

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

December 3, 1929

Dear Thomas,

I was hoping that you would respond to my last letter, but now I won't know if you did, because I was forced to move, and will not get any mail sent to my former address. My old landlady is unlikely to do me any favors. You can direct mail to my office-I'll be staying here for a while.

Remember a month or so ago when I was in Arkham investigating the disappearance of a student at Miskatonic? There were some strange characters about town then and that was when I first heard the dreaded name, Nyarlathotep. I wish I had more of your insight into the background of that name. Clearly foreign, it sounds almost Egyptian to me, like the name of an ancient pharaoh or some such. But you're the expert on antiquity, not me.

In any event, about two weeks ago, I began to notice that someone was watching my office. That's not the first time that's happened, as you well know. The fellow sat in his auto across the street, and when I walked home, I noticed him following me there as well. So, I tried to do the old turnabout trick and let him follow me, and then watched him.

Eventually, very late that night, he started to drive off. I got in my own car and attempted to follow. He saw me and sped away. I gave chase.

Well, to make a long story short, he lost me. He rounded a corner and it seemed that he just disappeared. But not before I got a look at him as I pulled close alongside him at one point. It was the same strange man I saw watching me back in Arkham. The one who I believe had something to do with that witch-cult there, involved with "Nyarlathotep".

Now, I never did wrap up that case. I never found the student, Donna, and when I went back a few weeks later to check on the cult and any strange activities on Samhain, I couldn't find a thing. After that, things are somewhat of a blur. If you remember, I was plagued with some strange dreams and my life took a strange turn.

I think I'm over that now, though.

Back here in Providence, I decided to take another look into this group, whom I still believe to potentially be a ring of kidnapers and cultists. Inquiring with my friend Jack with the local police, I looked through their mug shots. I found nothing. So I decided to return to Arkham the next day and look around yet again.

Then things got strange.

That night, I heard some noises in my apartment. I got out of bed and went into the next room, my mind filled with thoughts of burglars, or perhaps another encounter with the disappearing voyeur. What I found, however, was a huge, hulking brute inelegantly tearing apart my overstuffed chair as if his hands were the claws of some sort of animal. I did not turn on the lamp, but as always the room was partially lit from the lights through the window. Thomas, he must have been wearing some sort of strange overcoat or clothes, but I swear to you in the dim light that his flesh was a mottled, leathery mass of horrible colors and inhuman textures.



When I came in, I shouted at him to stop. I know it seems incredible, but the massive figure turned to me and growled. For a moment, I wondered if possibly a strange bear could have entered my apartment. Something about that growl made my very skin crawl, as though it resonated through me on a level I didn't know existed.

I had my pistol, and raised it to show him that I meant business. "Who are you?" I demanded. "What are you doing here?"

He lunged at me, brandishing his hands in front of him like weapons. I saw the gleam of what appeared to be razor-like claws, but I'm willing to believe that perhaps he wore some sort of strange gloves. I was too terrified to fire my weapon. All I could do was dive out of the way-I had to keep clear of those horrible claws, Thomas.

You know I am normally a level-headed chap, and I've been in my share of scrapes, but this was like nothing else in my experience.

I leapt away from him and he pounced past me with another inhuman growl, crashing into my tiny kitchen. He moved like neither man nor beast-he was quick, but I would have to describe how he moved as shambling rather than walking or running. His momentum carried him straight through the kitchen and he slammed into my icebox, breaking off the door. He was clearly even more massive than his appearance led me to believe to achieve such a feat, accidental or not.

Sparks flew seconds later, lighting up the kitchen in a strange blue burst. Electrical current blasted out of the back of the icebox as if somehow drawn to the intruder. I lay on the floor, and watched as my assailant was engulfed in current. He roared, and this time I could make out a word, as if it were some sort of plea, or perhaps a curse. He yelled "Nyarlathotep!" And then everything went dark.

And I mean everything. The sign for the grocery store downstairs went dark. The lights across the street went out. My apartment was filled with a burning smell, a little like a heavy dose of acid, almost, that burned my nose and eyes. After I gathered myself, I fumbled around my apartment for a flashlight. I could hear someone shouting about the lights from outside somewhere.

I flicked on my torch and saw that my assailant was gone. The kitchen floor was blackened and hot to the touch, the tile melted in places. The ice box likewise lay on its side, burned and ruined, although there was

very little smoke in the place. The intruder must have fled, wounded by the strange happenstance, in the dark.

Except that when I went to the door, expecting to find it smashed open or perhaps jimmied, it was still locked. I checked the windows, and they were all closed. I don't know how he got out, or-for that matter-how he got in.

Eventually the power came back on. I didn't sleep any more that night, but instead tried to air out the terrible smell by opening the windows to the cold winter air and clean up the damage a bit, all the while trying to figure out what was going on.

The next morning I gave Mrs. Dawson some money for the damages and gathered my things. She was fit to be tied, assuming that I had some wild party and started the fire. I didn't attempt to correct her. In fact, I've decided that for now I'm not going to tell the police about what happened. It's just all too odd. If it wasn't for the burned floor, the smashed icebox and the torn up chair, I would have assumed it was another strange dream.

I need to hear from you soon, Thomas. Things are not well.

Phillip





Mary Millar
243 Crossover Street
St. Louis, Missouri
December 4, 1929

Dear Mary,

Hope this finds you well. I know it has been a long time since you have heard from me, and I apologize. I was hoping that you could do a small favor for me. I have repeatedly attempted to contact my friend, Thomas Bode, of late, but to no avail. If you remember, you met Thomas at that Christmas party at Christian's house last year. Could you check on him, and just make sure all is fine? I have not heard from him in two months and we are fairly regular correspondents. I am sure that everything is fine. He might be busy with work, or even a bit under the weather. If you could just check on him and have him drop me a line or get back to me I would appreciate it.

Sincerely,

Phillip Shandler

December 19, 1929

Dear Mary,

Thank you for you letter. I will be brief, as I am leaving in an hour to buy a train ticket to St. Louis. Even though I am posting this Air Mail, I may still beat it there. I am afraid many of the things that you wrote in your letter are greatly disturbing. It is not at all like Thomas to leave suddenly without telling anyone, and even more unlike him to leave the back door unlocked. Your description of the state of his home suggests signs of a struggle.

I am very worried for my friend.

I will see you shortly.

Sincerely,

Phillip Shandler