

FADE IN:

EXT. GRIBALDI'S CAFÉ - NIGHT

A standard, if not worn down, coffee shop located on the corner of a vacant street. It's late at night and the moon is unusually large. A low mist hangs around the ground. The lights cast from the café are a warm contrast to the cool night. Some of the streetlamps flicker periodically and the mostly broken neon sign hung above the café echoes back weakly: BALD AF.

CUT TO:

INT. GRIBALDI'S CAFÉ - CONTINUOUS

Stained tiles shine dully beneath the overhead lights, worn and scuffed from time. Old newspaper clippings hang on the cream-colored walls, with bolded titles like BEST COFFEE IN TOWN and OMG! THE BEST COFFEE EVER! Black and white photos are meticulously hung all around the shop.

GRIBALDI- aging, balding, boring- is wiping down a table, muttering under his breath about coffee. He bears a resemblance to a man in one of the hung photos, though much older and far more stooped in the shoulder. On closer inspection, he looks a bit like a discount Larry David. He doesn't notice a MYSTERIOUS STRANGER sitting at one of the tables.

The Mysterious Stranger is hunched over and covered haphazardly from head to toe in clothing. Their head brushes the nine-foot ceiling. A hat is pulled low over their face. They look like someone who isn't sure what article of clothing goes where. A jacket is wrapped around one leg and a pair of pants is tied around their neck. They timidly clear their throat. It's a weak and garbled sound, somewhere between a bobcat and a beaver.

Several moments pass in silence. Gribaldi continues pattering around the café, wiping down tables and mumbling to himself. The Mysterious Stranger clears their throat again. It's slightly more confident this time but still retains an inhuman quality.

Another moment passes. The Mysterious Stranger clenches their fists and slams them onto the comically small table they sit at. A cup falls to the ground, shattering into pieces with a CRASH.

Gribaldi jumps in surprise and whirls around. He brandishes the rag he's been using to clean as a weapon.

The Mysterious Stranger clears their throat again. When they stand, their shoulders stoop to accommodate their massive height. They speak in a great booming voice that rattles the lights hanging from the ceiling.

MYSTERIOUS STRANGER

Gribaldi, the time has come—

GRIBALDI

Yeah, for you to pay and get the hell outta here!

Gribaldi mutters about rude customers and slings the rag over his shoulder. The Mysterious Stranger, stunned at the interruption and Gribaldi's gumption, stumbles over their words. They take a moment to compose themselves and fling off their hat, revealing a tentacled face. Thunder CRACKS in the distance. The lights flash.

GRIBALDI

(unimpressed)

It's a little early for Halloween, pal.

MYSTERIOUS STRANGER

(stuttering, volume diminishing)

What? That's not even— What? Why do you—?

The Mysterious Stranger takes a deep breath and recomposes themselves. Their voice regains the same deep tone as before.

I am Cthulhu! Lord of the Deep!  
The Great Dreamer! The—

GRIBALDI

And?

The Mysterious Stranger, now known as CTHULHU, sputters. Their tentacles twist aimlessly, curling and uncurling in nervousness. They clasp their clawed hands together and wring them together awkwardly.

CTHULHU

(unsure)

And I want you to join my cult?

INT. GRIBALDI'S CAFÉ - LATER

Gribaldi sits across the table from Cthulhu. His neck is tilted as far as possible to look at the mammoth being in the tentacles. His arms are crossed, and he looks at

Cthulhu with the expression of a man who has seen far too much in his time to be phased by an Old One in his café. Cthulhu fidgets with a steaming cup, their clawed hands holding the china daintily. They cross and uncross their legs several times, avoiding Gribaldi's eyes as much as possible.

GRIBALDI

Lemme get this straight. You're  
(in air quotes)  
"Cthulhu."

CTHULHU

Lord of the Deep. The Great-

GRIBALDI

Nap God, yeah. Got it. And you  
want me to join your  
(again, in air quotes)  
"Cult"?

Cthulhu straightens up, bumping their head on the ceiling in the process. A whine like a wounded dog erupts from beneath their tentacled face. Gribaldi's expression does not falter. He is far too old to be coddling an Old One. Cthulhu rubs a hand over their cephalopodic head and ducks down. They gesture in a controlled manner as they speak like they've practiced this a few dozen times in front of a mirror.

