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Fire in the Sky

by

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EXT. SCENE - RESIDENTIAL PITTSBURGH. STREET. (NIGHT)

A dark residential area southwest of the Ohio River. A man walks down a side street, deep in his headphones and half oblivious to his surroundings. In the shadows, another man stands, letting him pass, before turning to follow. They proceed this way up an arterial street before turning down the side street. The first man glances back, knowing something is up, and walks faster. The second man keeps pace.

As they cross the mouth of an alley, a voice speaks from above.

TACHI (OFF)

You should think twice about this.

The first man keeps going, but the second stops and looks around him. He puts one hand inside his jacket. He doesn't get a chance to do much: from above drops a young gargoyle child, female, and angry. She has a machete tucked into her belt.

TACHI

I really would suggest it.

ROBBER

What? What are you?

TACHI

Your nightmare.

ROBBER

Time to wake up, then.

He draws his gun, aims, and fires...at nothing. TACHI rolls out of the way and bolts into a back yard. The ROBBER chases her.

Into the back yard, TACHI comes up against a solid fence and leaps onto it. The ROBBER fires again, hitting the boards near her head, and she drops down into a crouch, drawing her weapon as she does. She growls, about as fiercely as a child can. The ROBBER approaches.

ROBBER

Tough little thing you are. Some nightmare. I've heard about you kind of creatures. How you...guck.

The last word is his reaction to having a katana placed across his throat. Three clawed blue fingers curl around the back of the blade and pull the edge right up into the ROBBER's windpipe,

and a gargoyle puts his head right alongside the ROBBER's, speaking directly into his ear.

NASHVILLE

That's enough. Throw the gun down or I pull this across.

The ROBBER throws it down. Just as he does, the yard light goes on and the tenant appears at the back door, blinking at the scene. NASHVILLE releases the sword and gives the ROBBER a good shove in the back, throwing him down. NASHVILLE makes for the fence, fast.

NASHVILLE

Tachi, c'mon!

He vaults the fence, followed by TACHI. The ROBBER, for his part, runs toward the house, but the tenant draws her own gun on him. He stops, stomps the ground in frustration, and finally puts up his hands.

EXT. SCENE - PITTSBURGH. AERIAL. (NIGHT)

TACHI and NASHVILLE are gliding through the night, heading generally toward the river.

NASHVILLE

"Your nightmare"? What was that?

TACHI

You don't get to say all the cool lines, Gnash.

NASHVILLE

That wasn't a cool line, Tachi. You've got to grow up a bit more for that one. Besides which, you've got to have more than a cool line. You have to have a plan "B" in mind.

TACHI

I was going to hit him with the sword.

NASHVILLE

Machete.

TACHI

It's a sword.

NASHVILLE

It's not a sword, and it's not a good plan "B", not if he's got a gun.

TACHI

That never stopped you.

NASHVILLE

Yeah, but I got experience with Brooklyn.

TACHI

So do I.

NASHVILLE

I have twenty years more experience.

TACHI

But I got to take out the gunship that one time!

NASHVILLE

That was one time. That's not experience. That's luck. You're going to get yourself into trouble depending on luck all the time.

TACHI

Blah, blah, blah.

NASHVILLE and TACHI continue through the air as NASHVILLE thinks to himself.

NASHVILLE

(internal)

She never listens. No. That's not fair. She listens all right, sometimes.

EXT. SCENE - CENTRAL CITY. (NIGHT)

NASHVILLE and TACHI are climbing up the back of a large brick building.

NASHVILLE

(internal)

She listens when I tell her about how the backs of buildings are easier to get up than the fronts because your

claws can dig in better to the back
bricks.

NASHVILLE's grip breaks loose and he slips, briefly, as TACHI reacts.

NASHVILLE

(internal)

Even if they tend to crumble more. And how limestone is even softer, so you shouldn't go up the fronts; plus, the humans complain about the claw marks.

EXT. SCENE - COMMERCIAL BUILDING. ROOF. (NIGHT)

The angle is down the front of a smaller building. Below on the street, there is a sidewalk cafe, with two young lovers at the table, holding hands and making smoochy faces. Above, TACHI holds a tub of sour cream and a spoon. Out in front, a flock of pigeons suddenly startles and takes to the air.

NASHVILLE

(internal)

How to get a meal without having to dig in the garbage. Once in a while.

TACHI flips the sour cream, and it splats on the table below. The lovers are disgusted, and bail on the table, heading inside. As they turn their backs, NASHVILLE swoops in and collects the dishes.

EXT. SCENE - GRANDVIEW TOWER. ROOF. (NIGHT)

NASHVILLE stands in front of a visibly upset KATANA, who is scolding him, as ANGELA, COLDFIRE, COLDSTONE, and FU-DOG surround them. He bows his head in shame, but he gives a conspiratorial side-eye to TACHI, who hides the sour cream tub behind her back.

NASHVILLE

(internal)

How to stand up for your clan, and to be responsible for upholding its honor all the time. Almost.

EXT. SCENE - PITTSBURGH. AERIAL. (NIGHT)

NASHVILLE and TACHI continue to glide through the night, turning to parallel the south shore of the river.

NASHVILLE

(internal)

She listens when I have something important to say, which is great, since sometimes I think she's the only one. Especially now.

TACHI

Hey, Gnash, look!

NASHVILLE

What?

TACHI

Over there!

She points, and he looks. Below and ahead of them is a familiar gold figure, COLDFIRE, gliding along the highway. They descend to meet her.

NASHVILLE

Coldfire!

COLDFIRE

Nashville! This saves some trouble.

TACHI

Did you find them?

COLDFIRE

Yes, and they sent someone to bring me back. Do you see that truck down there?

NASHVILLE

Yes.

COLDFIRE

Can you land in the bed of it?

NASHVILLE

Easily.

COLDFIRE

Good.

She touches the side of her head.

COLDFIRE

Matt, I have made contact. I'm sending someone down to you. Hold your speed.

(to NASHVILLE)

Go to him and direct him up to the wood. I will gather the others.

NASHVILLE

All right.

TACHI

How about me?

COLDFIRE

You come with me.

They separate, NASHVILLE descending and COLDFIRE climbing with TACHI.

EXT. SCENE - STREET. (NIGHT)

Caption: Wednesday, February 20, 2013. 8:23 PM. Mount Washington, Pittsburgh, Pa.

Nearby the upper station of the Monongahela Inclined Railway, MATT pulls his truck (with NASHVILLE in back) around and below an embankment, putting it out of view. There has been recent demolition in the area, and the rubble further hides them from view. He parks and shuts off, as NASHVILLE stands up and climbs over the bed rail to the ground. MATT exits, and closes the door.

MATT

This is it?

NASHVILLE

This is the place.

MATT

Nice view. Quiet. I can see why you like it.

NASHVILLE

The others should be here in a little while.

MATT

Great.

NASHVILLE

So, you, uh...

MATT

What?

NASHVILLE

Nothing. I mean, you seem pretty calm about all this.

MATT

What, meeting a strange gargoyle in an isolated dark corner of a major city?

NASHVILLE

Yes.

