

INT. BITTER GROUNDS COFFEE SHOP - DAY

SUSAN, a 30-something barista, is being harrassed by customers. Another barista, KIM, 20-something and vacuous, is chatting away in the background, and is not helping with the customers. SUSAN has places a finished froufrou beverage on the counter for a 40-something MOTHER chatting loudly on a cellphone.

KIM

And then I told him, I'm not moving to Alabama-

MOTHER

I told you to give your brother the gun. Remember how we talked about sharing?

SUSAN

Ma'am, I have your drink ready.

SUSAN waits patiently with the froufrou drink.

KIM

Of course, he's paying the rent, so that would be a big inconvenience for me if he left.

MOTHER

I don't care if he's hitting you with it. Give it to him.

SUSAN

Ma'am-

KIM

And then he was all like, "but I got a scholarship". Like I care.

MOTHER

I'm not telling you again MacKenzie, give your brother the gun.

The MOTHER turns around absent-mindedly to pick up the cup, but instead knocks it all over SUSAN.

MOTHER

I'm not paying for that. No, not you honey, I was talking to this brain-dead coffee girl.

SUSAN

I'll make you a new one.

KIM

Are you even listening to me Susan? You know, you've got like, whipped cream all over you.

MOTHER

Hello, hello? Damnit - I've got all my bars! (To SUSAN) Now look what you've done!

SUSAN

But-

The MOTHER abruptly leaves the counter and walks outside, fiddling with her cell phone, trying to get a signal.

Another customer comes up to the counter, 40 something, squat, and androgynous (COMPLAINER).

COMPLAINER

Excuse miss, but I ordered a non-fat latte. I distinctly taste milk fat in this. I mean, how hard is your job? You push a couple of buttons, pull a few levers, and out comes overpriced coffee. It's not like you actually have to pick the beans.

SUSAN

I'm sorry sir, I was positive it was non-fat. I'll make you a new one.

COMPLAINER

Are you blind? I'm not a sir! And no, I don't want a new one! I want a refund, because if I wait for you to make me a new one I'll be late for my very important meeting.

SUSAN

I'll have to call my manager at home, it's not our store policy to-

COMPLAINER

Oh, never mind! I'll be calling your corporate office, and I'll make sure you get fired. You've just ruined my morning!

Another well dressed male customer (MISSIONARY), 20-something is waiting behind the COMPLAINER, and moves to the counter when the COMPLAINER storms out of the shop.

SUSAN

(forced cheerfulness) Good morning! Welcome to Bitter Grounds. Our special today is a Brazilian roast with a hint of vanilla. It's very mellow.

MISSIONARY

(smiling beatifically)  
I'm not here to purchase anything.

SUSAN

Um, well then how can I help you, uh, sir?

MISSIONARY

Do you know Jesus?

SUSAN stares at him for a moment.

KIM

I know a Jesus (pronounced HAY-sus).

Just then, a loud sound, like a sonic boom, rattles the coffee shop. Everyone looks around in shock.

KIM

What was-

Another boom is heard, this time longer and louder. Outside, screaming people start to run by in one direction. One businessman with tie askew and clutching a briefcase to his chest (SCREAMER) enters the coffee shop, and pauses briefly to catch his ragged breath. Everyone in the shop stares at him expectantly.

SCREAMER

Run!

SUSAN

What's happening?

SCREAMER

Aliens!

Wild-eyed, the SCREAMER opens the door and bolts outside, only to be obliterated by some sort of beam. Everyone in the shop looks horrified.

KIM

Ew. There's like, bits of him on the window. I'm not cleaning that.

MISSIONARY

It's the end. But, why haven't I raptured?

SUSAN

It's probably not the end, it can't be. There's no such thing... I'm not ending my life in this craphole! I'm tired of being everyone's whipping bitch! I have talents and ambitions! I'm a good person! I mean, I don't want the highlight of my life to be a ten cent an hour raise!

KIM

You only got ten cents? You should have slept with the manager. She kinda smells, but it wasn't bad really.

SUSAN

There's got to be more to life than this. I want adventure! I've always wanted to travel. There's got to be more. I haven't even learned how to surf yet!

MISSIONARY

You're wrong, I know it. It isn't this life that is the reward... is it?

The MISSIONARY looks up.

