



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,

November 4, 1938

Adriana has the Star of Unseen Stars. There is no other conclusion for me to draw, Thomas. When we left London three days ago, I thought it curious that she was not with us. My companion, Aleister Crowley, did not seem overly concerned by her absence at the time, and Lieutenant Fleming seemed almost relieved. He clearly did not care for her. I suspect that like me, he felt nervous even in her presence. There was just something about her, Thomas. Her beauty could not be denied, but it was a dark beauty, like a dire storm rolling in from the horizon. Her long black hair was particularly strange in a way that I cannot quite define. It reacted sometimes, as though moved by a breeze, but in moments where there was no breeze. Sometimes even when we were indoors, at one of the strange occult gatherings or parties that she and Crowley took me to.

At first, Crowley would not even consider that Adriana took the jewel. He said her mysterious absence was typical of her behavior.

"She comes and goes as she wishes, young Phillip," he said. "She has more in common with the wind or the rain than a woman. She is a force of nature."

I was unimpressed with this explanation, but that's just the way the man talks most of the time. Eventually, however, he was forced to admit that the temptation of the Star of Unseen Stars was perhaps too much for her. "It calls out to all of us," he said. I knew that it seemed to draw supernatural creatures to it - the shambler in my office and the creature on the ship were evidence enough of that. But until then, I did not realize that it had the same effect on people. There does seem to be some truth to it, however.

The loss of the stone is a very palpable thing. Even packed away in the steamer trunk I'd carried it in across the Atlantic, I felt a comfort knowing it was safe. That it was mine. I'm not certain if this was some kind of influence of the stone, as Crowley suggests, or simply a desire to keep it out of the wrong hands that so desperately seem to desire it.

Crowley wants to hold a séance here tonight. We're in a safehouse somewhere in the south of England-I'm not even sure the name of the quiet little town, but we're close enough to the sea to smell the salt in the air. In any event, he seems to believe that he can learn Adriana's location from someone or something named Aiwass, who he contacts in a trance. But he wants my help, and Fleming's as well. I'll let you know what transpires.

Sincerely,

Phillip

Dear Thomas,

November 5, 1938

Events from last night were remarkable, to say the least! As I told you, Aleister Crowley wanted to conduct a ceremony to contact a spiritual entity named Aiwass in order to find Adriana, who stole the Star of Unseen Stars.

We gathered in a small drawing room in this safehouse. At half past eleven, Fleming, another intelligence officer named Fitzsimmons, and I sat in a triangle formation on a large rug with Crowley in the middle. Candles and incense burned around us while Crowley chanted and sang.



Mostly, I watched Crowley but occasionally I glanced at my other companions. Fleming was captivated, but Fitzsimmons was having none of it, I could tell.

"Horus," Crowley said finally, "send your farseeking guide, your prophet and messenger, your avatar and herald to me now. Aiwass, I call upon your senses yet again, old friend. Aid me."

A voice suddenly replied. "I am here."

I looked around. It was as if the candlelight congealed above Crowley, whose eyes were closed. The rest of the room darkened, but above him the light took shape - the vague image of a man appeared. But the man was like no one I had seen. His head was large and bald, his eyes vast and dark.

Until then, I must admit, I had my doubts about Crowley, believing him to be more talk than substance. But this was no trick. Aiwass was among us. Crowley sat unmoving, and everyone else stared at the vaguely gold and green spirit. Aiwass looked directly at me with eyes like the depths of a midnight sky.

"The one you seek lies far to the west, in her ancestral home. She has the jewel from beyond, and has it well protected by innocents. Beware her venomous brethren."

Then the room went dark. Fitzsimmons turned on the electric lights, and Aiwass was gone. Crowley lay unconscious on the floor.

Fleming and I managed to get Crowley into his bed. He stirred just for a moment, whispering the word, "ater" a few times before falling back into unconsciousness.

I did not sleep at all. Somehow, despite all I have seen, that image of Aiwass unsettled me greatly. Those eyes, Thomas - they looked right into the very core of my being as he spoke. I assume that when he finally awakens, Crowley will be able to tell us more about Adriana's ancestral home, and perhaps what those other references meant.

Once again, Thomas, I am in well over my head.

Sincerely,

Phillip