

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.

Dear Mr. Bode

7 August, 1930

As per your request, I am updating you on the condition of Phillip Shandler, a patient here at Rotterson State Mental Hospital. Mr. Shandler continues to receive the finest care available, I assure you. However, his condition is quite severe. He continues to have moments of extreme manic behavior, followed by long periods of catatonia. Unfortunately, during the periods of activity Mr. Shandler has shown a tendency for violent behavior, so he is kept under heavy sedation at all times. This is of course for his own protection, and the protection of others in the hospital. Nevertheless, this should not worry you. We have high hopes here for Mr. Shandler's recovery. For the time being, I assure you he is comfortable and well cared for. Thank you for your inquiry.

Sincerely,

Dr. Nicholas Smythe, MD
Rotterson State Mental Hospital

Dear Mr. Bode

22 September, 1930

I am writing to you regarding Mr. Phillip Shandler, a patient you admitted approximately eight weeks ago. I am pleased to report that Mr. Shandler's condition has improved. No longer afflicted by bouts of catatonia, he shows signs of coherent thought and behavior. We are highly encouraged by what we have seen. However, Mr. Shandler must still remain in our care for some time. His connection with reality remains tenuous and occasionally fleeting. His psychiatrist, Dr. Seymour Grant, is working with him daily. Dr. Grant reports that Mr. Shandler still insists on the reality of certain hallucinations. Although he does not seem as prone to fits of violence as he did in weeks past, we must keep him medicated and under close supervision. You should be extremely optimistic regarding Mr. Shandler's eventual recovery. This is the best possible expectation we could have in a case of psychological breakdown caused by a brief external stimulus as opposed to a hidden mania that grows over years.

Sincerely,

Dr. Nicholas Smythe, MD
Rotterson State Mental Hospital

Dear Thomas

October 3, 1930

Today they said that I could write to you. That is still difficult for me, so a nice nurse named Agnes is helping me with this letter. Thank you for bringing me here to Rotterson. They are helping me get well. I am feeling much better, and soon can receive visitors. Sometimes I have bad days, but I still like it here. I know now that all that business with the magic book and the dream people wasn't real. I am looking forward to seeing you again.

Your Friend,

Dear Thomas

Oct. 17

I am smuggling out this letter with a visitor here at the hospital. The doctors here would never allow me to get the truth out to you. My previous attempts at writing you in the last week have all been confiscated. While I know that you saved my life at the hands of Simon Carlisle, I am afraid that you inadvertently delivered me into the hands of the devil by bringing me here. Many devils, in fact. It has taken me a while to get my head cleared of the mind-numbing drugs that they give me here, but finally I can see with a clarity of vision. The doctors here, and even the majority of the nurses and orderlies, are cultists. Though I have not heard any of them specifically mention Nyarlathotep, I know that it is some dark, inhuman god that they hold dark rites to in the basement at night. The Necronomicon, of course, taught me much about the Old Ones and the dark gods. I know it could be any of them, but I suspect they serve dread Cthulhu himself. For as Cthulhu lies dreaming, so they wish for all of us in the hospital to lie dreaming as well, sleeping sacrifices for their hideous rituals. Their scheme is diabolical in its genius. They are not interested in killing us. Their rites are far too sophisticated for such a crass and cliché display. No, these cultists sacrifice our minds and our dreams to the foul master. Slowly, day by day, their drugs and their techniques slice razor thin slivers of our consciousness away. I can hear them whispering about it behind my back. When they know that I am listening, they communicate in code. Sometimes, they transmit their code to one another just in a series of eye blinks. That is how sophisticated they are. I have begun to suspect that they put special narcotics, harvested from some jungle plant unknown to science, in our food. This substance forces the patients to recite ghastly prayers and fetid chants to Cthulhu while we sleep. I have laid awake at night here in my bed

and heard these intonations from some of the others. At first, I was unable to make out what they were saying, but eventually realized that they spoke in the language of long-dead R'lyeh.

