

# I, Cthulhu

*or* What's a tentacle-faced thing like me doing in a sunken city like this

(Latitude 47° 9' S, Longitude 126° 43' W)?

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## I

Cthulhu, they call me. Great Cthulhu.

Nobody can pronounce it right.

Are you writing this down? Every word? Good. Where shall I start... mm?

Very well, then. The beginning. Write this down, Whateley.

I was spawned uncounted aeons ago, in the dark mists of Khhaa'yngnaih (no, of course I don't know how to spell it. Write it as it sounds), of nameless nightmare parents, under a gibbous moon. It wasn't the moon of this planet, of course, it was a real moon. On some nights it filled over half the sky and as it rose you could watch the crimson blood drip and trickle down its bloated face, staining it red, until at its height it bathed the swamps and towers in a gory dead red light.

Those were the days.

Or rather the nights, on the whole. Our place had a sun of sorts, but it was old, even back then. I remember that on the night it finally exploded we all slithered down to the beach to watch. But I get ahead of myself.

I never knew my parents.

My father was consumed by my mother as soon as he had fertilized her and she, in her turn, was eaten by myself at my birth. That is my first memory, as it happens. Squirring my way out of my mother, the gamy taste of her still in my tentacles.

Don't look so shocked, Whateley. I find you humans just as revolting.

Which reminds me, did they remember to feed the shoggoth? I thought I heard it gibbering.

I spent my first few thousand years in those swamps. I did not like this, of course, for I was the colour of a young trout and about four of your feet long.

I spent most of my time creeping up on things and eating them and in my turn avoiding being crept up on and eaten.

So passed my youth.

And then one day—I believe it was a Tuesday—I discovered that there was more to life than food. (Sex? Of course not. I will not reach that stage until after my next estivation; your piddly little planet will long be cold by then). It was that Tuesday that my Uncle Hastur slithered down to my part of the swamp with his jaws fused.

It meant that he did not intend to dine that visit, and that we could talk.

Now that is a stupid question, even for you Whateley. I don't use either of my mouths in communicating with you, do I? Very well then. One more question like that and I'll find someone else to relate my memoirs to. And you will be feeding the shoggoth.

We are going out, said Hastur to me. Would you like to accompany us?

We? I asked him. Who's we?

Myself, he said, Azathoth, Yog-Sothoth, Nyarlathotep, Tsathogghua, Ia! Shub Niggurath, young Yuggoth and a few others. You know, he said, the boys. (I am freely translating for you here, Whateley, you understand. Most of them were a-, bi-, or trisexual, and old Ia! Shub Niggurath has at least a thousand young, or so it says. That branch of the family was always given to exaggeration). We are going out, he concluded, and we were wondering if you fancied some fun.

I did not answer him at once. To tell the truth I wasn't all that fond of my cousins, and due to some particularly eldritch distortion of the planes I've always had a great deal of trouble seeing them clearly. They tend to get fuzzy around the edges, and some of them—Sabaoth is a case in point—have a great many edges.

But I was young, I craved excitement. 'There has to be more to life than this!' I would cry, as the delightfully foetid charnel smells of the swamp miasmatised around me, and overhead the ngau-ngau and zitadors whooped and skrarked. I said yes, as you have probably guessed, and I oozed after Hastur until we reached the meeting place.

As I remember we spent the next moon discussing where we were going. Azathoth had his hearts set on distant Shaggai, and Nyarlathotep had a thing about the Unspeakable Place (I can't for the life of me think why. The last time I was there everything was shut). It was all the same to me, Whateley. Anywhere wet and somehow, subtly wrong and I feel at home. But Yog-Sothoth had the last word, as he always does, and we came to this plane.

You've met Yog-Sothoth, have you not, my little two-legged beastie?

I thought as much.

He opened the way for us to come here.

To be honest, I didn't think much of it. Still don't. If I'd known the trouble we were going to have I doubt I'd have bothered. But I was younger then.