MATT

I've been hanging around the other half of your clan for months now. Not that strange, actually.

NASHVILLE

No, I guess not.

MATT

(yawning)

Driving eight hours straight through has some effect, too. Actually, um, could you, uh, turn around?

NASHVILLE

Why?

MATT

I just need to, uh...

NASHVILLE

Go?

MATT

Yeah.

NASHVILLE

I do mind. Sorry. Meeting a strange human in an isolated dark corner of a major city isn't exactly something I want to be careless about.

MATT

Oh, come on.

NASHVILLE

It's not like I don't know about this,
anyway. Go.

MATT steps around the corner, turning his back on him, and doing nature's business as far out of sight as he can.

NASHVILLE

Speaking of calm.

MATT

That's not calm, that's four cans of
energy drinks.

NASHVILLE

Everyone's all right? In Chicago?

MATT

They are fine. Really. Are you guys?

NASHVILLE

More or less.

MATT

I'd heard it had been a bit rough.

NASHVILLE

Yeah.

MATT

Yeah.

NASHVILLE

You're here to get us out, though,
right?

From above MATT, a low voice speaks.

COLDSTONE (OFF)

Befouling our meeting place is not a
good start to that.

MATT

Gyaah!

COLDSTONE drops down into the grove as MATT hurriedly makes himself presentable, before turning around to face him.

COLDSTONE
You are Matt Pegram?

MATT
Yes, I am. How do you do?

COLDSTONE
I have been much better in my time.

MATT
I would imagine.

KATANA and ANGELA land, with FU-DOG between them, followed by TACHI and COLDFIRE.

KATANA
This is he?

NASHVILLE
It is.

ANGELA
And you are sure he is with our clan?

COLDFIRE
He is a friend of the clan. Of that much, I am sure.

COLDSTONE
And how did that come about?

MATT
Yards of bandages and months of work. I know the names, but not the faces, sorry. You are Coldstone?

COLDSTONE
I am.

MATT
Coldfire I know. Who's Katana?

KATANA
I am.

MATT

Hello. Brooklyn sends his regards and also asks that you not kill him.

KATANA

No promises there.

MATT

And you are Angela?

ANGELA

I am. Welcome.

MATT

Thank you. Which means you must be Nashville?

NASHVILLE

Yes. Call me "Gnash."

MATT

And Tachi?

TACHI

Yes.

MATT

And this is Fu-Dog?

FU-DOG advances on him, growling. MATT retreats slightly.

KATANA

Fu-Dog, it is all right. He is a friend.

FU-DOG relaxes slightly at this. MATT reaches out to be sniffed, but FU-DOG is unimpressed and goes to KATANA's side.

MATT

Got it the first time through. This is a good start.

COLDSTONE

A better start would be for you to explain what has happened to our clan.

COLDFIRE

I was able to locate Goliath and the others. They are safe and well. They

have occupied themselves with protecting their temporary home but they are working on how to reunite the clan.

NASHVILLE

And go back to Manhattan?

COLDFIRE

Yes, eventually, but there is something else. Trouble is coming here.

ANGELA

What kind of trouble?

COLDFIRE

Someone named Doctor Cotter.

MATT

Typical mad scientist sort. She had been putting human brains into machines in Chicago. It sounds like she's planning to come here and put gargoyle brains into them next.

COLDSTONE

And what do you know of her?

MATT

Past victim myself. She had turned me against the clan for a while.

COLDFIRE

You did not tell me of this.

MATT

You didn't ask.

COLDSTONE

And now you are recovered?

MATT

Yes. Mostly.

KATANA

Mostly?

MATT

It's...lingering psychological effects, post-traumatic stress, I'd rather not

waste too much time on that. They saved me from all that, anyway.

COLDSTONE

Why would they do that?

COLDFIRE

Because he saved their lives.

COLDSTONE

You are sure of this?

COLDFIRE

I am sure. Goliath told me of it.

COLDSTONE

I see.

He walks around MATT, surveying him carefully.

COLDSTONE

Why did they send you here?

COLDFIRE

To bring me back.

COLDSTONE

You could have flown.

COLDFIRE

No. My fuel was largely exhausted traveling west.

COLDSTONE

So having completed that mission, you will now leave?

MATT

No, actually. I have another mission. To secure your welfare.

COLDSTONE

We do not require your help for that.

MATT

Goliath thinks otherwise.

COLDFIRE

This is true.

KATANA

By bringing us to Chicago?

MATT

Maybe. Not right away, though.

COLDSTONE

To Manhattan, then.

MATT

No, that's not his plan either.

ANGELA

What, then?

MATT

Suppress Doctor Cotter, first. She's a danger to you, but whether she can get to you or not, she's a danger to the people here.

COLDSTONE

Then we will address the danger by ourselves. You have done your duty. Now go home.

ANGELA

No.

COLDSTONE

What?

ANGELA

Goliath has said. He stays.

KATANA

Yes.

COLDSTONE

He is not needed. This is one human--

KATANA

Whom Goliath thinks is dangerous enough to need another. Answer me this: what exactly do you mean by "securing our welfare"?

MATT

I don't know, exactly. But I'm going to suggest, if you don't mind, that a large part of it could be keeping eyes out for you during the day.

COLDSTONE

Which we can do for ourselves, or were you not told that?

MATT

But there are other things--

ANGELA

That are irrelevant. Goliath has said he stays. That is enough.

She looks firmly at COLDSTONE.

COLDSTONE

For how long?

MATT

Well, how long do you think it'll take you to deal with Doctor Cotter?

COLDSTONE

Not long.

MATT

Then I won't be staying long. Good deal, thanks.

COLDSTONE

And where do you plan to stay, then?

MATT

A hotel. This is not a problem either.

COLDSTONE

As you will, then.

KATANA

If Cotter is coming, how do we find her?

COLDFIRE

She was hunting the homeless in Chicago. It is likely she will do the same here to build up her force.

KATANA

Then that is where we should begin. Shall we go down by the river?

COLDSTONE

They will do that. Angela and Coldfire should go together.

ANGELA

I suppose so.

COLDSTONE

We will investigate the center city.

NASHVILLE

And Tachi and I can go down to--

KATANA

You can remain here with Fu-Dog.

NASHVILLE

Why?

KATANA

Because you need to care for Tachi.

NASHVILLE

Yes, *okasan*.

COLDSTONE

Let us begin.

He fires his engines and lifts off from the clearing. KATANA begins to climb the embankment to gain height, but halfway up, she calls out:

KATANA

Musuko!

NASHVILLE

Hai?

KATANA

Kare o hanatte okanaide kudasai.

NASHVILLE nods, and KATANA takes off into the wind to follow COLDSTONE.

MATT

He seems upset.

ANGELA

He always seems upset. Please don't take it personally.

COLDFIRE

He will come around. Are you coming?

ANGELA

Right behind you.

COLDFIRE lifts off into the sky, and ANGELA leaps off the bluff and into the wind to follow her toward the Liberty Bridge, leaving the others behind.

