



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,

July 15, 1939

I wish there was a way I could contact you directly. I could use your advice. But of course you can't even write to me as I have no permanent address. I mailed the last few letters, but I have no idea if they will reach you. With each passing day, what was once Czechoslovakia feels more and more cut off from the rest of the world. I truly am no closer to home now than I was when I was in Vadoma. My time in that otherworldly place seems like a dream now. I wish that my time here did, but it is still all too real.

The police are everywhere. The Nazis are everywhere. Moravia is now a German protectorate, so the German military is in control. Curfews are in effect. Travel is strictly controlled. So are the newspapers. Still, in the last few weeks, I have managed to get out of Ostrava. I now make my way from farm to farm, village to village, occasionally doing odd jobs for room and board. The language barrier is a problem, but I've picked up a few words. It is easier to lay low out here.

I have to keep a low profile, of course, because I am a fugitive. It has become very clear to me now that the Nazis know of and want the Star of Unseen Stars. They are searching for me. Let me tell you about what happened just yesterday.

I was working on a farm, helping to tend to the sheep, when a truck pulled up into the yard. Out of it came a number of German soldiers, accompanied by a familiar face – the man I had met in the hospital named Reiner. He now wore a uniform, although it was not entirely like those worn by the men with him.

I made my way closer, hiding behind a small out-building. I watched as Reiner asked the farmer and his son questions, but I was much too far away to hear what any of them said – not that I would have been likely to understand them anyway. Eventually, the farmer pointed in my general direction, or rather, where I should have been with the sheep. Reiner and his men all looked to where he pointed with interest.

Reiner gestured and two of the five soldiers headed off to the field, rifles in their hands. I crouched lower. They went to where I had been just minutes ago. Reiner continued to speak with the farmer. The other three soldiers spread out at a casual pace, looking around the yard. It was only a matter of time before one of them came my way.

I reached into the pocket of the shabby coat I had taken from the back stoop of a farmhouse the week previous. It was too warm to wear during the day, but slung over my arm, the coat still offered me a good place to hide the stone. I grasped it tightly. I thought about what I had read in the *Knih Tajomstiev*. According to the *Book of Secrets*, the Star of Unseen Stars held vast power. Over the last year or so, I had seen that power manifest in many different ways.

That day, I wanted to see if I could make that power work for me, rather than against me, as it had so many times before. I closed my eyes and thought about the words I had found in the book. I had spent weeks in that hospital bed with nothing but the book to read.



I had memorized whole sections of it. As I thought about the strange words in the so-called "Unspoken Language" transcribed in one portion of the book, I found myself whispering them aloud.

And suddenly, the world disappeared. Or rather, it faded into a misty haze. I remained crouched in place, and saw that I could – if I really tried – see the building I had hidden behind. I could see the farmhouse and the soldier's truck. But all these things were hazy and amorphous.

When I could wait no longer, compelled by the fear of discovery and from the chill that I felt in this misty half-world that I found myself in, I ran. I ran as far as my legs would take me, generally in a direction away from the farm and from Reiner. The farm was nestled in hills, but the terrain seemed to have no relationship to my movement. It neither slowed me or worked to my advantage. I ran and ran.

Without warning, I instantly felt exhausted and collapsed. I must have lay unconscious for many hours. When I came to my senses, I perceived the world around me clearly, but the dark of night had come. I still felt weary, and my skin felt drawn over my bones as though it no longer fit quite right, but I needed to know if I was safe. A little exploration told me what I needed to know. I was at least a mile from the road, and many miles from the farm. No one was around.

I had tapped the power of the stone and escaped. But its use was inexact and so terribly draining. I eventually found a place to lie next to a fallen log and slept again until late this morning.

I'm now writing this on my last sheet of paper. I still feel quite weary, and need to find food, despite the fact that I do not feel at all well. I will walk to the road and hopefully a nearby village or farm, away from where I was, and hopefully away from the Germans that I now know still hunt me.

Sincerely,

Phillip