



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 12, 1939

The streets of this city are quiet. Dark. You cannot blame the people for remaining indoors. Nazis have begun marking the doors of homes. Sometimes, the families dwelling within are later dragged from those homes. The local police work in collusion with these uniformed thugs.

Most of those targeted are Jewish. I'm not Jewish, but I'm in hiding all the same. Those same thugs are after me as well. But for different reasons.

I left the hospital after writing my last letter to you. It wasn't safe there, and in particular it wasn't safe for the Star of Unseen Stars. Reiner would come back for me and for it. That much was clear. Not that I had it with me in the hospital. That would have been stupid. But he didn't know that. Still, I needed to leave. So I gathered a few things and slipped out the window that night. There were local policemen watching the entrance to the hospital, but that wasn't the first time I had to slip by the watchful gaze of a copper or two, as you know. And this wasn't the first time I'd surreptitiously slipped out of that hospital.

Once safely away, I went to where I'd hidden the stone. After I was first in the hospital – almost as soon as I could stand – I had climbed out of my window at night and made my way to a nearby grocery. Next to the building was a wooden cart that clearly hadn't moved in years. I pushed the cart back a bit, and dug into the ground under where one wheel had rested. I used a large spoon that I'd taken from the hospital. It got the job done. I pushed the cart back into place after I finished.

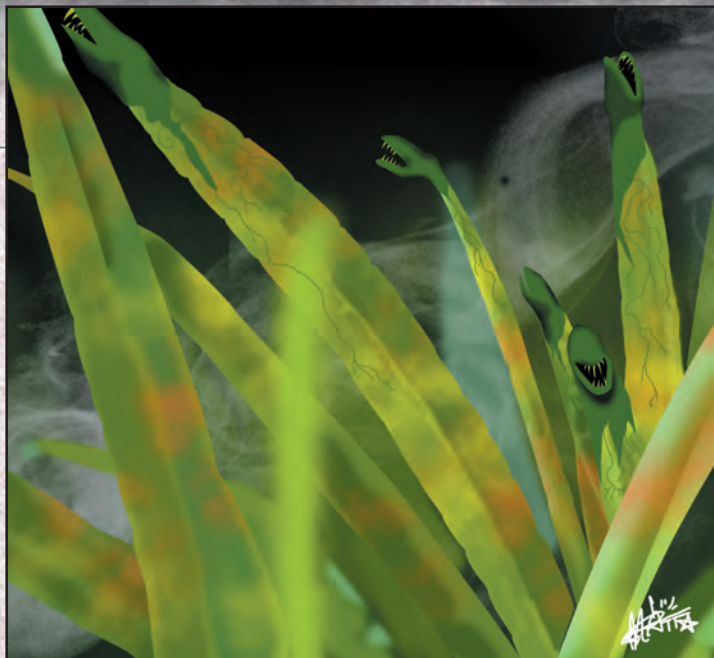
When I left the hospital again and returned to retrieve the stone, my heart was in my throat. Even though there was no way anyone would have found it, I still worried. I reached the building and went around the side in the dark. Some strange grass grew around the wheel that had not been there a few weeks earlier. It was a mottled yellow and orange with broad blades. I pushed the cart back and began to dig, and when I did I heard a hissing sound. I feared a snake in the grass, but even in the dim light I could see that it wasn't the case. I knelt on the ground and the hissing came right from my knees. It came from the grass itself.

I swear to God, Thomas, the blades of grass had each formed tiny mouths and were hissing at me as I dug into them. As if I was causing them pain. You know that I have seen a lot of strange and even horrific things, but somehow this unnerved me as much or more than any of them. The very grass itself had become monstrous. How was a man to cope with such experiences?

I could see that the grass grew directly over where I had buried the stone. I dug further. The grass hissed again. Worse, where I cut into the blades or roots as I dug, the grass oozed a light red ichor from the "wounds."

The grass bled.

I recoiled in horror. But I needed to get that stone. I swallowed hard. And then I heard footsteps. Lots of boots.



I leapt behind the cart and crouched. Men – a mixture of the uniformed Nazis and the local police – walked by. They talked and laughed among themselves. A few smoked. By the look of them, I could see they'd been drinking.

The grass still hissed.

I watched as one of them glanced over in my direction. He must have heard the strange sound. Should I stand and distract him? I didn't want their attention but I wanted them to investigate the grass less – I couldn't afford them digging up the stone.

I breathed a sigh of relief when he turned his gaze back to his companions and kept walking. I waited for a few minutes, and then returned to the spot. The grass had stopped making noise. With a deep breath, I dug into it again, churning earth, grass, and roots until I got to the stone. I ignored the hissing and the blood.

My heart raced when I saw the Star of Unseen Stars again. It gleamed with its own pale radiance. It was cool in my hand, and the dirt and grime fell away from it easily. I wondered at its properties that had caused unnatural growth like that to sprout above it. There was no question that the stone from beyond the confines of Earth was the cause. How or why I could not fathom. And I did not try. I slipped off into the night with my treasure wrapped in a pillowcase I'd taken for that very purpose.

Since then, I have been in hiding. I earned a little money doing some odd jobs that has allowed me to sleep in a bed some nights. Other nights I have kept to alleys or other hidden spots. I wish I knew how to contact my former companions: Flemming, Fitzsimmons, even Crowley. With no papers, and very little money, I have very little chance of getting out of this country.

I don't even have the money to mail this letter. Hopefully that will all change soon.

Sincerely,

Phillip