



# 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,

May 29, 1931

I don't know when you will get this, or any of my previous letters, but hopefully this will reach you eventually. There has been an incident here at our archeological site. People are pretty upset.

Do you ever get the feeling that trouble just follows some people? If that's true, I've got to be one of those people. Whether I'm back in Providence, or here, in the ancient Maya ruin known as Uaxichal, there's always trouble.

A man named Felix Schluter was a part of Professor Schultheiss' team. He was heavy set and kind of off-putting, in my opinion, not that I had any long conversations with him. He disappeared three nights ago. We searched the area—some of the others believed that he might have had a heart attack or collapsed in the heat. We never found a trace. Schultheiss used our radio to contact the local authorities and to send word to Schulters' family back in Europe via telegram. There was some talk about shutting down the expedition and going home, but Schultheiss wouldn't hear of it. He wanted Miss le Dor to continue her translations.

Last night, however, one of the Mexican workers, a man named Ramon Gutierrez, also disappeared. When questioned, a few of his friends said that Ramon had been kept up late each night, as he heard that strange piping sound.

The piping sound that I mentioned to you in the last letter, we determined, was the sound of some night birds. At least that's the popular opinion among the team. It's a strange, atonal sort of music. I suppose it could be birds, but I'd almost be happier to believe it was the wind blowing through the nearby cenote.

But there hasn't been any wind.

I wondered out loud a few days ago to the Professor if the Mayans might have built their temple pyramid here because the god they dedicated it to was known to be surrounded by servants playing pipes. He agreed, and said that my theory matched some of what Adele le Dor had found in the hieroglyphs.

This worried me greatly, Thomas, because my theory wasn't based on anything that I knew about Mayan gods (I don't know anything on the subject, really). It was based on what I'd read about Azathoth in the Necronomicon.

In any event, let me get back to Ramon. This morning, I helped in the search for the missing man. The team itself seemed less worried about



Ramon than they had been about Felix. A few of the men suggested that the "Mexicans were always running off." I, however, did not ascribe to their prejudices and to be honest saw an all-too-disturbing trend in the disappearances of the two men.

About noon today, I stood on the edge of the cenote, looking around. I spied something down on the rocks near the water's edge. Something white and out of place, like a rag or some cloth. This kind of geological formation has sheer rock walls, and is covered with vegetation, so I couldn't just climb down on my own. It took some convincing, but I got some of Ramon's coworkers to lower me down on a rope when they were done with their duties. That was about dusk, but there was still some light.

It did not take too long to get down to the water's edge. I noted a strange, oily smell that I couldn't quite identify.

Dangling from the rope secured around my waist and my chest, I could see that the object I'd seen was the remnants of a torn shirt. It hung from a thorny plant and did not look like it had been there long. I strained to reach it, but from where I hung it was still a few feet away.

As I looked around, I realized that unlike up top, there were no buzzing, biting insects. (There are some really nasty green and yellow flies here that I have really grown to hate.) In fact, I saw no sign of animal life at all. I found that strange, and planned on asking the men about it when I got back up.

I yelled up for the men holding me to swing the rope a bit. (I should point out, less you think me too foolhardy, Thomas, that the rope was also secured around the trunk of a stout tree.) It took a while for me to get my point across, as I've only mastered a few words in Spanish and they know only a little English.

Two of the men leaned over the edge to sway the rope, and got me moving a bit. I tried to use my weight to help, and stretched toward the shirt. Suddenly, the two men began shouting in Spanish. It sounded like "Hay algo en el agua!" and "Criatura!" but I'm not sure. They disappeared over the edge.

Then I heard something from below me, stirring in the water. I was only about six or seven feet above the water's surface, and when I had been lowered down, the water was perfectly calm. Now the water was churning.

I looked down only for a moment, and saw what looked like a dark shape under the water, but honestly it could have been my own shadow in the dying rays of the sun, swinging above. I looked back up and saw that I was moving close to the shirt. I stretched out my arm as much as I could to grab it.

And then I heard the piping sound. It was like what I had heard on the previous nights - a cacophony of high-pitched sounds, almost like someone playing a damaged clarinet, or perhaps a number of such instruments. It was coming from directly below me.

I missed the shirt.

Now I was swinging away from it, and I thought to look down, but something in me (perhaps something I'd learned in the mental hospital months ago) told me not to. Better not to look, I thought, which if you think about it doesn't really seem like me. A new survival instinct settling in? I don't know.

The strange, oily smell grew stronger.

It wasn't night birds singing below me either, I know that much. There was a presence - a singular presence-that I could somehow feel.

The men up top were still shouting in Spanish, and so I looked up rather than down. I couldn't see them-perhaps they were afraid to look down as well. Frankly, I was happy to know that they had not run off. Then I caught a voice in English, shouting loudly, "Hang on, Senior!"

I was swinging back toward the shirt when I felt the tug upward. They were going to haul me

up. On that last swing I lunged for the shirt and just managed to snag it with my thumb.

I held onto the very edge of the ragged shirt with my thumb and forefinger, afraid that if I tried to adjust my grip I might drop it. I couldn't see them, but I could feel those digits turning red and then white with my tight but sweaty grip. At that point, I just held onto the rope with my other hand and, frankly, closed my eyes, feeling that presence get fainter and fainter with each jerk from the rope, lurching me upward in awkward tugs. The odor faded, but the piping sound did not.

As I neared the top, the rocky wall got closer to me, and I could feel vines and leaves rubbing against my side. I opened my eyes and used my legs to walk up the side of the cenote wall, and when I got close to the top I hurled the shirt ahead up and over the side and then just climbed.

The men tried to ask me what I saw, and what was down there as they gathered around me at the cenote's edge. When I told them that I didn't actually see anything, they seemed almost not to believe me. Then someone looked at the shirt. One of the men identified it as being the shirt that Ramon was wearing yesterday. It was torn and covered in blood.

I took the shirt to the camp and told the Professor what had happened. It was clear that the man was dead. At first he said that Ramon had probably fallen. I asked him to explain how a man, falling over the side of a cliff can, on the way down, fall out of his shirt.

He sighed, and stared at me for a long time. "As I told you, Phillip," he said in his thick accent, "I needed a man who is accustomed to strange happenings. This is now your duty. Your job on this expedition. I don't want this danger - whatever it is - to put a halt to our work here."

That was just a few minutes ago. Now I'm back in my tent, wondering what to do. Did Schultheiss know that there was some kind of danger, perhaps even some kind of creature here? Is that why he hired me? I have no idea what I am supposed to do about it. Honestly, if I had some way of finding my way out of this jungle, I'd consider just leaving.

But even if I could, I don't know if I would leave everyone behind. I think these people - all of us, in fact - are in real danger.

As I write this, I can still here the fluting sounds.

Sincerely,

*Phillip*