Untimely Beginnings

By: Charles M. Brown

Story 1

I Met Cthulhu’s Illegitimate Love Child

     My name is Dave and I have a story I need to share.  I work at The Hellhound Bar.  I’m there every day and, now that I think about it, I can’t remember ever working anywhere else.  We get some strange people who wander through here.  After all, with a name like that it’s not a bar that draws the trendier crowds. Honestly, I’m not sure normal everyday people can even find the place.

The bar has that quaint cloaked in shadow atmosphere that you usually find in places where it’s better to mind your own business.  With a few old wooden tables, a long wooden bar, and an ancient jukebox it was a place made for hard drinking and darker things.  The bar has what seems to be the requisite long mirror half obscured by bottles of alcohol of every age, type, and variety.  Stuff no one ever mentioned in bartending school to be sure.

Every day I come in, open the bar, and every surface is spotless and shining in the deep gloom.  Come to think of it, I’ve never seen who cleans the bar or stocks it.  It’s always the same every day I open. I asked the owner one time about the cleaning staff and he curtly told me to mind my own business or lose my soul. A bit extreme but I’ve had worse bosses.

     It was a rainy Tuesday and I was working behind the polished oak bar when I saw a man walk through the wooden door causing the small bell above it to jingle lightly.  The customer was covered head to foot in an old worn brown trench coat and a wide brimmed brown hat pulled low over his face.  My first thought was, *oh boy, another weirdo*.  I had no idea how right and so very wrong I was in that one thought.

As the customer sat on one of the barstools at the bar I walked over to him and asked, “what’ll it be”?

    The stranger did not look up but said, “bourbon straight”, in a weird and exceedingly deep burbling voice.

    Now firmly believing this was going to be another one to watch I said, “you got it”, and poured two fingers of middle shelf bourbon into a glass tumbler.

    The customer tipped it back quickly so that I couldn’t make out his face under the hat before setting the glass on the bar and asking for another.  There weren’t many customers in the bar so after the fourth time he slammed the bourbon like a cheap shot of tequila I tried to gently intervene.

    “Whoa dude, slow down a little, the bottle isn’t going anywhere”, I said with a small laugh.

    The mysterious customer looked up at me, his eyes just visible under the brim of his hat and said, “Dave, I’ll drink as fast as I damn well want to”.

    Now, his tone was not angry really but his voice resonated with a command I didn’t understand but felt on a gonadal level.  Stunned from this I looked at the rather ominous dun covered dude and saw his eyes for the first time. I mean, I really saw his eyes.  They glowed red! Now, I don’t know a lot, but eyes shouldn’t be glowing or red! That might be a clue that there was a problem here.  Instead of getting the hint, all I could think to ask was, “how did you know my name”?

    He continued to stare at me until I thought I might just have to run screaming out of the bar before beginning to laugh in this deep voice filled with sibilant hissing and burbling like the biggest loogie known to man was stuck in his throat.

    “I’m just messing with you man”, he said while continuing his hissing burbling laugh. It was like the guy was laughing, talking, and hissing all at the same time.

    “My human name is Daniel and I just wanted to have a little fun”, he said, “my life is so devoid of normal things I just wanted to see your reaction”. Thinking a film crew was going to jump out any minute and say it was a prank I decided to play along.

    “Your human name, huh”, I mumbled.  “What is your nonhuman name”, I asked rather stupidly.

     He looked at me very pointedly before saying, “Dany’lehth”.  At the uttering of this one garbled word the floor of the bar shook and the gloom seemed to thicken.  In the back, drunk old Mickey fell off of his stool.  Pissing in the floor again, I was sure.  Great.  Why did I choose a career where people piss themselves?

    Thinking about just how weird this truly was I instantly went into smart alec mode.  “Gesundheit”, I said before I could stop myself.

    Daniel’s shoulders shook with mirth as he hissed out the words, “good one”, and continued that strange laughing hiss thing.

     “So, what’s your story dude”, I asked.  Honestly, I wasn’t sure what Pandora's Box of nightmares I was opening up with this question, but hey, I was bored.

    Daniel looked at me for a moment before replying. “I am Cthulu’s illegitimate love child”, he said in disgust before slamming back another bourbon.

    Now, I’d expected a lot of answers, cheating wife, lost job, just about any response except that. Who says something like that anyway? I stood there dumbly, holding a rag in one hand and an empty glass in the other which I’d been polishing with a moment before.  My simple mind just could not process this statement.  I felt like all my gerbils just went on strike.

     “Huh”, I muttered, thus winning the great conversationalist award of all time.

    “I am Cthulu’s illegitimate love child”, he repeated, “and I really really hate my dad”.

    At this point I knew I had to be on a game show or had hit my head and was enjoying a nice stay in the coma ward at Saint Luc’s.  Before I could respond, Daniel continued, “do you have any idea of the issues you have when your dad is a tentacle monster from the outer realms”?

    Being the natural smartass I am, all I could say was, “guess your mom liked hentai huh?”