As I remember our first stop was dim Carcosa. Scared the shit out of me, that place. These days I can look at your kind without a shudder, but all those people, without a scale or pseudopod between them, gave me the quivers.

The King in Yellow was the first I ever got on with.

The tatterdemallion king. You don't know of him? Necronomicon page seven hundred and four (of the complete edition) hints at his existence, and I think that idiot Prinn mentions him in De Vermis Mysteriis. And then there's Chambers, of course.

Lovely fellow, once I got used to him.

He was the one who first gave me the idea.

What the unspeakable hells is there to do in this dreary dimension? I asked him.

He laughed. When I first came here, he said, a mere colour out of space, I asked myself the same question. Then I discovered the fun one can get in conquering these odd worlds, subjugating the inhabitants, getting them to fear and worship you. It's a real laugh.

Of course, the Old Ones don't like it.

The old ones? I asked.

No, he said, Old Ones. It's capitalized. Funny chaps. Like great starfish-headed barrels, with filmy great wings that they fly through space with.

Fly through space? Fly? I was shocked. I didn't think anybody flew these days. Why bother when one can sluggle, eh? I could see why they called them the old ones. Pardon, Old Ones.

What do these Old Ones do? I asked the King.

(I'll tell you all about slugging later, Whateley. Pointless, though. You lack wnaishng'ang. Although perhaps badminton equipment would do almost as well). (Where was I? Oh yes).

What do these Old Ones do, I asked the King.

Nothing much, he explained. They just don't like anybody else doing it.

I undulated, writhing my tentacles as if to say "I have met such beings in my time", but fear the message was lost on the King.

Do you know of any places ripe for conquering? I asked him.

He waved a hand vaguely in the direction of a small and dreary patch of stars. There's one over there that you might like, he told me. It's called Earth. Bit off the beaten track, but lots of room to move.

Silly bugger.

That's all for now, Whateley.

Tell someone to feed the shoggoth on your way out.

## II

Is it time already, Whateley?

Don't be silly. I know that I sent for you. My memory is as good as it ever was.

Ph'nglui mglw'nafh Cthulhu R'lyeh wgah'nagl fthagn.

You know what that means, don't you?

In his house at R'lyeh dead Cthulhu waits dreaming.

A justified exaggeration, that; I haven't been feeling too well recently.

It was a joke, one-head, a joke. Are you writing all this down? Good. Keep writing. I know where we got up to yesterday.

R'lyeh.

Earth.

That's an example of the way that languages change, the meanings of words. Fuzziness. I can't stand it. Once on a time R'lyeh was the Earth, or at least the part of it that I ran, the wet bits at the start. Now it's just my little house here, latitude 47 ° 9' south, longitude 126 ° 43' west.

Or the Old Ones. They call us the Old Ones now. Or the Great Old Ones, as if there were no difference between us and the barrel boys.

Fuzziness.

So I came to Earth, and in those days it was a lot wetter than it is today. A wonderful place it was, the seas as rich as soup and I got on wonderfully with the people. Dagon and the boys (I use the word literally this time). We all lived in the water in those far-off times, and before you could say Cthulhu fthagn I had them building and slaving and cooking. And being cooked, of course.

Which reminds me, there was something I meant to tell you. A true story.

There was a ship, a-sailing on the seas. On a Pacific cruise. And on this ship was a magician, a conjurer, whose function was to entertain the passengers. And there was this parrot on the ship.

Every time the magician did a trick the parrot would ruin it. How? He'd tell them how it was done, that's how. 'He put it up his sleeve', the parrot would squawk. Or 'he's stacked the deck' or 'it's got a false bottom'.

The magician didn't like it.

Finally the time came for him to do his biggest trick.

He announced it.

He rolled up his sleeves.

He waved his arms.

At that moment the ship bucked and smashed over to one side.

Sunken R'lyeh had risen beneath them. Hordes of my servants, loathsome fish-men, swarmed over the sides, seized the passengers and crew and dragged

them beneath the waves.