EXT. SCENE - PITTSBURGH. AERIAL. (NIGHT)

COLDFIRE and ANGELA patrol east along the north shore of the Monongahela River.

COLDFIRE

He sends his love.

ANGELA

What's that?

COLDFIRE

Broadway. He is thinking of you.

ANGELA

I'm thinking of him, too.

COLDFIRE

He knows.

ANGELA

What is it we should be looking for?

COLDFIRE

Someone offering work, or perhaps shelter.

ANGELA

There are plenty of those.

East of 10th Street, there is a large mobile home set up with several people serving meals outside it, a mobile soup kitchen. A small crowd of people is gathered around. COLDFIRE and ANGELA circle around, observing.

ANGELA

They are being cared for?

COLDFIRE

It seems so.

ANGELA

I mean, the clan?

COLDFIRE

They are quite well. They have found a solid footing and they have found help when they needed it.

ANGELA

Good. I'm glad.

COLDFIRE

You are worried.

ANGELA

I can't help it. I miss my mate.

COLDFIRE

Yes, as he misses you.

ANGELA

When will I see him again?

COLDFIRE

I do not know. Goliath was not certain of the next step, other than to prevent Doctor Cotter from attacking us. It may be he intends to come here.

ANGELA

But he is protecting Chicago. Would he leave?

COLDFIRE

Would you leave this city?

ANGELA

To be with them? Yes. I think I would.
This is not home.

COLDFIRE

No. It is not.

EXT. SCENE - SECOND AVENUE PARKING LOT. (NIGHT)

They have gotten further east, away from the crowd. A van slowly prowls the lot, stalking a couple that is working their way east down toward the riverfront trail.

COLDFIRE

(indicating)

That is suspicious.

ANGELA

It may still be a charity.

COLDFIRE

Or a thief. Watch them.

They circle around and conceal themselves in a tree nearby, watching. Below, the van pulls up alongside the couple, and JIMMY LEG, a neatly-dressed goon, leans out the passenger side to talk to them.

JIMMY

Hi there!

MAN

Hi.

JIMMY

I got an offer for you if you're interested.

MAN

What's that?

JIMMY

Twenty bucks if you'll donate your brain to science, right here.

MAN

Get lost.

WOMAN

Really.

JIMMY

No, seriously. We're building a cyborg army and we could use your brain for it.

MAN

Uh-huh.

JIMMY

I got one in the back. You want to see?

WOMAN

No, leave us alone.

The couple walks away more briskly.

JIMMY

No? You're sure. Okay. Spin it around, Mel, we'll try again.

MEL, the driver, pulls the wheel sharply around to turn the van back. It does not get far: ANGELA drops in front of it, crouched, eyes lit. The van stops abruptly. JIMMY pops his door open and steps out, staring her down.

JIMMY

Well, it's about time!

ANGELA

What?

JIMMY

Two hours of cruising around in this thing finally pays off. Mel?

MEL pulls something out of the back seat toward the front, and JIMMY takes it. It is a large rocket launcher type of weapon. JIMMY aims toward ANGELA, who lunges at him, but too late: he fires, deploying a net around her and capturing her. A rope from the launcher connects it to the net, and JIMMY begins to reel her in.

JIMMY

Help me with this. C'mon, help me with this!

MEL reaches over to help pull on the rope. This doesn't last: there is a blast from the trees, severing the rope and allowing ANGELA to work her way out of the net. JIMMY tumbles backward as the rope snaps. COLDFIRE launches from the tree with a roar, descending onto the top of the van, where she crouches, looking down at him.

COLDFIRE

One chance. That was it.

JIMMY

Whoa. Plasma blaster. Not cool. That was not part of the deal.

COLDFIRE

That is not my concern. You will tell me your employer.

JIMMY

Doctor Victoria Cotter, or didn't you know that?

COLDFIRE

It is always best to confirm these things. Thank you for being forthright.

JIMMY

Don't mention it. Of course, you realize, information comes with a price.

COLDFIRE

Of course.

She flips backward off the roof of the van, just as MEL is reaching up with the electric prod to stun her. Instead, she gets his arm and rips him out of the van and onto the pavement. She takes the prod from him. JIMMY sits up, but at this point ANGELA is free, and leaps on him, pinning him down.

ANGELA

Now. What else do you know?

JIMMY

Uhhh.

COLDFIRE

Anything at all.

ANGELA

Start with where you were going to take us.

JIMMY

Do your worst, I'll never talk.

COLDFIRE

Oh. That is bad news. Here.

She tosses the prod over the van to ANGELA, who catches it and points it at JIMMY.

JIMMY

Hah. You think we go into these things blind? We've been told about you, and how your great love for humanity means you would never--

ANGELA jolts JIMMY in the shoulder with the prod, proving him wrong.

JIMMY

Ow! But, that, that...

ANGELA

You tried to capture me, electrocute her, and steal the brains of part of my clan. Even great love has its limits.

JIMMY

Enhhhh...

ANGELA

Where was it?

JIMMY

Allegheny Commons. The Aviary.

ANGELA

Very cute. Anything else we should know?

JIMMY

No, ma'am.

ANGELA

Fine.

She stands, releasing him, and he sits up, rubbing his shoulder.

ANGELA

Go tell Doctor Cotter we are not easy pickings. She ought to know that.

JIMMY stands, giving ANGELA a dirty look, and begins to climb into the van. She puts the prod across in front of him to block him.

ANGELA

Not like that. I'm not having you take any more people off. You walk.

JIMMY

You gotta be kidding. It's got to be four or five miles--

ANGELA smacks the prod against the van, producing a brilliant arc inches from JIMMY's face. He stumbles backward. COLDFIRE releases MEL, who sits up.

JIMMY

C'mon, Mel. I think the bus stop's this way.

MEL stands, and the two of them begin to walk away.

JIMMY

We'll be back, though. This isn't over.

COLDFIRE

Also good to know. Come on.

ANGELA goes toward the wood and begins climbing the tree as COLDFIRE fires her engines and lifts off. COLDFIRE circles around in the air, then fires at the van, and it explodes. ANGELA launches from the tree, and the two of them fly off into the night.

INT. SCENE - HOTEL ROOM.

An unremarkable hotel room, dark. Through the window, far out past the balcony in the distance, a small fireball rises into the night sky. The door opens and the light comes on, and MATT enters the room, closing the door behind himself. He puts a bag down on the bed, stretches, shuts the curtains, and lies down, relaxing. He shuts his eyes briefly.

Not for long. There is a scratching noise outside. He opens one eye, then the other, then looks over at the patio door leading to the balcony. A vague shadow is visible. He sits up, looking at the window. He stands, slowly, carefully, going over to the window. He puts his ear up to the curtain, listening. Tentatively, and then with more resolve, he reaches for the curtain, and then pulls it back, dramatically revealing NASHVILLE, scowling back at him from outside (in a "Terror at 30,000 Feet" callback). He gasps, and then scowls back, and opens the door. NASHVILLE enters, followed by TACHI and FU-DOG. TACHI begins to explore the room.

MATT

That's not funny. Is this going to be the way of it here, with you guys sneaking up on me all the time?

