



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,

June 4, 1939

The Nazis are a threat to all of Europe. I know that I'm just mimicking what all the newspapers are surely saying, but I can tell you first hand. They are a threat and I hope that England, France, and the United States do something to stop them.

I have sent numerous letters to England, hoping to get in contact with Flemming or Crowley or someone from the mission, but I have as yet had no response. I am very worried, and, I must admit, fear the worst. While I doubt that you'll fare better, simply because the mission was conducted entirely by their secret intelligence service, if you can attempt an inquiry I would appreciate it.

I am still in the hospital, recovering my strength. Brana continues to be a comfort. She brings me books to read, and I'm slowly learning more about the Star of Unseen Stars, albeit obliquely.

There is a man here that I do not trust. His name is Reiner, and he has both a body and a face like a tree-trunk. Although German, Reiner has some connection with the police in Ostrava, although exactly what his role is has never been made clear to me. He wears no uniform, instead always cloaked in a long, dark overcoat. When he comes to the hospital, he asks me questions in halting English.

"What, Mr. Shandler, are you doing in Ostrava," he asks me each time.

"I was hurt," I tell him. "Dying of hunger and exposure. People found me in the woods and brought me here to recover."

"But you are American." His narrow eyes narrow further. His voice grates and his breath smells of sausage.

"As I told you the last time, sir, I am a scholar. I came here to research the history of Chanov Castle in the Carpathian Mountains." My lie, I think, is relatively believable.

"And you have no papers."

"I have nothing. I was found, wandering delirious and without any possessions."

"There are no records of you entering the country."

I shrug. I want to keep my story as simple as possible.

He quizzes me about the castle, and the surrounding area. Fortunately, thanks to our mission, I know a little of the history of the place. I try to ask him on what authority he asks his questions, but he doesn't answer. Instead, he becomes vaguely threatening.

This goes on at least once a week, but yesterday he asked, for the first time, "When you visited at Chanov Castle, there was a... woman? Black hair. Beautiful. A woman?"

As usual, I shrugged.

"Her name, perhaps, jogs your memory?" His tiny eyes focused on me darkly. "Adriana."



I don't know how well I hid my surprise at this. My reaction to her name, however, was one of real panic. Who is this Reiner? Why is he here and what does he actually know?

I shook my head. "Some of the locals were saying that a woman had taken up residence in the castle in recent months, but I never met her. Is that who you mean?"

He didn't reply. Instead, he said, "What about a man being named Crowley? Older. Bald. English. This man you know?"

I shook my head again slowly, pretending to seem thoughtful. I began to sweat where I sat, on the edge of my bed. I realized that he wasn't asking me anything. He was telling me that he knew about the mission. But how much did he really know?

"Interesting." He stroked his chinless face with stubby fingers. "Because he says he knows of you."

I couldn't hide my surprise at that. My mouth fell right open. To try to cover this up, I asked, "Who is he? What does he say about me?"

"Where is the jewel, Mr. Shandler?"

I froze.

"I can be having you searched. I can be bringing you in for questioning. And in far less pleasant surroundings."

For what seemed an eternity, I stared into his terrible eyes. I thought about where the nearest exit lay. I began planning my flight from the hospital. My neck was covered in sweat.

"You should rest, Mr. Shandler. Take care of yourself. You are not to be looking well. Do not worry. I will check back with you soon. I will be watching over you."

And then he left, just like that. But his threat was as clear as if he held a knife to my throat.

Thankfully, I have the stone well hidden.

Sincerely,

Phillip