

7 August, 1935.

Long and trying journey, & all in response to a cryptic note from a bloody French priest. As I wrote before: prospect of sitting in a room with one of them again turns the stomach. Can't forget what lies they spin for the poor villagers back in Nyasaland, and how they were to dad when he married mum. Bastards.

Wonder, too, at our group's prospects: whilst Prof. F----- seems a brilliant man, having read every book, I'm sure and perhaps up to the task of making sense of the disconcerting references in Fr. E-----'s letter, and T--- likewise seems smart and well-traveled, a sensible man if not as manly as he could be (probably too much given to sitting about and thinking for his own good), I cannot help but wonder what that rich top B----- is doing among us, beyond his links to the Committee at Miskatonic U. who sent us... & as for his ballerina girl-friend, S.B., I worry what will become of her when things get rough. Shame, that girl: she's pretty, but one senses a kind of damage in her that ruins a person for life. Why in the hell was she sent with us? 'I can't go to China without a ballerina,' B----- says. Worry he'll get us all killed with foolishness like that before this is done.

As for today...

Arrived Shanghai mid-morning. What must it've looked like when Charles Gordon was here, beating back the Taiping lunatics? Can't imagine. A corrupt place, all its various police forces and triads all conspiring to beat one another, get rich and rule the shadows. One must have faith that the civilizing will win out in the end over baser and more primitive human drives like greed & lust for power. The city looks curious, almost mad in its way: a jumble of European styles all squatting before a muddy shoreline, looking out upon a pestilent beach and a vast island hunkering before the shoreline, covered in huts and stinking of human squalor.

Disembarked & failed to sneak any of my damned guns into the damned country. No worries, in city corrupt as this, shd be easily replaced. Threatened the bloody bastard who took my guns with an early grave if any go missing, when he attempted to extort a bribe for the promise of their safekeeping. Bloody crooked, that little bastard was.

Whilst disembarking, remarked on our being observed.

Conferring with others, it appears by multiple shifty types: one or two natives, as well as at least two Caucasians.

Allowed one to follow us partway, and then slipped through the crowd to catch him. He played ignorant, so pulled him into nearby alley to push for information, to what may be great success, although. First name given (no family name), but no point in recording here as almost certainly false.

Didn't press as likely to get another bloody lie in any case: like all Russian scum, he looks a born liar. Had the look of an opium eater, shifty-seeming, told many stories HE clearly believed to be impressive and lurid, though they were no surprise, and frankly I expect the tip of the black and filthy iceberg for a city like this one. His tale concerned inexplicable assassination in some den of corruption called the B---- L---- Club, some important thug named after his oversized appendages of hearing; what it matters, I cannot guess. Paid the rotten little lotophage equivalent of five American dollars (in the local currency, which inexplicably, is bloody Mexican dollars, of all things) not for this tale, but mainly to dispose him to not fleeing when next he sees us. Thought to trail him and see to whom he'd report our arrival, but the others were in a hurry to get to the hospital mentioned in the priest's letter.

(Perhaps there's something to the assassination story? Some link to why we're in Shanghai? Will have to look into it if it ties in. Such things too often do, though with so much crime about, one can never know.)

So: into the French Section. Found the hospital P----- with ease, though too late: the man summoned us already shuffled off the bloody coil. According to doctor there, Henri something, body held at Municipal Police. Yes another lurid story re: encounter in a village a few hours off; Fr.

E----- perhaps beset by bandits or criminals, not sure; did 'something' with the so-called Star Mirror.

Sounds like another of those curiosities the University hoards, which they claim is why they need men like me working security, instead of pampered bloody Americans who've never seen what a bloody horror can happen outside of wartime.

Inspected Fr. E-----'s room, long-abandoned for the Pension M----- (more shuddering: a houseful of Priests and their Simpering Tales of Heaven; would hate them all, if they hadn't done so much to advance the better parts of civilization in the more savage corners of the world): aside from a strange & unidentifiable chemical-nutmeggy stink, nothing found. Must reclaim the body from the Municipal Police, if we can, or at least inspect it. Is he truly dead? Perhaps this, too, is a lie. Will see if among the English police-men of Shanghai there are any still British in spirit, or if they have all, to a one, rotted in this despicable heat & sink of corruption, and gone unfortunately both native & criminal.

Oh, when we were on verge of leaving, woman (probably whose by the look of her, pretty enough for the work I imagine when not bleeding all over the floor) stumbled in, knifed in the belly & in terrible shape. The scribler of our group, B----- T-----, managed to save the poor thing's

life. Why she was knifed, we could not guess. Again, could it be connected?

This seems like no city to try make a life for oneself in, to be sure. Only hope we manage to get out alive.

Questions to mind:

* who was watching for our arrival, & why... & why so many watching for us?

* why shd police have Fr. E-----'s body, & why hang onto it?

* what was the noxious stink of the room?

* what is the state of his quarters in the Pension Montigny?

* what happened at the village without Shanghai mentioned by Henri? Did Fr. E---- use the 'star mirror' there? What did it do? (Village Woo Tsing or Yu Tsien? Dr. Henri unclear.)

* who was the whore, & why stabbed?

* assassination at Black Lotus: suspect triad. Who? Why? Triad involved? The fellow mentioned in connexion with the Green Caps or whatever they were called?

* what to make of the cave in Fr. E-----'s letter?
Sounds unsettlingly like the one Old Patterson talked
about finding. Christ save our arses if so...

My mind turns to Florence now, and I wonder what she is
doing, whether she's happy... whether her ability to deny
the truth of what we glimpsed has persisted. I would pray,
if I were fool enough to worship any God dreamt up by
man...