CTHULHU

Yes! I have a slideshow prepared.  
It's approximately seventy slides  
and-

GRIBALDI

Right. Look, kid, I don't think  
this will work out. I'm a human,  
you're a...  
(gesturing vaguely)  
You.

Gribaldi stands up from the table. He sets his hands on his hips and squints at Cthulhu.

Besides, my wife warned me about  
these kinds of things. One minute  
you're in a small room with a  
charismatic speaker and then  
(clapping hands together)  
BAM! You're tits deep in product  
you can't sell and start sending

messages to people you haven't talked to since high school.

He WHISTLES and shakes his head.

And half my graduating class is dead. I'm too old to be using Ouija boards and inviting demons into my home. I just paid off the mortgage!

Cthulhu panics as Gribaldi turns to walk away, clearly dismissing the Old One.

CTHULHU

Wait! I don't even know what any of that means! All I require is your eternal devotion and a measly weekly sacrifice—

GRIBALDI

Not today, Nap God! Be gone!

CTHULHU

But my presentation! I practiced and, and—

(wailing)

I bought custom mugs!

They scramble after Gribaldi, holding out a ceramic mug in their large hands. They knock over a few tables in the process with a few THUNKS. They begin to apologize, but Gribaldi stops them with a hand motion. He sighs, long and drawn out with the weight of the world on his shoulders. Cthulhu visibly shrinks, disheartened.

GRIBALDI

(tiredly)

Just go, okay? I've got real things to worry 'bout, like debt and 'coons and how I'm gonna keep this place open.

CTHULHU

But, I—

Cthulhu cuts themselves off when Gribaldi ducks into the back room and out of sight. Their shoulders slump and they seem to sink even further into themselves, now standing a mere five feet tall. A single ceramic mug, emblazoned with CTHULHU IS NUMBER ONE and a caricature of the Old One, sits on the table they were previously occupying.

CUT TO:

EXT. GRIBALDI'S CAFÉ - LATER

Cthulhu mopes outside the café. The clothing they were wearing sits in a pile next to them and their wings unfurl behind them. Their great head is resting on their knees, hidden from view, and their shoulders tremble.

A soft RUSTLING can be heard from the alleyway next to the building. Cthulhu continues to stay hunched over.

An obnoxiously loud CLANG comes from the alleyway. Cthulhu looks up, wiping at their cheeks and eyes. A single, metal trash can lid rolls out of the dark mouth of the alley. It spins and comes to a stop with a RATTLE against the ground. Cthulhu gets up with some difficulty and lumbers towards the alleyway with trepidation.

CTHULHU

(stuttering, quietly)

Hello? Who goes there?

The RUSTLING continues. Another BANG of metal hitting the ground. Cthulhu flinches at the loud sound and their wings flap nervously.

CTHULHU

(louder, emphasis on "said")

I said who goes there?

The RUSTLING abruptly stops. CHITTERING echoes through the alleyway as glowing eyes blink into existence in the darkness. First one set, then two, five, and finally too many to count. Cthulhu stumbles in surprise and whispers something in R'lyehian. The glowing eyes narrow and the CHITTERING turns to HISSES.

CTHULHU

(trying to be intimidating)

I am Cthulhu! Lord of the Deep!  
The Great-

Suddenly a RACCOON launches out of the alleyway. It latches onto Cthulhu's tentacled face and begins SCREECHING. Cthulhu flails wildly, their scream layered a thousand times in various pitches and causing the sidewalk to crack.

CUT TO BLACK:

EXT. GRIBALDI'S CAFÉ - EARLY MORNING

Cthulhu sits on the sidewalks outside of the café, head held in their clawed hands. Fresh scratches cover their

body and a viscous green fluid wells up in some of the deeper wounds. Occasionally a SNIFFLE can be heard from them, though to untrained ears it sounds frightening like the unholy union of the snorting of a hog and the slurping of a bowl of noodles.

After a few moments, Gribaldi ambles down the empty street. In the breaking morning light, he somehow appears older, more weathered and broken down. He is still reminiscent of a discount Larry David. He is surprised to see the hunched form of Cthulhu sitting on the curb.

GRIBALDI

You still here, kid?

Cthulhu SNIFFLES and nods.

Gribaldi awkwardly shuffles on his feet and scratches at the wisps of hair still on his head. He looks anywhere but at Cthulhu. His gaze inevitably falls on the alleyway next to his café. Gribaldi's eyes widen when he sees an interdimensional tear at the mouth of the alleyway. Inside, floating through the cosmic swirl of space, are several disassembled, but still alive, raccoons. Their eyes blink at him. Some of them twist in unnatural ways. A single raccoon paw, detached from a body, grasps a half-eaten croissant.

