



UNIT 732

A Mystery Tale of Pandemic Proportions

A while ago, I had the opportunity to interview the two leads of Fantastic Behavior Investigations (FBI), Lovecraft and Howard. I was writing about the traditions of paranormal research and they agreed to talk to me over the phone. But of all the things we talked about only one of them truly terrified me... and it didn't have anything to do with the paranormal.

©2020 David Woodruff – all rights reserved

“What would you say is the most important tool in your toolbox. What instrument do you use the most in paranormal work?”

Phillip Howard Lovecraft’s voice sounded almost hard-bitten from experience when he answered, “It would have to be the wiretap.” He had the throaty, almost gravelly voice of someone who had seen it all. But it had a light-hearted lilt to it.

“Agreed.” By comparison, Ervin Robert Howard’s voice was almost severe, you might even call it gruff. I could instantly tell the two apart, even over the phone.

“It’s interesting how you get almost blasé about wiretaps,” Lovecraft continued.

Howard’s interest seemed energetic as he explained further. “Until you run into a call which demands your attention. Like the call we tapped from Harbin, China.”

Lovecraft snickered. “Oh, yea, that one.”

“What was interesting about this call?”

“Well, for one thing,” I could almost hear Lovecraft sneering over the phone, “it was in English.”

Howard sounded shocked. “They didn’t even try to cover up what they were talking about. It drew our curiosity immediately.”

“What were they discussing?”

Lovecraft’s answer shocked me to the core. “The Coronavirus.”

“I understand the outbreak was very serious in China.”

Lovecraft dismissed my comment, almost out of hand. “No, no, they were discussing making it. The actual engineering of the virus.”

“I don’t understand.”

Howard calmly related the rest of the story in a way which, quite frankly almost altered my view of the fabric of human existence. “The voice on the other end of the line, who was an American, was giving the Chinese engineer specifics about how the virus should be constructed. He wanted something in the flu family, something airborne.”

Lovecraft interrupted him, “He wanted something that would be over by the summer when the weather got warm. Without having to use fancy drugs to stop it.”

Howard continued like a faithful partner. “So, the guy calmly goes on to say he was looking for something that would infect the respiratory tract. He wanted it to particularly target old people, especially those over 65. Then he got extraordinarily detailed. He wanted something infectious for about three or four days before the carrier showed any symptoms.”

“Funny thing about the east,” Lovecraft explained, “They never tell you something can’t be done right away. They have to save face. The Chinese guy simply listened to everything the American said. Quietly

agreeing, but not actually committing. It's usually the sign you can't get what you are asking for, simply because no one can get it done. It's not possible."

I heard Howard give a wry snicker on the other end of the line. "But he was talking to Unit 732."

"What's Unit 732?"

Howard explained it as if everyone should know this. Common knowledge stuff. "Secret Chinese Bacterial Warfare Center. They specialize in creating bacterial warfare agents. They test it on their own people. It's something they learned from the Japanese during World War II. They use it to remove criminals, political dissidents, and general troublemakers."

"Cheaper than a gulag system," Lovecraft commented.

"Anyway," Howard continued with his story, "The Chinese guy gives him a delivery date and they start talking about the price."

I tried to hide the shock in my voice. "They were going to make it?"

"Oh, yea," Howard announced as if this was a standard business transaction you overheard every day, "plus the Chinese guy didn't seem to have any moral qualms about the delivery of the stuff to a foreign nation."

"It was all business to him," Lovecraft added. "I hear they even sold it to someone in Italy later, we never did find out who *they* were."

Now I couldn't hide my amazement. "Did you find out who the American was?"

"Oh, yea," Lovecraft related like it was all in a day's work.

I was almost too terrified to ask the next question, but I finally did. "Who was the American?"

"The Director of the Social Security Administration."