

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
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February 6, 1930

Dear Thomas,

I've just finished reading through the research you sent me. As always, your work is thorough and complete. I appreciate all your help.

However, I'm obviously disheartened by your conclusions. Disheartened, in fact, is hardly the word. The feeling of dread that overcame me as I read what you had found regarding the being known as "Nyarlathotep" can hardly be put into words. At least, no words come to me. But then, words were never my strength.

It would appear, then, that many of the strange happenings that I have encountered, or rather, endured, relate to Nyarlathotep. And your reading in the manuscript you called the "G'harne Fragments" suggests that he (it?) is some sort of harbinger of even more powerful, vast, and alien gods. These "Outer Gods," as you called them, almost certainly have dark designs for us, correct?

Now, that question implies that I actually believe that what the "G'harne Fragments" said is real, and I don't think I do. Do you? I shudder to think that it could be. But even if it is, are my notions of evil demons scheming against humanity correct? Much of what you quoted from those dire books suggests an even more chilling idea—that of cosmic intelligences so vast and terrible that we are beneath their notice. If such is true, but Nyarlathotep, "the Crawling Chaos" heralds their appearance, they could destroy us all and not even be aware that it happened. This could be the true meaning of the apocalypse foretold by so many for so long.

But I said I did not think that I believed in it at all, and I choose to stick to that. My strength may not be words, but I can deal with facts. So allow me to lay out the facts that we do know about this whole Nyarlathotep issue.

1. Back in Arkham, I encountered a witch cult that revered Nyarlathotep. Before then, I'd have expected them to pay homage to the Devil, and in all appearances, it seemed that that's what they were doing. They just used Nyarlathotep as the name of the Devil. Nothing led me to believe that any of it was anything other than a group of dangerous lunatics.

2. I was attacked in my upstairs flat by a creature that your books seemed to suggest might be something called a "dimensional shambler." I don't know for a fact that it was some otherworldly monster, because it was dark. It did seem more unwholesome beast than man, though, and it did disappear mysteriously. And when it did, it screamed the name "Nyarlathotep." (Thomas it gives me a renewed chill just to remember it.)

3. I met a little girl on the train that seemed to be possessed. Perhaps she was just a little touched, but she claimed to be a servant of Nyarlathotep and part of a cult that had sent that shambler thing against me. She mentioned a town out west called Lastbridge, which was a strange place mysteriously wiped off the face of the earth years ago. It was led by a preacher named Simon Carlisle.

~~4. I've had strange dreams, some of which contained a woman named Fiona Carlisle, just like Simon. I think there might be~~

No, never mind about that Thomas. I'm trying to list the facts, here, and I am not yet ready to accept dreams as facts. I haven't gone that far off the deep end. Not yet, anyway.

Speaking of which, let me tell you that I am sorry that reading the "G'harne Fragments" disturbed you so greatly. I'm not surprised, though. These are truly, fundamentally dark matters that we discuss. I know you did that research on my behalf, and I do appreciate it. You have helped me a great deal, my friend. You never did tell me where you found such a terrible tome, though.

Anyway, please take a break from such studies. Have a nice walk in the garden and remember the good things in the world. Get your mind off this nasty business. Take care of yourself.

Sincerely,

Phillip

February 13, 1930

Dear Thomas,

I do not know how to begin. I know that in my last letter I told you to forget about the dark matters that you read about in the G'harne Fragments, but I have to tell someone about what is going on, and you are the only person I know of that can understand what I am about to say. Perhaps "understand" isn't the right word. "Accept," or "believe" might be more appropriate.

Thomas I had another dream last night. I know, I said that I was not going to put much stock in such ephemera, but now, I just cannot ignore it any more.

I saw her again.

I dreamed that I was here, in my offices. As you know, I've been living here since I lost my apartment in that strange attack. The couch that I use as a bed was covered with rumpled blankets, as though I had just awoken. It was dark, and through the window outside it seemed that a heavy fog had settled in, reducing the streetlamps to mere glowing specters in the night. Nothing moved.

Try as I might, I could not get the lamp on the desk to work. The place remained dim, and it almost seemed as if the night fog was beginning to seep into the office itself. Things became hazier and hazier. The world around me grew distant. I felt as if, in the dark fog, as I watched the things around me become harder and harder to see, it was actually I that was fading away.

But then I heard a sharp rapping sound. It clarified things and made me feel suddenly solid. The floor was once again firm beneath my feet. The knocking came again, and I realized that someone was at the door. A strange light came from behind the door, illuminating the glass window with my name painted on the front, casting shadowy, backward letters on the floor in front of me.

I opened the door. Stretching out before me was a grand, winding staircase that led down into darkness (not what I expected on the other side of the door at all!). It took me a heart-beat, but I realized that I recognized the stair—from previous dreams. This strange staircase, I knew, led down to a cavern that in turn led to a place called the Dreamlands. I had little time to think about that, however, because I saw a beautiful woman standing at the top of the stairs. Long blonde hair rested gently on her shoulders and she wore a long, billowing white gown. It was the woman I'd seen in the Dreamlands—I mean, in a previous dream, where I had imagined that place called the Dreamlands. Her name was Fiona Carlisle.



"Fiona," I exclaimed. "What is going on—"

She interrupted me with a graceful finger placed against her lips. "We must not let them hear us," she whispered.

I looked around nervously. The mist still slowly churned around me, even inside. "Who?"

"Ghosts," she said. My skin turned to ice.

But then I steeled myself and gathered my wits. I was quite lucid in this dream, although I do not know if, at the time, I was sure it was indeed a dream at all. "Fiona Carlisle," I said quietly, "I did some looking. You're in Boston. In a coma."

She winced, as though I'd slapped her. I felt a sudden wave of guilt, but I was unsure what I was guilty of.

"My great grandfather," she whispered. I waited for more, but she said nothing.

"What is it, Fiona?" I asked.

"Simon." Again, with a simple word she chilled me to the bone. The name the little girl on the train had used.

She continued, her eyes showing an intensity I'd never seen in anyone before. "You must—"

And then I found myself on the couch, covered in sweaty blankets. I was in my office, but there was no mist, and dawn had come. I had awoken. What was she going to say? Then I heard the telephone ring, and realized that the previous rings had woken me from the dream. (Did I tell you, Thomas, that I had a telephone installed in the office? It is quite handy, but at that moment I can tell you that I regretted it.)

I picked up the receiver. On the other end, I heard a hoarse whisper.

"Stay away," the voice said.

"What?" I demanded. "Who is this?"

"Stay away from my great granddaughter."

Then silence. The connection broke.

That was just minutes ago, Thomas. I've been sitting here at my desk, staring at the telephone. The receiver is still off the switch-hook. I am embarrassed to admit that I am a little afraid to touch it. While I am shaken by the events in my sleep, and the fact that it seemed to be more than a simple dream, I am troubled more by the telephone at the moment.

Thomas, did I just get a telephone call from a ghost?

Phillip