Gribaldi nearly stumbles off the sidewalk and points at the interdimensional tear, a noise of confusion caught in his throat. Cthulhu looks at it and shrugs. They aren't bothered by this. Just another Tuesday in the mortal realm.

CTHULHU

They were being mean to me.

Cthulhu looks away and sighs, scraping a hand over the oozing wounds on their face. Green ooze coats their palm, which they wipe off on their leg.

CTHULHU

You also had an unwanted visitor.

As they say this, a SOLICITOR floats through the interdimensional tear. He is miraculously in one piece. When he sees Gribaldi staring, he begins to wildly flail. The briefcase he holds smacks a raccoon's body and sends it careening away. He is screaming, but no sound leaves the interdimensional tear. Gribaldi recognizes him as the man who has been trying to take his café away.

GRIBALDI

(in wonder)

Did you do all of this?

Cthulhu finally looks at him, brows drawn in confusion and nods slowly. Gribaldi, hands on his hips, surveys the scene once more. The Solicitor is attempting to dislodge a rogue set of teeth from his expensive pants. One raccoon head is gnawing on an unidentifiable piece of trash. Gribaldi muffles a laugh and slowly, painfully slowly, sits down next to Cthulhu. A few bones CREAK and CRACK during the process. Once seated, Gribaldi claps his hands together and turns towards the massive God next to him.

GRIBALDI

Alright, lay it on me, why're you still here?

Cthulhu suddenly SOBS loudly. There's no way to describe the sound, but it's loud enough to rattle the glass of the café's windows. They bury their face in their arms, wings pulled up around them. Compared to the night before, they seem to have shrunk another foot and are child-sized.

CTHULHU

Yog-Sothoth will have surely told  
Nug about my failure!

Gribaldi mouths the name YOG-SOTHOTH with great exaggeration. He has some trouble with it and shakes his head.

GRIBALDI

And this is because this...  
(struggling with name)  
Yog-Sothoth is your... parent?

CTHULHU

My grandfather. He will surely  
claim Hastur the Unspeakable as  
his heir!

(sighing)

I even bought these statues to  
celebrate my victory.

From the sky, a ten-foot statue of a victorious Cthulhu crashes into a nearby car. An ALARM sounds, but is quickly interrupted when Cthulhu waves a hand and the wrecked car hurtles into the interdimensional tear. The Solicitor, battling a swarm of disembodied raccoon feet, narrowly avoids it.

Gribaldi looks back into the tear. The raccoon parts are bouncing against each other. An eyeball floats aimlessly by, staring unblinkingly into his soul. A set of jaws whips by and snaps the eyeball between its teeth.

GRIBALDI

All right, first and foremost,  
never buy victory statues or  
trophies before you've secured the  
win.

He leans forward to set a firm hand on Cthulhu's shoulder. Some of the green fluid oozing from the wounds there gets on his hand. He studiously ignores it as it seems to develop a mind of its own and begin slithering over his rheumatic knuckles.

GRIBALDI

(determined)

Secondly, what does one have to do  
to join your cult? I know you said  
eternal devotion and something  
about a sacrifice, but do you want  
money? Because I ain't got any.

Cthulhu straightens up, wings fluttering excitedly, and whips their head around to look at Gribaldi. The movement is so fast that one of their face tentacles hits them in the eye. They wince, pull the tentacles off with a disgusting sucking noise, and rub at their swelling eye. They look wary, judging from the one visible eye, but there is an undercurrent of excitement in the way they hold themselves.

CTHULHU

You want to join my cult?

GRIBALDI

Well, you got rid of my 'coon and  
solicitor problem. The least I can  
do is join your little club. Plus,  
that mug you left behind amazingly  
kept my wife's tea warm for seven  
hours last night.

CTHULHU

(excitedly)

It's the cutting edge in R'lyehian  
heating technology! I'll bring you  
ten, no twenty, no thirty more!



Cthulhu shouts and jumps up, growing to nine feet in the span of a second. The pavement cracks beneath them when they land. A five-foot-deep pothole forms in the road. They begin to dance in the street, causing anything not nailed down to topple over, and chant in R'lyehian. Gribaldi smiles.

FADE OUT