



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, May 14, 1931

Mexico is as hot and humid as you would expect. This is closer to the equator than this New England son thought he would see.

The voyage here was uneventful to the point of being dull. As I think I mentioned before, not many on board spoke English, with most of Professor Schultheiss' team being German or at least European.

I've learned a little about Schultheiss' financial backers, who I gather are not all German but some are Austrian. Apparently, these gents hope for Schultheiss to make some kind of grand discovery in Mexico. They seek proof for theories relating to a connection of the Latin American empires of old and other ancient peoples via some now long-lost civilization. I daresay that I do remember references in the Necronomicon about such things, and thus I begin to understand a bit more of why I am here. Schultheiss has more than once mentioned what a pity it is that I am no longer in possession of that book. It occurs to me that the Pnakotic Manuscripts, the book you obtained during your business with the Silver Moon Society, also had a fair bit to do with a sunken continent in the Pacific and the peoples of that strange, lost land. I never read all of that strange tome, however. Perhaps the Professor should have hired you as well.

I am currently somewhere south of a town called Merida. The jungle is thick and the road isn't much of a road. The team comprises three trucks and a car and the going is slow. My geography could use some work, but we're north-west of British Honduras in a province called Yukatan, headed for someplace called Quinana Roo and an ancient Mayan site called Uaxichal. Although it seems like everyone says it differently, the Professor says Yoo-ah-sha-kal, so that's the way I pronounce it as well. As I think I told you in my last letter, Uaxichal was entirely a ceremonial site, and much smaller and remote than nearby Chichen Itza.

I was hoping to get a letter or telegram for you in Progreso or Merida, but if I dare say it, all facilities are quite primitive here, so I imagine communication is no different. I won't be able to send this letter to you until someone on the team goes back to a town and carries it for me.

It's beastly hot here, Thomas, but the locals all assure us that it only gets hotter as the



summer wears on. I've taken to wearing a wide-brimmed hat to keep the sun off. After this May weather, I've no intention to find out what July or August are like here. I'm flying home out of the British Honduras in mid-June. It would be nice if I could hear from you before then, but I fear that's no longer a realistic possibility.

Sincerely,

Phillip

Dear Thomas, May 22, 1931

We've been in Uaxichal for a few days, now. Schultheiss, on our first full day at the site, showed me the main attraction, so to speak - a tall pyramid of dirty gray stone that rises up out of the foliage that entwines it. The overgrowth is so thick, in fact, that I'm not sure I wouldn't have walked right by it, assuming it to be a strange hill. The workers we hired in Merida started in that first day clearing away much of the vines and plants.

Schultheiss and Adele le Dor, the French Mayanist I mentioned before, showed me the strange Mayan symbols that they believed spoke of the worship of a strange blind god. This required us to climb up the steps of the pyramid, something I don't mind telling you that I hope I don't have to do too often. The steps seem impossibly steep, almost like they were not meant for human feet, and the stone is slick and crumbling. We used vines to aid our ascent, crawling on all fours more than walking. The top of the pyramid has a single dark room filled with faded paintings and carved symbols. The images were disturbing, filled with writhing serpents and strangely attired men with large, menacing eyes.

Of the entire team, only Professor Schultheiss has been here before. Apparently, he and a much smaller expedition came upon the site following some local legends about a cursed jungle spot where even the animals would not go. They found Uaxichal, but had neither the time or the resources to clear it or explore much.

Uaxichal is built around a geological formation called a cenote. This, if I understand correctly, is a water-filled cave not far from the surface that sometimes collapses, creating a small but deep crater-like lake. Uaxichal's cenote looks like a bowl about 150 feet across. Schultheiss believes that the Mayans threw human sacrifices into the lake, but Adele and most of the team disagree. As you probably know, the more commonly accepted belief is that the Mayans were a nonviolent, peace-loving folk, unlike the more bloodthirsty Aztecs that came later.

We first heard the piping sound the second night we were here. The Professor seemed to almost expect it, and was very curious the next morning of what I made of it. I described to him what I heard. At first, it seemed simply like the wind whistling, but as it continued it sounded more like fluting. It hadn't lasted long, and I never bothered to get out of my tent to investigate it. I joked that if it was fluting, the musician must have been deaf because it was as atonal and horrid a music as I had ever heard. As we ate our breakfast, everyone laughed at my comment (although it required translation for most). The laughter was a bit nervous, I noted,

as if the sounds had spooked some of the team. For myself, I figured that it was some jungle animal. Schultheiss said he had no idea what it was, but he said he'd heard it while he was here before.

Days passed. I had little to do, so I poked around the ruins and the cenote. All of Uaxichal, from what I could tell, was the large pyramid, a long stone colonnade, and two tall buildings built near the edge of the cenote, along with the remains of a platform that overlooked the depression and its lake.

By that time, Adele had made some progress in her translation, which was really astonishing to everyone involved. Her success in reading what, up until now, had been an indecipherable language, is sure to set the archeological world afire. She said that while she believed most Mayan writing was a record of kings, celestial movements, and important events, the symbols in the temple recorded sacrifices to the blind, idiot god, whose dire, monstrous servants dwelled in the cenote and fed on the flesh of sacrifices.

I told her that I had read of a blind, idiot god of ancient times that supposedly dwelled at the very center of the universe. She became very interested, but I assured her that the deity, known as Azathoth, was a figure of obscure Arabian myth, not Mayan.

"And this is from the Necronomicon," she asked.

I nodded, and assumed that the Professor must have told her about the book.

"That is exactly the kind of connection Professor Schultheiss is looking for," she said.

"I think it's probably more coincidence than connection."

The idea is somewhat disturbing, though, Thomas. Azathoth, according to the Necronomicon, is an insane, or perhaps mindless, entity that is the source of all creation—the very primordial soup, or primal chaos from which all things come. He, or it, is utterly oblivious of the people in its creation. We are not even gnats to him.

The disturbing part, though, is a reference I only half remember: that of strange, piping lesser gods that orbit Azathoth, playing their inhuman music of madness.

As I write this, I sit in my tent next to my dim lantern atop my bedroll.

The piping is playing outside. It comes from the cenote.

Sincerely,

Phillip