

IN A CUP OF COFFEE

Written by Brad M. Wallace

Based on the Japanese folk tale "In a Cup of Tea"
as collected and translated by Lafcadio Hearn in
"Kottō: Being Japanese Curios, with Sundry Cobwebs"

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INT. APARTMENT - KITCHEN - EARLY MORNING

BZZT!

A cheap coffee grinder smashes a small batch of beans.

CHOO!

Steam billows out of a stove kettle.

TSSS!

Steaming hot water pours into a paper cone filter filled with dark coffee grounds.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

ISAAC, 20s, sits at a small kitchen table with a full mug of coffee in hand. He looks distant, stressing about the day ahead.

Without thinking twice about it, Isaac raises the mug to his lips.

He gently blows on the coffee to cool it down --

The coffee ripples with his breath.

Isaac peers across the table into the pre-dawn darkness of the apartment's living room --

But the light from the kitchen falls off sharply at the mouth of the room. We can't see a thing past a foot or two.

Isaac glances back down into the mug --

The rippling stops.

In the reflection of the coffee --

A HORRIFYING, TWISTED FACE.

GAPING BLACK HOLES WHERE EYES SHOULD BE.

PALE, SCARRED SKIN.

Isaac looks shocked.

He whips his head up and looks up across the table into the living room --

Nothing. Darkness.

He stares for a moment longer.

The darkness stares back.

Finally, Isaac slowly tilts his head down and looks into the mug again, examining it closely --

SLOW ZOOM ON ISAAC'S FACE.

He lets out a heavy sigh of relief. Dismissing and defusing what he thinks he just saw.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

SPLASH!

Isaac dumps the coffee from the mug into a reusable tumbler.

CRRK!

Isaac screws on the lid of the coffee tumbler.

CUT TO:

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - EARLY MORNING

It's still dark outside. Might as well be the middle of the night.

Isaac leaves his apartment through the back door. He has a backpack over his shoulder and the tumbler of coffee in his hand.

Isaac shuts the door behind him and steps onto the building's narrow second-floor balcony walkway. He heads towards the end of the walkway and looks out into the tiny backyard and alleyway below --

He stops.

In the alley behind the building, past an old, gated wooden fence --

THE FIGURE OF A MAN stands completely still, facing Isaac.

Isaac looks worried. He reaches into his pocket and grabs his car keys.

When he looks back up at the alley --

The alley is empty. The FIGURE is gone.

Isaac grips the car key tight.

He slowly continues on the walkway --

Then down the steps to the backyard --

With each step, Isaac seems less confident. The dark pre-dawn envelopes his surroundings. His mind races and his heart pounds. Completely unnerved.

CRRK!

Isaac opens the creaky old wooden gate and steps through.

EXT. ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

Isaac shuts the gate behind him. He looks to his left down the alley --

Nothing. Only the shitty street lamp overhead casts enough light to see anything.

Then to his right --

Nothing.

Lulled into a sense of security, Isaac heads towards his designated space in the building's garage. He presses the button on his garage door-opener --

BZZT!

The garage door creeps open. Impossibly slow. Every second feels like an eternity.

Isaac looks antsy. He looks over his shoulder back towards the end of the alley --

Nothing.

Then to the opposite entrance --

Nothing.

His breathing escalates. He fiddles with the car keys.

The garage door reaches halfway open.

Seeking respite, Isaac raises the coffee tumbler to his lips. He holds it there for a moment, wondering what he might catch in the reflection if the tumbler didn't have a lid.

Finally, Isaac shuts his eyes and takes a heroic drink --
GULP!

The coffee courses through his veins.

The garage door stops. It's finally open.

Isaac opens his eyes and releases his breath.

Then, without warning --

ISAAC SPITS OUT DARK, BLOODY VOMIT --

LIKE HIS STOMACH JUST EXPLODED --

IT KNOCKS HIM TO THE GROUND --

ISAAC TWITCHES UNCONTROLLABLY AS THE BLOODY VOMIT DRIBBLES FROM HIS MOUTH ONTO THE PAVEMENT --

TEARS WELL IN HIS EYES --

HE'S COMPLETELY PARALYZED --

ISAAC'S POV: THE DARK FIGURE OF A MAN STEPS OUT AT THE END OF THE ALLEY --

ISAAC'S EYES WIDEN --

HE LETS OUT A SILENT SCREAM --

ISAAC'S POV: THE FIGURE SLOWLY WALKS TOWARDS ISAAC --

IT GETS DOWN ON ALL FOURS --

THE HORRIFYING, TWISTED FACE.

GAPING BLACK HOLES WHERE EYES SHOULD BE.

PALE, SCARRED SKIN.

IT SMILES.

CUT TO BLACK