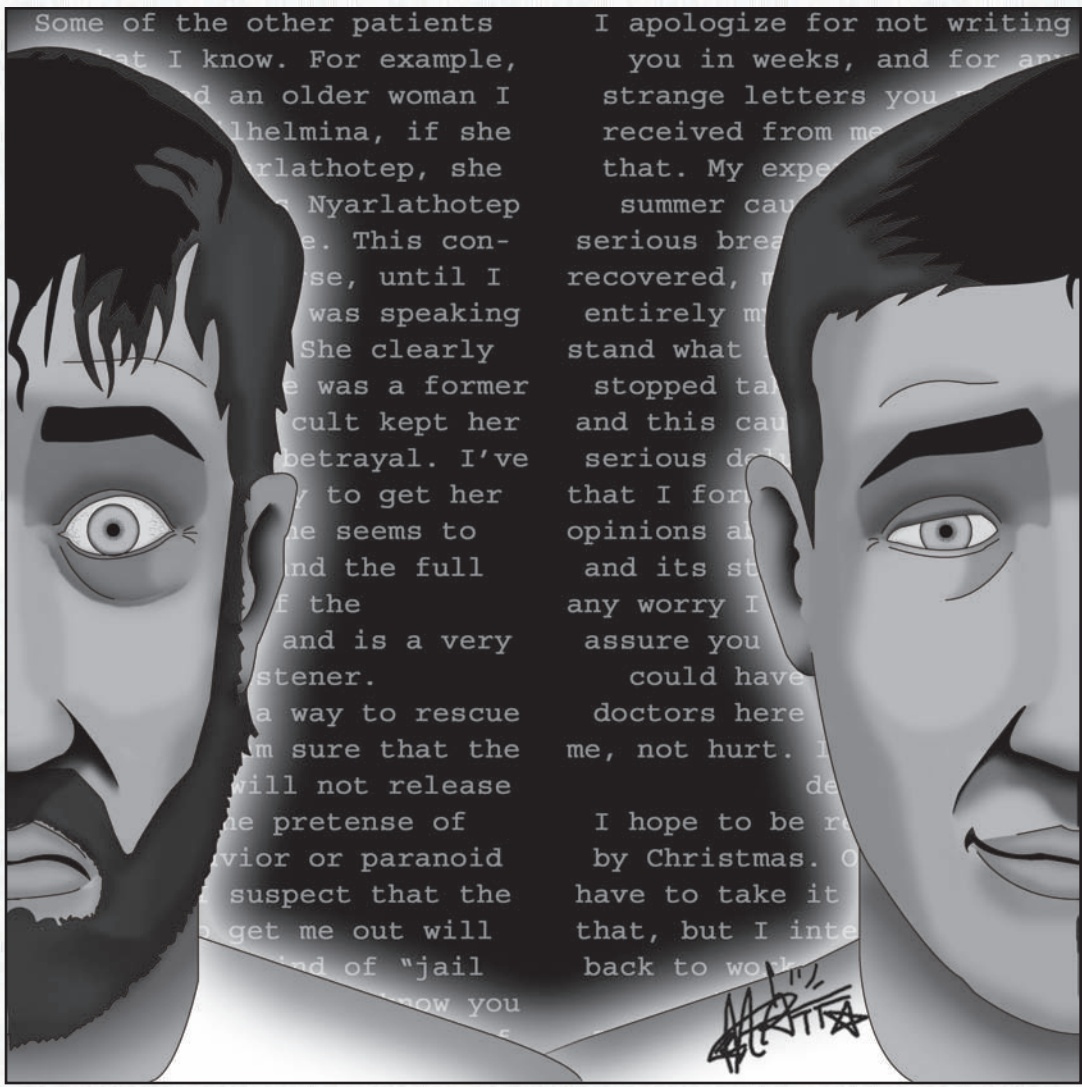
In the guise of psychiatry, a certain Doctor Grant uses words and phrases in rhythmic patterns during my meetings with him. Only yesterday did I realize that he wasn't actually talking to me, but that he was reciting the words to a cultist ritual, in code. Each session we have, he casts a web of mind-numbing spells over me, tearing at my conscious mind and offering it to Cthulhu himself.

Some of the other patients know what I know. For example, when I asked an older woman I know here, Wilhelmina, if she knew about Nyarlathotep, she said that she was Nyarlathotep in a previous life. This confused me, of course, until I realized that she was speaking metaphorically. She clearly indicated that she was a former cultist, and the cult kept her here now for her betrayal. I've got to find a way to get her out as well. She seems to really understand the full scope of the situation here, and is a very good listener.

You must find a way to rescue me, Thomas. I am sure that the doctors here will not release me under the pretense of violent behavior or paranoid delusions. I suspect that the only way to get me out will involve some kind of "jail break," as it were. I know you can come up with some kind of plan. You are extremely resourceful. Knowing that I still have allies outside this horrid halls keeps me going.

I anxiously await your response. Do not send it via normal post, as they not only read any incoming mail, but they chemically treat it with hypnotic drugs before giving it to a patient. I no longer touch any letters that arrive, thank you all the same.

Phillip



Dear Thomas

November 30th

I apologize for not writing to you in weeks, and for any strange letters you may have received from me previous to that. My experiences of this summer caused me to have a serious breakdown and even as I recovered, my mind was still not entirely my own, if you understand what I mean. For a time, I stopped taking my medication, and this caused me to have some serious delusions. I am afraid that I formed some rather absurd opinions about the hospital here and its staff. I apologize for any worry I may have caused, and assure you that nothing I said could have been true. The doctors here have only helped me, not hurt. I owe them a great deal. I hope to be ready for release by Christmas. Of course, I'll have to take it easy even after that, but I intend on returning back to work as early as I can in the new year. Thank you again for everything you've done for me, Thomas. And I do know what you have done. I may have a new perspective on things, but I haven't forgotten anything.

Sincerely,

Phillip