MISSIONARY

I thought I was saved. Did I do something wrong? I converted twelve people! Maybe I should have picked Hinduism...

SUSAN

It doesn't matter! We can't let this happen! We can't just let go of what we have! We can't just give up and hope that we get transported to some mythical paradise. This is it! We have to save what we know we've got!

MISSIONARY

Dear Shiva, um, Kali, and whoever else, please forgive me for walking the wrong path-

The MISSIONARY abruptly disappears with an audible pop.

SUSAN

You've got to be kidding...

KIM

Who's Shiva? I know a Sheila. She  
slept with-

Just then, a man in a spacesuit (BRIAN), wrestling a large slimy alien with plenty of tentacles, crashes through one of the shop windows. They fight on the floor. BRIAN has what looks like a ray gun, but the alien is trying to wrestle it away.

BRIAN

(grunting) Help! Can't one of you  
help me? Can't you see that I've got  
something not of this Earth on top  
of me?

SUSAN quickly grabs the latte left behind by the COMPLAINER, and splashes it on the alien. The alien begins to smoke as the coffee sears into it's flesh. It lets out a hideous squeal. It releases it's grip on the ray gun, and BRIAN rolls it off him. It promptly explodes, sending bits of alien all over the inside of the shop. BRIAN gets up, and brushes his suit clean of alien bits.

BRIAN

Thanks! How did you know coffee  
would repel it? That information is  
supposed to be classified.

SUSAN

(shocked) I didn't. What the hell is  
going on?

BRIAN

Isn't it obvious? We're being  
attacked by aliens. We've been able  
to fend them off for decades, but  
this is it, Earth is totally  
screwed!

KIM

Who are you?

BRIAN

My name is Brian. I'm a captain in the U.S. Spacefleet. I just crashed my ship chasing that guy here.

SUSAN

The space-what?

BRIAN

Come on, haven't you ever wondered why sixty percent of your tax dollars went to national defense? Didn't that ever seem a little high to you?

SUSAN

(confused) We have a space army? How...is that, is that a ray gun?

BRIAN looks tentatively out the unbroken window, in the direction of the sky.

BRIAN

Yeah, the Nazis invented them at the end of the Big Deuce in a last ditch effort to turn the tide of war. Obviously, it didn't work. You know, It's getting pretty bad out there. Looks like we're losing.

Suddenly, BRIAN'S face is illuminated by a bright orange light. He jumps back a bit. The sound of an explosion rattles the window.

BRIAN

Yup. We're as good as gone.

Small bits of metallic debris rains down on the sidewalk and ping against the window.

KIM

You're going back out there right? You're going to kick tentacled butt right?

BRIAN

No, I don't think so.

SUSAN

But, you have to. I mean, this is Earth we're talking about. You have to save Earth. You're our only hope!

BRIAN

No, no I'm not. It's pretty much over. We had orders for full retreat. It's like seriously over, done, stick a fork in it. If I still had my ship, I might have been able to make it to the moon base, but they'll destroy that soon enough too.

SUSAN

Moon base... but, you have to do something? I mean, we may not be the best species in the universe, but we deserve to live!

BRIAN

Hey, it's natural selection. Besides, I'm tired of fighting. I'm tired of losing.

SUSAN

We've got to fight!

BRIAN

No. I really don't want to spend the last minutes of my life like that.

SUSAN

Then tell me what to do! I'll fight them!

BRIAN

You wouldn't last more than a few seconds out there.

SUSAN

I've got to try, there's always hope! I still have hope!

BRIAN

I don't. Look, why don't you listen to some music or something? Quit bugging me.

KIM

Well, if we're all going to die, do you want to have sex in the bathroom? Susan just mopped in there 'cause she had to unclog the toilet. It's all sparkly and stuff.

BRIAN

(thinking for a moment) Yeah, okay.

BRIAN puts his ray gun on the counter, and leaves with KIM for the back of the shop. SUSAN takes a long look at the ray gun, then looks out the window reflectively. She looks back at the ray gun.

With a look of determination, she grabs a couple of bags of ground coffee from behind the counter. SUSAN comes around the counter, pauses, puts the coffee on the counter, and takes off her soiled apron, dropping it to the floor.

She picks up the coffee, looks at the ray gun, then picks it up as well. She goes to the door of the shop, pauses as the light of multiple explosions dance on her face. She opens the door, and walks out to meet her true calling.