



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, December 23, 1938

It has been some weeks since I've had a chance to write. I hope you are well. Thank you for your letters of support. I am now in the Free City of Danzig. How I got here is a bit of a tale.

After we learned that Crowley's companion, Adriana, had stolen the Star of Unseen Stars, Crowley and Fleming did a little research, contacting various sources to learn that the "ancestral home" that the spirit Aiwass had referred to was in fact Chanov Castle south of the Carpathian Mountains. Crowley had known that she came from this region originally, but both men agreed that we should be certain of her precise location before leaving England. I don't know how much you've been following eastern European political news, Thomas, but the entire area is in upheaval.

As you perhaps know, the Germans are in the process of reclaiming much of Czechoslovakia. As part of an agreement signed just a few weeks ago, the region in which Chanov Castle lies, Carpathian Rus, was given over to Hungary. In response, the people there wish to declare their independence from everyone around them. It is a confusing and dangerous time there now. In the meantime, though, we have our own political intrigues. But first things first.

Once we determined that Adrianna had stolen my jewel, and where she had gone, we had to figure out how to recover it. A covert mission to Chanov Castle, obviously, was in order. Fleming seemed to relish the idea of getting out of England and into a field mission. Despite his advanced years, Crowley insisted on going as well. And obviously I would go. Fleming gathered a team of British Intelligence agents, including Fitzsimmons, whom I had already met.

Unfortunately, bureaucratic issues with Fleming's superiors and poor weather in the North Sea delayed our trip for a few weeks. At that point, I could not have cared less about the impending holidays. I felt the loss of the gem as a palpable thing. It was, Thomas, like perpetually being out of breath. Finally, late in the month of December, we took a small ship across the channel at night. We were eight in total. I had taken to carrying a firearm in my satchel. Everyone else was armed as well except for Crowley, who seemed content with an elaborately carved walking stick, the ends shod in iron. Early the next morning - none of us slept - we boarded a steamer that took us into the North Sea.

Winter travel in those waters is, to say the least, unpleasant. Even the hardiest of us succumbed to seasickness as our ship tossed upon the white waves. All of us, that is, except for Crowley. Since leaving England, he had become extremely quiet and subdued, but also seemed possessed of a strength I had not witnessed before. A solidity. When he did speak, the timbre of his voice carried with it a hint of something new, but not unfamiliar.

It wasn't until we were on board the steamer that I recognized it. Hidden within the man's normal cadence was the voice of Aiwass, his spiritual guide. Unlike most of us, he spent much of the journey standing upon the deck of the ship in a long black coat, as unmoving as a fixture.



I did not want to speculate what the man had done, but something unnatural seemed to be behind his change in demeanor and fortitude. In truth, however, I did not have much time to observe. I was as sick as I have ever been lying in the crude bunk below deck. I did not even have time to worry about attacks from sea creatures as had happened in my voyage across the Atlantic, but as far as I know, nothing of the kind occurred. Of course, we did not have the Star of Unseen Stars in our possession, and that likely made all the difference.

In Denmark, we left our ship - none too sad to never see its cursed insides again - and boarded yet another boat, this time sailing across the Baltic to Danzig. This trip was better. Harshly cold, but the seas were friendlier.

This bustling port city is a strange entity. Though not a part of Germany, the Nazi party is in control in Danzig, and I must say their symbols and propaganda posters, found everywhere, are disturbing on a level I cannot quite put my finger upon. I can't read the writing on the posters, for example, but they are still not a little sinister. There is a presence here that hangs over the city like a looming shadow.

Though we have travelled far, the Star of Unseen Stars still seems very distant. Our journey from here is overland and through dangerous territory. Wish us luck.

Sincerely,

Phillip