R'lyeh sank below the waters once more, awaiting that time when dread Cthulhu shall rise and reign once more.

Alone, above the foul waters, the magician—overlooked by my little batrachian boobies, for which they paid heavily—floated, clinging to a spar, all alone. And then, far above him he noticed a small green shape. It came lower, finally perching on a lump of nearby driftwood, and he saw it was the parrot.

The parrot cocked its head to one side and squinted up at the magician.

'Alright,' it says, 'I give up. How did you do it?'

Of course it's a true story, Whateley.

Would black Cthulhu, who slimed out of the dark stars when your most eldritch nightmares were suckling at their mothers' pseudomammaria, who waits for the time that the stars come right to come forth from his tomb-palace, revive the faithful and resume his rule, who waits to teach anew the high and luscious pleasures of death and revelry, would he lie to you?

Sure I would.

Shut up Whateley, I'm talking. I don't care where you heard it before.

We had fun in those days, carnage and destruction, sacrifice and damnation, ichor and slime and ooze, and foul and nameless games. Food and fun. It was one long party, and everybody loved it except those who found themselves impaled on wooden stakes between a chunk of cheese and pineapple.

Oh, there were giants on the earth in those days.

It couldn't last for ever.

Down from the skies they came, with filmy wings and rules and regulations and routines and Dho-Hna knows how many forms to be filled out in quintuplicate. Banal little bureaucruds, the lot of them. You could see it just looking at them: Five-pointed heads—every one you looked at had five points, arms whatever, on their heads (which I might add were always in the same place). None of them had the imagination to grow three arms or six, or one hundred and two. Five, every time.

No offence meant.

We didn't get on.

They didn't like my party.

They rapped on the walls (metaphorically). We paid no attention. Then they got mean. Argued. Bitched. Fought.

Okay, we said, you want the sea, you can have the sea. Lock, stock, and starfish-headed barrel. We moved onto the land—it was pretty swampy back then—and we built Gargantuan monolithic structures that dwarfed the mountains.

You know what killed off the dinosaurs, Whateley? We did. In one barbecue.

But those pointy-headed killjoys couldn't leave well enough alone. They tried

to move the planet nearer the sun—or was it further away? I never actually asked them. Next thing I knew we were under the sea again.

You had to laugh.

The city of the Old Ones got it in the neck. They hated the dry and the cold, as did their creatures. All of a sudden they were in the Antarctic, dry as a bone and cold as the lost plains of thrice-accursed Leng.

Here endeth the lesson for today, Whateley.

And will you please get somebody to feed that blasted shoggoth?

### III

(Professors Armitage and Wilmarth are both convinced that not less than three pages are missing from the manuscript at this point, citing the text and length. I concur.)

The stars changed, Whateley.

Imagine your body cut away from your head, leaving you a lump of flesh on a chill marble slab, blinking and choking. That was what it was like. The party was over.

It killed us.

So we wait here below.

Dreadful, eh?

Not at all. I don't give a nameless dread. I can wait.

I sit here, dead and dreaming, watching the ant-empires of man rise and fall, tower and crumble.

One day—perhaps it will come tomorrow, perhaps in more tomorrows than your feeble mind can encompass—the stars will be rightly conjoined in the heavens, and the time of destruction shall be upon us: I shall rise from the deep and I shall have dominion over the world once more.

Riot and revel, blood-food and foulness, eternal twilight and nightmare and the screams of the dead and the not-dead and the chant of the faithful.

And after?

I shall leave this plane, when this world is a cold cinder orbitting a lightless sun. I shall return to my own place, where the blood drips nightly down the face of a moon that bulges like the eye of a drowned sailor, and I shall estivate.

Then I shall mate, and in the end I shall feel a stirring within me, and I shall feel my little one eating its way out into the light.

Um.

Are you writing this all down, Whateley?

Good.

Well, that's all. The end. Narrative concluded.

Guess what we're going to do now? That's right.  
We're going to feed the shoggoth.