



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, June 4, 1931

More people have disappeared. The local workers Professor Schultheiss hired are getting ready to leave Uaxichal. I'm considering leaving with them. Something has stirred in this old Mayan temple-city.

About the only thing keeping me here is Adele le Dor. She's really had some amazing breakthroughs regarding the translation of the Mayan writing. She is sure to win some kind of Nobel Prize for her work. Despite my fears, it is exciting to see her work.

Yesterday, she translated the following from a temple wall:

"The Blind Idiot God floats with his attendants playing their tuneless music. He rules all but is aware of nothing."

As I mentioned to you previously, that reference to a "Blind Idiot God" sounds a lot like the being that Necronomicon calls "Azathoth," a being of primal power and importance.

Then it says:

"He is not gone, never moving, but shall return."

I'm not sure what to make of that line. Finally, the last line reads:

"His return shall be preceded by his herald with a thousand forms, the chaos that crawls."

That reference I know. All too well. "The chaos that crawls," or the "Crawling Chaos," is the name which has haunted me for these many months: Nyarlathotep. This horrible entity precedes the return of the Old Ones, which, to put it plainly, is the end of the world. Azathoth, though, I never knew what to make of that one. He - it - is supremely powerful but ultimately unaware, like a vast cosmic joke. A god you cannot pray to, for why would he ever notice your prayers? I wonder what the Mayan priests here thought of him. When I told Schultheiss all of this, he speculated that the priests weren't revering him out of wanting anything, but simply because a god of such power deserves veneration.

For myself, unless we're missing something here, I'll assume that they were mad, and they thought that if they said their prayers and offered their sacrifices, Azathoth would look favorably upon them, or maybe would simply spare them when the end came. Assuming that Azathoth is real - and I pray to my own Christian god that he is not - either seems unlikely. If a man, in walking about, crushes an anthill without even seeing it, do the prayers of the ants matter?

These are grim musings, but I am in a grim mood. I believe that the thing in the nearby cenote lake still looks for sacrifices. We hear its unnerving piping music every night now.

Sincerely,

Phillip

Dear Thomas, June 21, 1931

I think it was a spell.

This time last year I would never have thought such a thing. At least I don't think I would have. In any event, I've seen some strange things and read about more, and using that experience and knowledge, I think the ancient Mayan priests embedded a spell within their religious writings on the walls of the temple. I think that our very ability to figure out what they said was our undoing.

Let me back up a few weeks.

The hired locals left, leaving only the remaining seven of us from Schultheiss' team: five Germans, Adele le Dor, and myself. We all had taken to keeping close while we worked and while we slept. A few more days and nights passed, and everyone was fine. Perhaps, we began to think, it was all some sort of coincidence. Although I did not forget my experience hanging by a rope near the water's surface, and the thing, whatever it was, that came up out of the cenote. Although I had not actually seen anything, I knew what I heard, and what I felt.

Then Adele cracked an important bit of translation. She was very excited, and all of us wanted to know what she had learned. We all climbed to the treacherous top of the temple pyramid that evening so she could show us the last few day's work. She carefully recited the last few lines from the back wall interior of the temple:

"The Blind Idiot God gave unto us a servitor, who shall be a guide and our master."

As she translated, I thought to myself: if this is the same being that I read about in the Necronomicon, I still believe that they think of him as too purposeful, and too active. One might as well assign such attributes to a storm or a mountain. But the mention of a servitor...

"He came down from the stars and brought with him power unknown to any in this world, that changed the world."

"We shall build this, our temple, near the site of god's fingerprint."

Adele stopped there and mentioned that it might not be "fingerprint," but "footprint." And that the god in question may or may not be the Blind Idiot God. Was the "servitor" also a god? We didn't know. She then continued:

"And we shall call to him to accept our gifts and our devotion by the water's edge. And we shall call..."

I dare not write more of that. I think that it was Adele's translation and our understanding of it which caused what happened next. When she was finished with the last line, the whole temple shuddered. The stone under our feet crackled like a newspaper and cracks formed on the ceilings and walls, accompanied by a rain of dust.

One of the team, a man named Becker, ran to the temple entrance and looked out into the dusk-filled jungle. I knew that from the top of the pyramid, one gained a commanding view of the surrounding areas, all the way to the cenote. Becker began to say something in German, but his voice was overwhelmed by the other voice.

We all heard it. A terrible, shrill voice that almost seemed to be singing rather than speaking. Its atonal song was composed of words whose meaning were beyond us all, but which still carried a significance that somehow impressed itself upon our brains. These were words so terrible that even though the language lay beyond my comprehension, their very utterance exuded a sort of intent. If language appeals to one's higher brain function for understanding these words contained another level that drove their substance into my lower brain as well. Perhaps this comprehension came about as a result of something in the collective unconscious – an ancient racial memory. Perhaps it was a voice accustomed to addressing mankind in a far less evolved state, as something inchoate that had just crawled from the evolutionary soup of the primordial sea.

However we knew, we knew what it meant. The voice spoke of a primal hunger of not just flesh, but of mind. Without realizing it, we were all screaming.

Becker was first. A long, wet tendril of glistening flesh came from outside the temple and tore him from where he stood with such force and speed that grisly portions of the man remained inside.

Then more tendrils reached into the structure. They used the opening at the front as well as crevices all around us, some having just been created by the recent upheaval, some old but hidden from us until now – perhaps purposefully placed there for just such utility?

I watched as the tendrils claimed Professor Schultheiss with their death-dealing touch. He died quickly, and screaming.

As the things reached about inside the temple, I realized that they were looking for something specific. That was when it occurred to me – it was a spell.

A spell of summoning or calling. The creature outside – the millennia-old inhabitant of the

cenote, the servitor of Azathoth – was looking for Adele. Ducking past two flailing tendrils I ran for her at the back of the square chamber.

"Adele!" I shouted pathetically. I reached out for her, my mind scrambling for some way to protect her even as the carnage around me reached a fever pitch.

But the tendrils dribbled some awful, organic slime as they grasped about. My foot fell upon a glob of the slippery stuff and the next thing I knew, my face struck the stone floor.

Before I could even glance upward, I heard Adele's scream suddenly cut short. I didn't have to look.

Then, the calling of the spell completed, the tendrils drew back and disappeared. I was still screaming. The horrible remains of the team lay all around me. Gathering what wits I had remaining, I staggered to the entrance of the temple, and looked around. And then up.

I only saw the newly appearing stars in the night sky. But the sight of them was not beautiful, it was terrifying. What horrors lay in the endless gulf that I looked upon then?

The rest of the tale is harrowing, but forgetful. I stumbled into the jungle and thrashed about for what may have been days before I was fortunate enough to have been found by some of the local people. I told them nothing of what had happened, except to give them vague warnings about Uaxichal. Though I spoke no language they understood, I got the feeling that I was telling them something they already knew without any help from me.

It took a great deal of time, but they helped me reach the city of Merida, where I write this letter to you. Somehow, I hope to make my way back to America soon, but I am without money or means at the moment.

I am so tired, Thomas. Tired of seeing what I have seen, and knowing what I know. Maybe even a little tired of surviving.

Phillip