    Daniel stared at me under the brim of his hat, his eyes glowing brighter and brighter red until I felt like his stare would melt me into the floor before he began bellowing in laughter and slammed back his sixth bourbon like a frat girl at spring break.  He continued to laugh and hiss as I slowly exhaled and thanked every deity I could think of that he thought the comment funny.

    “Hentai, huh”, he asked, “maybe that’s what she meant when she said Dad had touched her like no other being”.

    “Oh, gross dude”, I exclaimed but couldn’t help chuckling at the sheer sickness of the comment.  I’d started it so I might as well ride it out.

    “No man, seriously, my Dad is such a dick”, Daniel proclaimed, “like when I was sixteen I fell in love with this girl and he said she wasn’t good enough because she wasn’t insane, didn’t hear voices and had never sacrificed anyone to the Elder Gods”, he went on.  “I mean really, is that any way to judge who I can date”, Daniel asked.  Shaking my head and feeling really confused all I could utter was another epically loquacious “huh” in response.  Eloquence, thy name is Dave the Bartender.

     After standing stunned for a moment the gerbils seemed to lock onto something insignificant to continue the conversation with.  Bloody stupid gerbils! “Ok”, I said, “you’re talking about the Cthulhu from the books right”?

    Daniel looked at me for a moment then asked, “you’re new here huh”, in a rather pitying tone.

    Daniel picked up his seventh bourbon and I noticed the skin on his hand was gray.  Not a normal color but the gray of a corpse that had been in the water for way too long.  I swallowed loudly after seeing this and wondering if there was any possible chance Daniel was telling the truth or if I had finally made it to a psych ward and when would the jello arrive? Daniel did not seem like he wanted to pursue that subject further so I decided to enjoy the hallucination and asked, “if your dad is Cthulhu how can you be illegitimate”?

    Daniel chuckled softly and said, “my dad doesn’t really do labels and adores the idea of chaos, so marriage isn’t his style”.

    Daniel shook his head and continued, “besides, there aren’t as many universes as there used to be and dad really couldn’t afford to devour another one just to establish an outer realm marriage ceremony.”

    This conversation just keeps getting weirder I thought to myself.  “Devour another universe”, I asked a little shakily.

    “Yeah”, Daniel said, “apparently it’s a custom of the chaos realms that at least one universe must be devoured and all life destroyed as part of the wedding feast”.

    I could hear Daniel’s heavy phlegmy sigh as he rolled his eyes.  When he rolled his eyes he accidentally tilted his head upward towards the light.  I couldn’t not stare.  Honestly, I really tried!  What I had originally thought was a thick mustache actually looked like thin tubes that were…..they were……moving!

    “Are those tentacles”, I blurted disbelievingly.

     “No Dave, it’s a porn ‘stache”, he replied defensively, “yes they’re tentacles idiot! My dad’s friggin’ Cthulhu you ass”!  As his voice rose the bar began to shake again and bottles fell off the shelves behind me.

    Feeling my butthole pucker so hard I thought I’d be turned inside out I quickly apologized. “I’m sorry, I’m sorry”, I blurted in a panicky rush.

    And just like that the shaking stopped and the air returned to normal. Feeling like I could breathe again and promising myself I would murder the person who had slipped ‘shrooms in my coffee when I came down, I poured Daniel yet another bourbon.  Did he even feel the alcohol?

    “No, I’m sorry Dave”, he said somewhat contritely.  “I’m just a little touchy about my appearance.  All my life I’ve just wanted to be normal”, he continued dejectedly, “but noooo, not me, my dad has to be the tentacled god of madness and despair”.

    For a moment I thought he might weep but then he shook himself and slammed back another bourbon.  Seriously, the dude had to have three livers!  The whole bar was silent as I kind of did a half push up off the bar.  The whole scene was just surreal.  Out of nowhere Mickey, the old drunk, stumbled up behind Daniel.  The smell hit us both at the same time and I almost wretched.  The smell of sour piss and old bourbon made my eyes water.

    “Lawd, my lawd”, Mickey slurred as he fell to his knees beside Daniel.  “Lawd let me worsshhhiiipppp”, Mickey whimpered from below the bar.

    Gagging from the smell Daniel said, “not again”, and sighed loudly.  His sigh seemed to come from the dark of the gloomy bar and infect the soul.

    I did not want to throw Mickey out.  Don’t get me wrong, he was a horrible old drunk and no one liked having him there, but I really didn’t want to touch him.  The last time I had escorted him out I felt like I needed a body condom.  But he was bothering a paying customer so……….

    I started to move around the bar, determined to lose my sense of smell when Daniel raised his hand in a motion for me to stop.  And I did.  I didn’t want to stop, I just suddenly couldn’t move forward.

    “Leave him”, Daniel said.  In that moment he looked so tired, or at least, his glowing red eyes did.

    “Wha-“, I started to ask and froze again.  A loud boom echoed from the rear of the bar and I could hear screams and sirens in the distance.  It suddenly sounded like there was a riot in the distance.  Before I could think about the sounds a blonde tornado of junkie in leopard print screamed into the bar towards Daniel.  As it slid to a stop beside Mickey I recognized Wanda.  Wanda was a back alley lady, to put it as nicely as possible.

