



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, January 17, 1939

Here in the mountains of Carpathian Rus, the winter is unkind. Tremendous snowstorms have besieged us here as we wait outside Chanov Castle, watching for clues as to what is going on, and waiting for the right moment to attempt to regain the Star of Unseen Stars (called by some the Star of Fallen Stars), stolen by Aleister Crowley's former companion, Adriana.

The nearby city of Mukachevo is currently buried under the onslaught of snow and ice. We have not seen anyone from outside the immediate region in days. The passes, it would seem, are all impassible.

When we first arrived, the British intelligence officer, Lieutenant Ian Fleming, thought we could make an immediate assault on the castle. However, a reconnaissance mission lead by Fitzsimmons revealed that Adriana had taken hostages and held them with her in the castle.

The hostages were all children.

Fitzsimmons said that each child had a peculiar collar around their neck, like something you might fit around a dog. When he said this, I noted a look of momentary recognition on Crowley's face. When I asked him about it later, he did not reply. As was usual now.

When some of Fleming's men went into the city to make some inquiries, we learned that indeed, there had been a rash of mysterious disappearances of children, aged 5 to 12. Worse, two of the children had been found, dead. In fact, they had been decapitated, with a strange collar either still around their neck or lying nearby. We surmised that these two poor children were meant to be warnings. The children she had kidnapped had been fitted with some kind of devices which would sever their young necks at Adriana's wish, or so our theory went. No one in Mukachevo seemed to know that she had their children, however. The locals rarely had visited the place.

Personally, I wondered if perhaps the collars were creations of some eldritch power that Adriana commanded. I was certain that this was true. I mentioned it to Fleming, and he simple regarded me in that manner of his, indicating that while what I said might be true, he did not want to contemplate it.

I can sympathize.

Lieutenant Fleming was more interested in other, more mundane but equally disturbing news. Adriana had arrived at the ancient castle a bit more than a month ago, but others had taken up residence in the formerly abandoned structure months before that. A few people in Mukachevo had been to Chanov Castle in those early days, delivering supplies. While they had not seen any children there—the disappearances were reported since Adriana's arrival—they had noted that the men bore symbols that Fleming knew. These men were Nazis. And not just Nazis, but members of the Thule Society, an arcane order within the party interested in harnessing a mysterious supernatural energy known as Vril. You likely remember me writing about it a few months ago.

The Thule Society, Fleming had told me back then, was likely the greatest threat that his small division faced. He had learned that they not only knew about the



Star of Unseen Stars but desired it. This meant that Adriana was in league with them. It also tied directly to the vision that the stone had given me back in America regarding the inhuman Vril-Ya and their "Teutonic Allies" opening a door "at the bottom of the world." I still was not sure of the nature of the Vril-Ya, but it was clear that Adriana and the Thule were the allies.

As I contemplated this earlier just today, however, Crowley came into the room where I sat, trying to keep warm with a mug of bitter coffee. Without preamble, he said to me, "Adriana is not human."

"What do you mean?" I asked him.

"Far older is she, hailing from a realm both difficult to find as well as understand. A place of eternal darkness."

"Why didn't you tell me this before, Crowley?"

Then his expression changed. He looked at me a long time with a flat gaze that made me wonder if he truly saw me at all. Finally, he said, "Crowley didn't know. She fooled him."

Crowley is an odd man, and odder still—far odder—since the séance where we contacted his spirit guide, Aiwass. But he did not regularly refer to himself in the third person. The man walked slowly away, back into the other room in the small farmhouse we had made our base of operations. He ignored further questions.

But now I believe that my suspicions are true. Crowley is no longer Crowley. He is Aiwass. And this revelation about Adriana makes a great deal of sense as well. I wonder if she is one of the Vril-Ya.

It is all coming together, but not in way that makes me feel relieved or happy.

Sincerely,

Phillip