NASHVILLE

Not all of the time, just when you're not paying attention.

MATT

What are you doing here, anyway? I thought you were supposed to stay up on the hill.

TACHI

Katana told him to watch you. What's this?

MATT

It's a coffee maker.

TACHI

What's it for?

MATT

Making coffee.

TACHI

Can I try?

MATT

Not this late.

NASHVILLE

Coffee stunts your growth, kiddo.

TACHI

Oh.

TACHI continues exploring. FU-DOG hoists himself up onto the bed and curls up on it.

NASHVILLE

"*Kare o hanatte okanaide.*" "Don't leave him alone." You're as much at risk as we are. Probably more.

MATT

I mean, maybe so.

NASHVILLE

Maybe?

MATT

Probably so. Still, I can lock the doors. I don't really need you to follow me here, and besides which this is definitely a no-pets room!

NASHVILLE

Fu-Dog is not a pet. He is a valued member of our clan.

FU-DOG looks up at him at the mention of his name, and flips his tail against the bedspread once or twice. TACHI, meanwhile, has wandered into the bathroom. There is the sudden whir of the hair dryer turning on.

TACHI (OFF)

Oh, cool! Gnash, come see this!

NASHVILLE

It's a hair dryer, Tachi.

TACHI (OFF)

It's attached to the wall, though!

MATT

This is your first time in a hotel room, I'm guessing?

TACHI (OFF)

Yeah, it's neat.

NASHVILLE

Now, maybe you can turn down our protection, but can you really bring yourself to deny her this kind of new experience?

MATT shrugs, and then sits on the bed. TACHI turns off the hair dryer and comes back out of the bathroom.

MATT

Oh, all right, then. I'm not really trying to turn down your protection, anyway. I just don't want to trouble you guys if you have something else you're supposed to be doing.

TACHI

We don't. We'd just be standing up on the hill getting bored.

NASHVILLE

She's not wrong. I don't mind protecting her, but I'd rather be protecting something more.

MATT

Like what?

NASHVILLE

The clan. The city, the world. Something.

TACHI

You talk like you don't get to do that.

NASHVILLE

I don't, not officially. Not like before.

MATT

What happened before?

NASHVILLE

Long story.

TACHI

Boring story.

MATT

Well, give me the short version.

TACHI scoffs, and then flops back on the bed next to FU-DOG and fidgets.

NASHVILLE

I hatched when Brooklyn and Katana were on what they call the "Timedance."

MATT

I heard mention of that from him, nothing more.

NASHVILLE

They were my only mother and father for nineteen years, ...

TACHI AND NASHVILLE

(together)

...years that spanned centuries.

TACHI

He always says it that way to sound cooler.

MATT

Well, it does, but what does it mean?

NASHVILLE

Every so often we would hop to another time and place. The Phoenix would just show up one night, and off we would go. We would have something to do in the new time and place, then off we went again.

MATT

Wow.

NASHVILLE

We spent our time protecting all sorts of people. I grew up helping mother and father to do that, and they taught me what I needed to know.

MATT

Non-stop action, then.

NASHVILLE

Not quite. Close to it, though. Anyway, we finally came home to the clan, and not long after, Tachi hatched. And I've had to watch out for her ever since.

TACHI

You have not.

NASHVILLE

No? What about earlier tonight?

TACHI

That was a fluke.

MATT

What happened earlier tonight?

NASHVILLE

There was a--

TACHI

No, let me tell it!

NASHVILLE

All right, go ahead.

TACHI

There was a man going to rob another man. I stopped him from doing it.

NASHVILLE

And nearly got shot.

TACHI

I did not!

NASHVILLE

You did so. I had to jump in and prevent it.

TACHI

But I protected the first one!

MATT

Is that what you guys are doing here?

NASHVILLE and TACHI look at each other.

MATT

Or you're not supposed to be, are you?

NASHVILLE

Can you keep it to yourself?

MATT

Yes, of course.

TACHI

Our mothers worry, but Coldstone worries most about it.

NASHVILLE

He does not want Tachi out on the street.

TACHI

But I want to get out. I can't do any good locked up with Fu-Dog all the time.

NASHVILLE

And sometime you have to get on the street and practice.

MATT

So you've been sneaking out?

NASHVILLE

Something like that.

TACHI

But not this time.

NASHVILLE

No. This time, Katana told me specifically to watch you.

TACHI

Told us.

NASHVILLE

Yes, all right. Told us to watch you.

MATT

Well, thank you for that.

He stands up.

MATT

It has been a long night for me already, though, and I do need to get my sleep.

NASHVILLE

Oh, sure. Come on, let's give him his bed back.

TACHI jumps off the bed, and she and NASHVILLE head for the balcony. FU-DOG puts his head up and whimpers.

NASHVILLE

That cozy, huh?

FU-DOG nods, and then lies back on the bed.

NASHVILLE

Do you mind?

MATT

Not if he doesn't mind sharing. I'm not going to sleep in the tub tonight.

NASHVILLE

Sleep well. We'll be out here if you need us.

MATT

Thanks.

NASHVILLE and TACHI exit onto the balcony, as MATT picks up his bag and begins to unpack.

INT. SCENE - HOTEL ROOM.

Later: the light is coming in the patio door around the curtain. MATT lies flat on the bed in his T-shirt and pants, snoring. The clock on the bedstand indicates it is 9:38 AM. There is a soft double tap at the patio door. MATT does not react. There is then a loud bang. MATT jumps awake. He sits up and swings out of the bed, looking at the clock, then looking at the window. He stands and then goes to the window. He pulls aside the curtain. COLDSTONE stands on the balcony, looking in at him. MATT opens the door. NASHVILLE, TACHI, and FU-DOG stand outside, in stone.

MATT

Good morning. I didn't expect you to be up at this hour.

COLDSTONE

Whereas I did expect you to be up.

MATT

It was a late night.

COLDSTONE

May I come in?

MATT

I think you should.

He steps back inside. COLDSTONE folds his wings and enters.

MATT

I was just going to make coffee. Did you want any?

COLDSTONE

No, thank you.

MATT goes to the coffee maker and begins setting it up.

MATT

"No, thank you," huh? That's more civil than I'd have expected.

COLDSTONE

Mm.

MATT continues working in silence. He goes to the sink for water, then brings it back to put it in the coffee maker as COLDSTONE looks around the room. MATT switches on the coffee maker, then leans against the counter, looking away.

MATT

If you have something to tell me, I wish you would.

COLDSTONE

Angela and Coldfire succeeded last night. There were two men attempting to lure them.

MATT

Lure them? Really?

COLDSTONE

So it would seem. They made no attempt to hide the fact, either.

MATT

Hum. I don't suppose that should be a surprise. No point in subterfuge now.

COLDSTONE

No.

The coffee maker gurgles away. MATT sighs, and then turns to look at COLDSTONE.

MATT

You're not mentioning my extra company this morning, I see.

COLDSTONE

They spent the night guarding you. I had expected as much.

MATT

I suppose so. They had mention...um.

MATT rubs his face, embarrassed.

COLDSTONE

Had they?