    “Great”, I blurted, “is this a meeting of the deranged or what”? Wanda was whimpering and clinging to Daniel’s leg.  It looked like she was grinding against him like a stripper with Tourette’s.

    “Dude, what is going on”, I yelled.

    Daniel looked back at me from the sobbing prostitute and said, “this happens”, before trailing off.

    “What happens”, I asked, “you attract crazy people like puppies”?

    “Well, yeah, kind of”, he said before looking back down at the writhing forms.

    “Well, just don’t ask if you can keep them.  I mean, did your mom ever have to tell you, ‘no you can’t keep the crazy people and no they didn’t just follow you home’ when you were a child”? Daniel snorted softly and the walls seemed to waver a little.  ‘Shrooms, man, had to be ‘shrooms.

    I could just hear Wanda mutter to Daniel, “take me, I’ll have the children of lunacy on this very bar for you”.  And then a wet splatter hit my cheek and a soft thump filled the bar.

    I stood stunned for a moment, shaken by what I had just seen.  Mickey had lurched from the floor, grabbed an empty beer bottle and used it like a cop’s truncheon on Wanda’s skull. Wanda lay there, her legs twitching as Mickey screamed words at Daniel.  It took a minute for the gerbils to kick in the drunk guy translator portion of my brain.

    “I will have your babies”, Mickey screamed at Daniel.  He sank back to his knees, the bottle sliding from his hands. “I will have your baby’s, oh lord of chaos”, Mickey slurred before falling over in Wanda’s blood.

    I didn’t know what was worse, the look of Daniel frozen in horror at the old man’s proclamation, Wanda’s body spasming on the floor of the bar, or Mickey lying in Wanda’s blood puking into his beard.

    “What the-…..what the…. What is happening!!!!”

    Daniel looked at me with his eyes glowing and said, “Look, Dave, it’s all my dad’s fault.  I just don’t like talking about it”.

    “Well, I think it’s TIME to talk about it”, I said.

    Daniel froze in front of me and time stopped.  I don’t mean it felt like time stopped. Time literally stopped, even the ticking of the clock above the bar stopped.  After maybe 20 non-seconds of facing Daniel’s stare and recalling that my life had been pretty pathetic up to this point, and that I didn’t want to die here, Daniel said, “ok”.

    Daniel kind of straddled the barstool above the two inert forms and signaled for another bourbon.  What was this, his tenth or maybe twelfth?  “My dad isn’t from this reality”, Daniel said, “and something about his children cause things to happen everywhere we go”.

    Daniel shifted slightly, “everywhere I go followers, batshit crazy people, spring up and start trying to sacrifice the world in my honor. People I talk to go mad and cut their faces off. Some peoples’ whole lives change for the worse when I’m around”.  Daniel snorts before continuing, “one normal guy named Hunter and I were talking in the park. The next week he has died, come back, and is bound by some curse to hunt me and people like me.  A lady I asked out one time, she was a writer, suddenly has a seizure, goes into a coma, and now any story she tells comes true like some ancient oracle”.

    Daniel heaved a huge sigh and downed his bourbon.  “Something about being half human and half Younger God makes everything just go wrong”.

    I looked down at his feet and said, “no, really”?

    Daniel looked to the ground and looked back up at me.  He opened his eyes to say something and the world exploded.  Not literally, I mean come on you’re reading this.  But the world inside the bar seemed to come apart. The door came open so hard it shot the little bell above it to the rear of the bar like a shotgun blast.  The few dirty windows near the door just evaporated into dust.  I couldn’t hear anything but I could feel the thrumming sound so deep in my chest I thought my ribs would come loose from my sternum.  My last clear memory is of Daniel flinging off his coat and hat.  His skin was corpse gray and seemed to writhe along his body.  His tentacle porn ‘stache flared as he charged out the door screaming, “damnit dad, not again”.

    I don’t know how long I was unconscious on the floor of the bar.  I woke up lying face down with my cheek glued to the wooden floor from years of spilled liquids and who knows what else.  I could feel something sharp poking me in my ribs and rolled over to see the bar’s owner poking me with a broom handle.  I grunted at him and waved my arms to fend off the stick and probably looked as graceful as a retarded baby T-rex doing it.

    “Well, you’re not dead”, the owner snarled at me. “Guess I would have lost that bet”, he said to the empty bar.

    I slowly got to my feet and took stock.  All my parts were there. Looking around I saw that the door and windows had been repaired.  I turned to the owner and asked, “how long have I been out”?

    The owner snorted and said, “about five minutes, now get back to work”.

    “Five minutes”, I stated, “that’s not possible.  Everything is fixed, the bodies are gone, there’s no way, what happened”?  I was close to panic.

    The owner had turned to walk away but stopped and looked back over his shoulder at me.  “Family squabbles happen among the Younger Ones, now get back to work”.

    I stopped, and I mean I stopped dead.  The owner's eyes, they glowed.  Just like Daniels.  They glowed.