



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 4, 1938

First of all, I apologize for being out of contact for so long. Since returning to work after my long convalescence, I've been extremely busy. Thanks to the upturn in the economic outlook, clients have flowed steadily through my door. Most of them, of course, have been wives looking for philandering husbands or business owners looking for swindling employees. But I have no complaints. Such is my bread and butter.

Three nights ago, however, something more interesting occurred. You know I like to keep late hours, and so as usual, that evening found me still in my office. I was stirred from a reverie regarding old cases by the sound of dogs barking. I assumed the disturbance to be little more than a tomcat straying into an unwelcome alleyway and thought little of it. What truly caught my attention was when the dogs all ceased to bark. Like a lightswitch, they quieted down instantly and, stranger still, simultaneously. I peered through the blinds down into the lamp-lit street but saw nothing.

As I settled back into my desk chair to return to my ruminations, I heard a knock on my door. Before I could say or do anything, the door opened. A man stood in the doorway, tall and gaunt like a peal of thunder given life. "Mr Shandler," he said in a quiet voice. "May I come in?"

"What's this about?" I asked him.

"I have need of your services, obviously." He had manner about him that suggested that he had had this conversation with me before, and could barely work up the enthusiasm to have it again. Of course, I'd never seen him before.

I told him to come in, and he did. I'm a crack-erjack at nailing a man's age but this old gent presented a challenge. That he was old was obvious. At least sixty by the tone of his skin and the wrinkles about his eyes. I would be tempted to say that he was far older, in fact, but he moved like a much younger fellow. His hair was thin but still dark. His eyes were pale, as though much of the life had faded from them long ago.

He told me his name was Ambrose Killian. He refused my offer for a seat, and clearly wanted to get right to business. So we did. I asked him what he needed me to do.

"I seek papers of great importance."

"What kind of papers?"

He paused, and looked at me as though he had never considered I would ask that question,

despite its clearly obvious nature. Finally he said, "Scientific papers."

I told Killian I wasn't much of a man of science. He smiled and said it didn't matter. In fact, he thought it was for the best. He explained that these were the papers of someone named Charles Dexter Ward, but that they may also be found under the name Allen. Ward and Allen did some research based on some earlier work done by someone named Curwen. Ward and Allen had passed on, and Curwen was more than a hundred years dead. Killian gave me assurances that he had every right to the research, but wouldn't give me any details as to its nature. When I mentioned that it made things much harder that way, he offered me a great deal of money. He even paid up front.

I took the job, of course. Mr. Killian left quickly after.

I started to ask around about these men the next day. Of Allen and Curwen, I found nothing. As for Ward, he came from a prominent local family, but he passed away ten years ago after spending some time in an asylum. His father died a few years later, and his mother was in yet another asylum out of state.

It's what happened the next evening, Thomas, that has prompted me to write.

I was visiting the site of a small country house Ward had owned in Pawtuxet. The day grew late, and finding little of interest, I sat in my car getting ready to head back home when I saw a strange shimmer of light in the woods. I got back out and, grabbing a flashlight, I walked into the trees to find the source of the strange illumination. As ludicrous as it sounds, one moment the sun was setting in the relatively clear twilight and the next the sky was filled with dark clouds and flashes of lightning. Where the storm came from, I have no idea. The wind howled and I expected rain any second. Still, I saw the strange light. It was violet in color, and pulsing slightly. A bit closer I saw that it was a jewel imbedded into the ground as if it had fallen from a great height. No, that's not entirely accurate. What it truly seemed was that it had been buried deep in the ground and had somehow, over some vast stretch of time, wormed its way up to the surface.

As I stood there gaping at this strange site, I was knocked on my backside by some terrible force and flash of light. When I could see again, my ears ringing, I realized that I'd been near a



lightning strike. In fact, as I stood, I saw that it was the violet jewel that had been struck! I had dropped my flashlight, which had gone out, but the light of the purple gem lit the area well enough. I advanced a step toward it, and lightning struck, yet again! When I'd recovered from that nearby blast, I ran back to my car. From that vantage, I saw the jewel struck four more times during the storm. I know how impossible that sounds, but I assure you it is the truth. This was too strange not to investigate further. When the storm had passed, I went to the gem and found it not only undamaged, but cool to the touch. It was a simple matter to dig it up and bring it to the car. I don't know much about gemology, but the lustrous thing is a bit larger

than my fist and cut into smooth facets. It's on my desk now as I write this.

Do you have any knowledge of such things you can share? Have you heard of such a stone, or an occurrence like that in a thunderstorm? I await your reply.

Sincerely,

Phillip Shandler

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THE SHANDLER CHRONICLES
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