



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, April 18, 1939

I apologize for the fact that you have not heard from me in quite some time. Probably since New Years, although I'm uncertain you likely received some of the letters I wrote around that time, in that remote region. Truthfully, I wonder if you have received any letters since I left England. And, of course, I have not heard from you since that time, but that is to be expected. In this package, you will find the letters that I wrote over the last few months but – for reasons which will become obvious when you read them – I could not even attempt to send.

I am not ready to write more of the harrowing and strange events after the last letter was written. I am sure you will understand. The nurse here assures me that she will mail this package.

Sincerely,

Dear Thomas, May 13, 1939

I got your letter! It was so very good to hear from you after all this time and to learn that you received at least some of my letters, including the last package. Your letter asked many questions. I will try to answer some of them now.

I write to you from my bed in a hospital in western Czechoslovakia, which as you know has been virtually taken over by German occupying forces. Technically, "Czechoslovakia" no longer truly exists. Some villagers found me wandering in the wilderness – I am not certain where. They brought me to a hospital. The language barrier was a problem, and I was malnourished, dehydrated, and delirious. Eventually I was brought here, a



larger hospital in Ostrava, where there is a nurse here that speaks fluent English.

Brana, the nurse, brought me some books to read, at my behest. I wanted to try to find out more information about what I'd experienced. One of the books was called Kniha Tajomstiev, or "Book of Secrets." She has helped me translate some of it. From that, I believe that the mysterious place in which I

had apparently spent months was a place called Vadoma, a city known to practitioners of the occult as one far removed from our world. Another planet? Another dimension? I do not know, and apparently, neither did the anonymous writer of *Kniha Tajomstiev*. Neither did he know of who built it, or where they had gone. But I did learn yet one more name.

The thing that ended my time there – the thing that Adriana had come to find – was a Great Old One named Hastur.

On that last day in Vadoma, Adriana used the Star of Unseen Stars to call forth Hastur, who is associated with the city as well as some other named Carcosa, which the book calls its “far-off twin.” Hastur arrived in the heart of a terrible storm that I had been certain would tear the city apart, brick by brick. The power and size of it was unlike anything I'd ever experienced, and Hastur was its fuel. As I stared at the colossal figure approaching wreathed in storm clouds, my mind seemed to seize like an engine without oil. I stopped functioning. But still events were in motion all around me. Adriana had taken a position on a high tower of purple and green stone. She was not far from me, but paid me no heed.

In my time in Vadoma, I had noted small, darting shapes alive within the city's shadows. At that moment, I realized that those had been, surprisingly, cats. As Hastur approached, the streets and rooftops seethed with cats. Some appeared as normal housecats, but others were larger, and more primal. All had a glint of unmistakable intelligence – although who has not seen such glimmers in the cats we have here on Earth as well?

In any event, even as Adriana called to Hastur for some inhuman, unspeakable, and (perhaps thankfully) unknowable purpose, the cats swarmed toward the storm-cloaked entity in the thousands. In the millions. I could not see what happened from that distance, but it was as if a man was assailed by a swarm of locusts the way that the Great Old One thrashed as the felines advanced. Lightning and thunder crashed, destroying whole sections of the city.

Finally, I got my wits about me enough to move. I descended a winding stair to a bridge that connected to the tower upon which Adriana chanted and held the stone aloft. Cats swirling around my feet like water I crossed the bridge and then began to ascend a stair I found. The ground shook and the narrow windows flickered with bright flashes.

I emerged onto the top of the tower. Wind and rain tore at my ragged clothing. I glanced to see that the figure in the storm still

railed against the sea of tiny creatures that assailed him like it was a fortress. Then I saw Adriana.

The cats had beat me there.

They swarmed over her, dragging her to the ground. They wrestled and struggled in her long tresses as though the hair was a mass of black tendrils. With one hand, she grasped at the Star of Unseen Stars. With the other, she batted at her attackers. I lunged forward and grabbed the stone. Those inky tendrils of hair lashed at me like whips that stung as though covered in barbs. I screamed. She screamed. And the cats screamed. None of us, however, made a noise significant enough to be heard over the raging storm of the besieged Great Old One looming closer.

Then, I pried the gem out of her clutches. With a flash of brilliance and the roar of the primal thing at the heart of the storm, everything went black. I remember nothing that happened after that until I awoke in that first hospital, with nothing other than the Star of Unseen Stars.

Yes, Thomas. I have the jewel yet again.

Sincerely,

Phillip