MATT

Well, they...uhhh, I really need to wake up more before I talk.

COLDSTONE

You need not worry. As you say, there is no point in subterfuge. They will not be in trouble.

MATT

Good to know.

COLDSTONE

You, on the other hand, are in danger. I believe it is the human practice to shoot sentries who sleep at their posts.

MATT stands up sharply and looks at COLDSTONE, who now had a malevolent gleam in his eye. COLDSTONE steps toward him, and MATT steps back.

MATT

No, wait, wait a minute. You wouldn't dare, would you?

COLDSTONE

Wouldn't I? A "late night" excuses your carelessness?

MATT

No, I, I...

COLDSTONE

Well?

MATT

I thought they would wake me up if they needed me.

COLDSTONE

You relied on children to guide your duty, then.

MATT

Be fair. Nashville is not exactly a child, is he?

COLDSTONE

Regardless of that, I question your sense of duty to this clan.

By this point, COLDSTONE has backed MATT up into the corner, and he puts one hand against the wall, gripping it firmly and blocking MATT's escape route.

MATT

You have no right to do that. I wouldn't have come if I didn't owe you and your clan some loyalty.

COLDSTONE snorts, and looks up toward the door.

SHOT - COLDSTONE'S POV. VFX: THERMAL VIEW

Through the wall, there are two human-shaped hot spots flanking the door. One is apparently armed with a long weapon.

MATT

If you knew what I'd gone through already protecting your clanmates in Chicago--

SHOT - NORMAL VIEW.

COLDSTONE leans in close to MATT, who recoils, and speaks quietly, eyes narrow.

COLDSTONE

Who is outside the door?

MATT

I don't know. I have no idea.

SHOT - CU MATT. VFX: THERMAL VIEW WITH VITALS.

COLDSTONE studies a wide-eyed MATT closely. A set of vital sign data come up: temperature, respiration, EKG with pulse rate. The verdict displays in his view: "NO DECEPTION."

SHOT - CU COLDSTONE. NORMAL VIEW.

COLDSTONE's natural eye widens in realization as his cyborg eye glints.

COLDSTONE puts one hand on MATT's shoulder, gripping him, and MATT jumps at this. COLDSTONE leans in very close.

COLDSTONE

(whispering)

There are two men standing outside your door. One is armed.

MATT

(whispering)

You can see that?

COLDSTONE

(whispering)

Yes. I can see their warmth through the door.

MATT

(whispering)

What do we do?

COLDSTONE
 (whispering)
 How are you as a fighter?

MATT
 (whispering)
 Untested, mostly, at least at close
 quarters.

COLDSTONE
 (whispering)
 Let them in when they come. Then stay
 out of the way.

(aloud)
 We are perfectly capable of addressing
 the threat on our own.

MATT
 Even so, why shave it close to the
 line? Take the resources you have,
 and--

There is a knock on the door. MATT stiffens. COLDSTONE steps
 back into the corner and gestures at MATT, who goes to the door,
 chains it, and then opens it. Outside is JIMMY CHIPS, a stout
 type in a sharp suit.

CHIPS
 Mr. Pegram?

MATT
 Yes?

CHIPS
 Hotel management. May I come in?

MATT
 Yes, of course.

He unchains the door and opens it, letting CHIPS in. He closes
 the door behind him and looks into the bathroom.

MATT
 Something the matter?

CHIPS
 Why are you conducting an art show on
 our balcony? We are getting complaints.

MATT

Oh, well, you know, there's not that much room in here, and I figured they might perk up the appearance of the building a bit.

CHIPS walks into the room, but stops well short of the corner behind which COLDSTONE is crouched. He surveys the room carefully.

CHIPS

You are aware that storage is not permitted on the balcony, though? We do have a perfectly serviceable baggage room if you need one.

MATT

Oh, but, where would the fun be in that, really?

CHIPS

Fun or not, I must insist on taking these down to storage during your stay.

MATT

I don't know that you ought to do that.

CHIPS steps into the room, and COLDSTONE springs out, pinning him against the wall. But CHIPS is a stout fighter, and is able to slip COLDSTONE's initial grasp. CHIPS takes a couple of steps into the room.

CHIPS

Sam! Sam!!

The door bursts open, and SAM runs in, carrying a long weapon that looks like a rifle, but snazzier. MATT steps back into the bathroom as SAM brushes past. COLDSTONE turns to face SAM, who brings the weapon up and thrusts it into COLDSTONE, shocking him. COLDSTONE cries out and slumps down. With one arm, he sweeps the weapon aside, but SAM brings it around and shocks him again, bringing COLDSTONE down to one knee. COLDSTONE tries again to sweep the weapon away, more weakly. JIMMY CHIPS, for his part, kicks COLDSTONE in the back. COLDSTONE growls in response, but cannot do much.

CHIPS

Yeah, get him! Get him!

SAM comes right up on COLDSTONE and lines up his weapon on the back of his head, ready to plunge.

MATT

Hey!

SAM looks around, and is immediately clubbed in the head by MATT, who has picked up the hotel's toilet paper stand from the bathroom. MATT circles it around for a second swing. SAM uses his weapon to parry the blow, and that is enough of a distraction for COLDSTONE to grab SAM by the belt and pull him off balance. MATT swings a third time, hitting SAM in the arm, and SAM loses his grip on the weapon enough for COLDSTONE to grab it with his other hand. SAM tugs on it, but COLDSTONE has the better grasp, barely. COLDSTONE growls deeply; his eyes light.

COLDSTONE

Get the other one.

MATT looks up, and jumps up on the bed around COLDSTONE and back down, brandishing the stand. He takes a swing at CHIPS, who guards himself with his arm and is able to grab the stand away from MATT. MATT looks around quickly.

CHIPS

One brainless zombie and one mindless flunky. No great loss taking either of you down.

CHIPS swings at MATT and connects, knocking him backward, and they fight.

COLDSTONE's grasp on the weapon is weakening, and SAM is gradually able to pull it loose. He brings it around again, charges it, and hits COLDSTONE in his free arm. COLDSTONE howls in pain. He drags SAM backward by the belt, but SAM is able to keep his balance for the moment. COLDSTONE tries to get hold of the weapon again. He succeeds mostly in knocking it slightly aside and he is clearly weakening badly.

MATT has been knocked backward enough that he is pinned against the wall at the headboard. He fumbles on the nightstand, grabs the telephone, and swings it at CHIPS, who puts an arm up to defend his head. He does, but he also gets entangled in the cord, and that is enough to let MATT swing at his head freely. CHIPS steps back. MATT gets hold of the lamp from the nightstand and throws it at CHIPS, who deflects it, but MATT is right behind it

and shoves him backward hard. CHIPS stumbles back out to the foot of the bed, and is able to recover into a fighting stance.

COLDSTONE finally gives SAM a hard pull in the belt, pulling him across his knee and off balance. With what strength he has left, he throws SAM into the back of the room. SAM crashes into CHIPS, and the two of them crash through the patio door and out to the balcony. COLDSTONE tries to stand, but collapses back to the floor.

EXT. SCENE - HOTEL ROOM. BALCONY.

