



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
188 Gibson Lane
Providence, Rhode Island

Dear Thomas,

Sept 16, 1938

I do not know how long it will take for this to reach you back in America, but I hope it makes its way with haste. I have found England to be a green and pleasant land, as they say, or rather I imagine it would be such a place were it not shrouded in a cloud of fear. The people here are truly worried about war in Europe, which many believe to be inevitable. The prime minister is in Germany even now talking with their leader, attempting to negotiate a peaceful resolution to the growing tensions.

Your friend, "John Morris," has much to say about Adolf Hitler. Morris - or rather, Crowley, as I mentioned to you by cable - says that the German chancellor and his inner circle are quite involved in the occult. And after spending a "fortnight," as they say here, with Mr. Aleister Crowley I must admit that I would trust his instincts and knowledge about virtually any occult topic.

Crowley is a fascinating fellow. I don't mind telling you that he frightens me a bit. Bald and heavily built, he is nevertheless quick in body as well as mind for a man that I presume must be at least sixty. He has traveled the world, and the stories he has of mystical ceremonies, secret societies, and strange occurrences outdo even the occult-related events of my own life. He spends most of his time in the company of a woman named Adriana, who speaks with an accent that at times seems Slavic and at times almost Indian. Her skin is the color of coffee with cream, her eyes are deep and dark, and her extremely long hair sometimes seems to move with a life of its own. She is as steeped in occult lore as Crowley himself and has a way of looking at me that makes me feel as though I have no secrets from her. Adriana is beautiful, Thomas, but in the way a foreboding storm looming on the horizon is beautiful.

I have spent much of my time here conferring with both of them regarding the words of the whispering voice I heard from the mystic jewel, the Star of Unseen Stars, and the visions it showed me in its unearthly light. If you remember, it said, "He waits beyond the veil. He waits for safe passage." Then, after it showed me titanic, inhuman structures and creatures, it said, "The veil shall be rent at the bottom of your world by the Teutonic Knights and their Vrilya allies."

Crowley believes that "Teutonic Knights" is a direct reference to the Nazis in Germany interested in the occult. It was Adriana, however, that knew of the Vrilya, who she claims are the remnants of an antediluvian people that dwell deep within the earth. An idealized, "master race," they utilize some kind of powerful occult force or substance called vril. The Nazis, apparently, lust after vril as a source of power for their own dark designs. Upon hearing her description of the Vrilya, Crowley expressed skepticism that they are human at all. He believes them to be beings of some alternate nature entirely, from before man's time on the planet.

We all agreed that any action by either the Nazis or the Vrilya most likely holds nothing but ill for the rest of us, and Crowley seemed particularly moti-



vated to take action. I am still not sure I understand enough of what's going on to do anything, but Crowley is, if nothing else, extremely compelling. He even convinced me to produce the jewel itself and show it to him directly. I had originally planned, of course, to keep the fact that I had it with me on my trip a secret, but both he and his mysterious companion saw through that quickly.

Their individual reactions to the Star of Unseen Stars were very different. Crowley stared at it for a silent hour (or more), turning it over and over in his hands. Adriana, however, took one hard look at it and then left the room, agreeing to re-enter only after it was placed back in my steamer trunk. Later, as if emerging from a trance, Crowley mumbled something about tests that could be conducted to further analyze the stone, but agreed that for now, it should be kept under wraps - particularly after I told him about the monstrous creatures that had seemingly been drawn to it over the last few months.

Today we leave for London. Crowley wants to introduce me to a military man named Fleming who may be able to shed further light on the occult-related interests of those in power in Germany. With each day, I feel that I am in quite over my head. I wish you were here with me, Thomas. Crowley is knowledgeable and charismatic, but not an entirely pleasant companion. Adriana, frankly, terrifies me.

Enclosed is the address in London where you can reach me, should you wish to pen a reply. I hope you do.

Sincerely,

Phillip Shandler