned later that it was Fleming's British intelligence men that found me and brought me here to this hospital in London. The door was closed, and the changes that Hastur's presence had wrought — the colors, the mad music, the living dead — had all come to an end.

Fleming himself congratulated me on my victory, but honestly I don't feel victorious. How could any of us, knowing our world is such a fragile thing, and there are those in it foolish enough to put it at such risk? I don't even know how I survived.

And is it all truly over? Crowley, apparently, is missing. The war escalates. Some of the winged things — which Fleming called byakhee — are still loose in Antarctica, having disappeared into some heretofore unexplored mountain range of incredible size. But I can't let myself think about such things. My role in this is over. I don't know how long I'll be here, Thomas, but now that I am free of the jewel, I think perhaps I can finally rest quietly, at least for a time.

Sincerely,

Phillip