SAM and JIMMY CHIPS crash out of the patio door and are on trajectory to clear the balcony railing. SAM drops his weapon, and it skitters toward the edge of the balcony, lodging against the railing stanchions. SAM manages to get a grasp on the railing, and falls onto the outside of the railing, hanging there. CHIPS grabs TACHI and also goes over the railing, toppling TACHI toward the rail. His weight is enough that TACHI begins to rock up on the railing and threatens to come over with CHIPS. MATT rushes out onto the balcony, and, seeing this, jumps onto TACHI and pins her down to the floor. JIMMY tries to climb up over TACHI's back, grasping at her wings to pull himself up. MATT swats his hands away.

MATT

No! Get off her! Get off!

CHIPS

You can't keep me from climbing up. You do that and it's just murder.

MATT

So I let you up to murder us? No chance.

SAM slides down the verticals of the railing and is able to get a hand on his weapon. He points it loosely at MATT, and fires. A plasma blast misses MATT by inches, taking a chunk out of the hotel facade.

CHIPS

We don't need to come up for that. You let me fall, the next one's aimed right at your head. Better yet, at this little one's head.

MATT

Don't you dare!

CHIPS

No, you're right. Better to save her
brain for Doctor Cotter.

Behind them, there is a scraping. COLDSTONE drags himself out of the room and is able to get one hand on TACHI's leg, holding her down. MATT feels this and looks back at him.

COLDSTONE

Get...other.

MATT looks over at SAM, and then jumps off TACHI and over to SAM, who looks up at him. MATT looks down at him, hesitating. After a moment, SAM rotates the weapon up toward MATT, preparing to fire. MATT steps on it, freeing it from the railing and it slides out. SAM drops from the railing, crying out briefly as he does. MATT breathes hard, staring after him. He then looks up at CHIPS, who is glaring hard at him.

CHIPS

We're not through with you yet, you
know. See you around.

CHIPS lifts one hand up, waves, and then lets go, dropping over the railing...and into the arms of SAM, who is standing on the next balcony down. The two of them break open the patio door and go inside the room below MATT's. MATT goes to TACHI and rights her, setting her on the floor. COLDSTONE lies there, eyes shut, panting. MATT then kneels down by COLDSTONE.

MATT

Coldstone? Come on.

COLDSTONE

Inside...inside...

MATT

Yeah, come on.

COLDSTONE

No, leave me! I can...I...

MATT

Oh, come on.

MATT grasps his hand and half-drags him into the room.

INT. SCENE - HOTEL ROOM.

MATT helps COLDSTONE into the room. COLDSTONE climbs up onto the bed and rolls over onto his back, wings spread, panting hard.

MATT

Hey, come on here.

COLDSTONE

Pain...such pain...

MATT

What can I do?

COLDSTONE

Tachi...

MATT

Tachi's fine, she's safe now. How can I help you?

COLDSTONE

I...I can heal. I will heal. Must guard...must protect...

MATT

Absolutely. That's a given, you know that.

COLDSTONE

Nightfall...

MATT

I will. I said I will. I'll be right here.

COLDSTONE gives a deep sigh. MATT grasps him on the shoulder. COLDSTONE shuts his eyes and tries to bat it away. MATT sighs, and then looks out toward the balcony.

EXT. SCENE - GRANDVIEW TOWER. ROOF. (NIGHT)

ANGELA, COLDFIRE, and KATANA are on the roof, looking around anxiously. TACHI lands and runs to them.

TACHI

Mothers!

KATANA

What is it? What has happened?

TACHI

Coldstone has been hurt. He wants you.

COLDFIRE

What? Where is he?

TACHI

He's with Gnash and Fu-Dog and that human.

ANGELA

Show us.

TACHI goes to the edge and launches off, followed by the others.

INT. SCENE - HOTEL ROOM.

MATT is sitting in the room next to the bed, where COLDSTONE is lying. COLDSTONE looks much stronger than he did previously. MATT has a couple of bruises on his face where he was hit. NASHVILLE is on the balcony, watching out; FU-DOG is sitting facing the door. There are some empty boxes of take-out tacos sitting on the table, and a rifle leaning against the wardrobe. NASHVILLE enters.

NASHVILLE

Here they come.

COLDSTONE

Good.

TACHI lands on the balcony with KATANA, and they enter. Behind them, COLDFIRE and ANGELA land, and they enter as well. COLDFIRE goes to COLDSTONE's side.

COLDFIRE

You are hurt?

COLDSTONE

I was. I was struck with a weapon, and the pain from the wound was worse than any other I have experienced. I have recovered some of my strength, but not all.

COLDFIRE

Oh, my love.

They embrace. MATT shifts in his chair. COLDFIRE looks at him.

COLDFIRE

And you?

MATT

I took a couple of punches in the face.
I'm all right.

ANGELA

(indicating the rifle)

This is the weapon?

MATT

That's mine. They took theirs with
them.

COLDFIRE

What sort of weapon was it, then?

MATT

Well, that's what we've been trying to
figure out.

COLDFIRE

Something new?

COLDSTONE

I believe so, yes.

MATT

They were able to fire it like
a...well, like one of your plasma can-
nons, actually. But I think...

COLDSTONE

They burned me with its touch. It is
more than a gun.

MATT

Right.

ANGELA

So this has escalated.

MATT

It could be. One of them referred to one of us as a "brainless zombie." Emphasis on the brainless, maybe?

COLDFIRE

Such rudeness.

MATT

He said there was no great loss taking either of us down.

KATANA

Eliminate you three, and it leaves us vulnerable during the day.

COLDSTONE

Aye.

MATT

That's not going to happen.

COLDFIRE

No, it is not.

ANGELA

That one that we found said he was to deliver us to the Aviary.

MATT

What's that, a bar?

ANGELA

It is a zoo in the north part of the city.

MATT

They were taking you to a zoo? That is rude.

ANGELA

I don't think they were taking us into the zoo. It is a landmark.

KATANA

A misdirect.

NASHVILLE

There is an old hospital there, too.

KATANA

You have been there?

NASHVILLE

Early on, yes.

MATT

I hate to say it, but if she's planning to take out brains, there are worse places than that to do it.

COLDFIRE

Then that is where we start.

NASHVILLE

All of us.

MATT

You got that right.

COLDSTONE starts to sit up.

COLDSTONE

Under no condition will you...oh.

COLDFIRE

You rest.

COLDSTONE

Against my will.

COLDFIRE

It is my will, love.

He relaxes back on the bed.

KATANA

Tachi, you stay here with Fu-Dog.

TACHI

Again?

KATANA

Yes, again. Guard Coldstone. If anything happens here, you know where we are.

TACHI

Yes, *okasan*.

COLDFIRE

Matt, you will come?

MATT

Yes. I'll drive over.

COLDFIRE

You know the way? I would take you.

MATT

I will find it. Save your fuel.

COLDSTONE

Anything else? Then go.

MATT goes to the door, taking his rifle up and wrapping it in a coat as he does. FU-DOG shifts to let him past, and he exits. KATANA, ANGELA, and NASHVILLE exit to the balcony.

COLDSTONE

Guard the balcony, youngling.

TACHI

Yes, father.

She goes to the balcony and closes the door most of the way.

COLDFIRE

Goliath's messenger acquitted himself well.

COLDSTONE

Goliath's messenger forgets what he is. Of all the presumption, to protect a gargoyle. I do not want him involved in this.

COLDFIRE

He is an ally. They have not been easy to find.

COLDSTONE

That is as may be, but we do not need allies who pretend to be incomplete gargoyles. He draws trouble.

COLDFIRE

He resolves it as well, it seems. Perhaps you would be better to complete

him than to condemn him for his advocacy. You may start by thanking him for the use of his bed.

COLDSTONE

It would not be necessary if he would not have come.

She stands.

COLDFIRE

I traveled alone once. I would not do it again.

COLDSTONE

Regardless, see to it that he stays clear of the battle. Remember who is to protect whom.

COLDFIRE

I have not forgotten.

COLDFIRE exits to the balcony, and launches off.

EXT. SCENE - CLOSED HOSPITAL. STREET. (NIGHT)

MATT pulls his truck up to the curb outside the hospital and gets out. He looks up to the sky. Three silhouettes arrive and land on the roof. With a whoosh, COLDFIRE descends and grips the wall of the building near MATT. MATT slings his rifle over his shoulder.

MATT

Going up?

COLDFIRE

Not yet. Keep an eye out from here.

MATT

Got it.

COLDFIRE begins climbing up the wall. MATT leans against his truck. A couple of people walk through the park behind him. He looks back, and then puts the rifle into the truck bed nearby him.

EXT. SCENE - CLOSED HOSPITAL. ROOF. (NIGHT)

KATANA, ANGELA, and NASHVILLE are on the roof, looking down toward where MATT is standing. COLDFIRE climbs up over the parapet and joins them.

KATANA

He's ready?

COLDFIRE

He is.

NASHVILLE

So how do we do this? Floor by floor?

ANGELA

That would make sense.

NASHVILLE

Start at the top, then.

COLDFIRE

Lead on.

NASHVILLE looks at her, very pleased, and then goes over the parapet and begins descending. The others follow.

INT. SCENE - CLOSED HOSPITAL. TOP FLOOR. HALLWAY.

NASHVILLE pulls a window open, and goes in to the hallway. ANGELA, KATANA, and COLDFIRE follow. They begin to explore the hallway. It is dusty and cluttered, and has clearly been disused for a long time. They go from office to office, looking into each.

NASHVILLE

She has to know, right? Doctor Cotter?

KATANA

I suspect so, yes. By now those *akuto* she sent last night will have tipped her off.

ANGELA

Do you suppose she has guessed we would be here?

KATANA

Most certainly, yes.

NASHVILLE

That's reassuring. Thank you.

KATANA

Eyes up, *musukochan*.

NASHVILLE

Hai, okasan.

They continue down the hall. Halfway down, there is a large blank space along the wall. NASHVILLE opens the last door before reaching this, looks in, and enters.

INT. SCENE - CLOSED HOSPITAL. OPEN WARD.

Within is what is left of an open ward. Beds line both walls of a long room, dusty and disused as with everything on this floor. NASHVILLE enters, followed by the others.

NASHVILLE

I'm glad Matt's downstairs. He'd probably say this is creepy.

KATANA

He would be correct.

ANGELA

Yes.

There is a whirring noise from deep within the ward. NASHVILLE holds up a hand, and the others stop. He takes a couple of steps forward. From the back of the ward, ten ball drones enter, and start flying toward the group.

ANGELA

Back, get back!

The group backs off, but the drones continue coming. They flee into the hallway, drones in pursuit.

INT. SCENE - CLOSED HOSPITAL. TOP FLOOR. HALLWAY.

The group runs for the open window at the end of the hall. They dive through, one by one, taking to the sky. NASHVILLE is last, and as he dives out, one of the drones gets hold of his foot, and he drags it out with a yell.

EXT. SCENE - CLOSED HOSPITAL. AERIAL. (NIGHT)

The four gargoyles fly through the night, NASHVILLE dragging the drone attached to his foot, followed by a cloud of drones chasing them. They fly out over the park, and split up, but the cloud of drones splits as well to chase all of them.

NASHVILLE

One's got me! Get it off me!

He barrel rolls to try to shake it off, but with no luck. It begins to draw up onto his legs, tying him up. He punches at the drone, but it merely snares his arm as well. NASHVILLE begins to spiral down, being collapsed by the drone, when suddenly the drone sparks and releases his arm. A split second later, there is the sound of a rifle shot from below.

EXT. SCENE - CLOSED HOSPITAL. STREET. (NIGHT)

MATT is firing. He has the rifle shouldered and is following NASHVILLE. He fires again.

EXT. SCENE - CLOSED HOSPITAL. AERIAL. (NIGHT)

The shot finds home. The drone splays its tentacles and drops away from NASHVILLE, who recovers his flight and continues along.

A little further away, KATANA is keeping as much speed as she can to get away from a drone. She banks hard and turns to draw it across MATT's line of fire. He shoots, and the drone sparks and drops away.

Another drone has nearly caught up to ANGELA. She looks back, eyes alight, and dives away, but it keeps up with her. It reaches out for her, but just as it is about to reach her, a plasma blast knocks half its tentacle completely off. It holds the stump up to what passes for its eyes, examining the damage, before a second blast explodes the drone and sends its shrapnel into the park below.

Two drones are now pursuing COLDFIRE. She turns back and fires on one of them, which explodes, but she is unable to get a lock on the second. She has gotten out of MATT's line of fire: he aims, but is unable to get a bead on her pursuer. Frustrated, he lowers the rifle, and then brings it back up quickly and fires to take down another drone that had been diving toward him. Back with COLDFIRE, the drone is nearly upon her when it is seized with a scream by NASHVILLE. He digs his claws into it, drawing

sparks, and then flings the remains into the lagoon below, where it arcs brilliantly and then sinks.

This goes on until all ten drones have been disposed of.

MATT walks up to one of them, which lies sputtering on the street and spastically wriggling its last. He kneels next to it, as it writhes and is then still. He bows his head. He then stands, head still bowed.

COLDFIRE lands against the building near MATT, her eyes alight.

COLDFIRE

Now we are going up.

MATT looks up at her. There is fire in his eyes, too.

MATT

About time.

He slings the rifle over his shoulder, and grabs onto COLDFIRE around her shoulders. She climbs up the building as the others dive in through the same open window.

INT. SCENE - CLOSED HOSPITAL. OPEN WARD.

The four gargoyles, with MATT, enter the ward.

MATT

Cotter! You better be in here!

The others look at MATT, who looks back at them.

MATT

We got priors.

NASHVILLE

So you said.

Two androids round two different corners at the back of the ward. They march forward, and then turn to face the group, stopping short. A screen at the back of the ward crackles to life, and after a moment, DOCTOR COTTER appears. She scowls at them.

COTTER

Mister Pegram.

MATT

Oh, why is it you have to phone in your appearances every time?

COTTER

Because I am not a fool, unlike yourself. What is it that you want?

MATT

I want you to leave my friends alone.

COTTER

Nothing doing. And?

KATANA

And...if I may?

MATT

Please.

KATANA

And we want you to stop this project.

COTTER

Who are you?

KATANA

Your nightmare, if you will not.

NASHVILLE

Nicely done.

KATANA

Thank you.

COTTER

Nightmares are easily awakened from. What makes you think I should pay you any mind at all?

NASHVILLE

Only this. We protect ourselves...

COTTER

...and you protect your cities. Yes, I know! Goliath told my people this already!

ANGELA

And yet you do not listen.

COTTER

I am not going to.

KATANA's ears turn back, followed by NASHVILLE's. They look at each other. KATANA nods.

COTTER

I don't need to. I have the advantage of numbers. Haven't you got that? There's a dozen of you. I have the entire homeless population of two cities to draw on, plus some substantial manufacturing capacity at my disposal--

KATANA and NASHVILLE suddenly leap out to the sides, just in time for two androids to miss grabbing them. They take hold of the androids and slam them into each other. They pop, and go down easily. KATANA and NASHVILLE then turn to face the screen. The others, while this is happening, are startled and turn back to see what is going on, and then turn to face the front again.

COTTER

Oh! Now, come on, that's not fair.

MATT

Why should any of us respect that? It's your job to know your enemies, isn't it?

COTTER

Point. But don't think that is going to stop me.

MATT

No. But this is.

He raises his rifle and fires at the screen, exploding it. The androids begin to approach, arms outstretched.

MATT

You want these?

ANGELA

More than anything.

MATT

They're yours.

ANGELA

Perfect.

They split up. ANGELA and NASHVILLE leap at one android, and COLDFIRE and KATANA at the other. The androids deploy their plasma guns, and fire at each pair, but all four gargoyles dodge successfully, spinning the androids around. One of the droids finally fires into the other, taking it out of service, and then COLDFIRE shoots the other, knocking it out. All four gargoyles plus MATT survey the wreckage.

KATANA

Anything else?

ANGELA

Is she finished, then?

MATT

Unlikely.

ANGELA

Assure it.

COLDFIRE

Indeed.

SHOT - WS WARD. COLDFIRE'S POV. VFX: THERMAL VIEW

COLDFIRE scans the room. There are several heat signatures visible through the back wall.

MATT

I don't like this.

KATANA

Neither do I.

SHOT - WS GARGOYLES. NORMAL VIEW.

NASHVILLE

She's going to take out our brains and that's all she brings?

MATT

That and a pocket knife, I guess.

COLDFIRE

There is heat behind that wall. Something mechanical.

ANGELA

Mechanical like what?

MATT

I'll take a look.

KATANA

You will not.

MATT

I have to. I'm the "mindless flunky," after all. If this is a trap, is she really going to want me?

ANGELA

Don't assume she would be that picky.

NASHVILLE

I'll back you up.

MATT

Come on.

They go toward the back wall. MATT looks it over carefully, and then touches a panel, which slides the wall open. Rifle at the ready, he steps forward, and directly into the embrace of a ball droid.

MATT

Yaaah!

NASHVILLE grabs hold of MATT and holds him back against the grasp of the ball droid, which is rapidly joined and assisted by another. Their collective pull drags MATT into the back lab. Inside, he looks up through the tangle. In the back lab, he can see a line of beds mirroring the ones in the ward he has been pulled out from. On each is a body, connected to breathing machines. He looks on in horror briefly, and the shock is enough to allow the first ball droid to envelop his head.

Only briefly, as NASHVILLE unsheathes his katana and cuts through the droid, just above MATT's head. He grasps the now-stubby droid and, enraged, rips it away from MATT and throws it back into the ward. It strikes the oxygen panel in the wall, breaking it open with a loud hiss of gas. NASHVILLE tightens his

grip on MATT and continues to pull him away, as KATANA and COLD-FIRE come up to help. COLDFIRE looks into the ward, studying, and then more ball droids approach. She fires into one, which squeals and pops as it hits the ground against the wall. In the now oxygen-rich atmosphere, the wall flares up immediately. They free MATT, who reels back and then faces into the back ward, facing the flames in horror.

MATT

Get the fire out.

COLDFIRE

We have no time. Come.

MATT

But those people!

NASHVILLE

Come on, this fire's going fast.

MATT

We can save them!

COLDFIRE

Matt. They are gone already.

MATT

What?

COLDFIRE

I examined them. There are no signs of life.

He gapes, looks back.

MATT

But the oxygen...

COLDFIRE

It preserves the flesh. The life has been removed.

More ball droids begin to approach them, working to close off the exit as the fire grows. MATT gulps.

NASHVILLE

This way out. Come on!

KATANA draws her sword, and she and NASHVILLE begin working their way through the ball droids, slashing away at the grasping tentacles, as ANGELA, COLDFIRE, and at the rear MATT follow. As they clear out, the fire expands. There is a burst back in the ward. The fire blooms across the ward, trapping what is left of the ball droids.

EXT. SCENE - GRANDVIEW TOWER. ROOF. (NIGHT)

MATT is standing at the edge of the roof, looking out into the night pensively. In the distance, a glow and a column of smoke mark the location of the hospital as it burns. He looks down. Behind him, there is a scrape, and he looks back. TACHI is standing there, looking at him curiously.

MATT

Hi there.

TACHI

Hi.

MATT

Something up?

TACHI

Can I see your mouth?

MATT

My mouth? Why?

TACHI

I want to see something.

MATT

Yeah, okay.

He turns, takes one knee, and opens his mouth. TACHI studies it briefly, and then scowls.

TACHI

Coldstone's right.

MATT

About what?

TACHI

He said you're like a gargoyle that didn't get finished.

MATT

He may have a point there.

ANGELA approaches them. MATT stands.

ANGELA

Tachi, go watch Fu-Dog.

TACHI

Mother.

ANGELA

Go on. I want to talk to Matt.

TACHI

I'm not a hatchling, Mother. I want to listen.

MATT

"Mother"?

ANGELA

Then listen, don't talk. Okay?

TACHI

Okay.

ANGELA

Yes, I am her mother.

MATT

But she said that Katana--

ANGELA

Yes, Katana is also her mother, as is Coldfire. Tachi is the clan's child.

MATT

Oh.

TACHI

It's just humans that are weird about wanting one mother and father.

MATT

Yeah, I guess.

TACHI

And they have weird teeth, too.

ANGELA

Finger on lips, child.

TACHI huffs and crosses her arms.

ANGELA

Coldstone wants to know why you inserted yourself again.

MATT

What? Was I supposed to let Doctor Cotter keep harvesting people? Maybe even get to you? I have a part of this.

ANGELA

He thinks your part is to take the protection we give you.

MATT

I can't do that. I'm sorry. I cannot stand back and let people get killed off. That isn't me.

He turns back and leans on the parapet.

MATT

I know I can't be a hero here, but I want to be, to be...

He waves in the air as he trails off. Lacking the word, he finally looks at ANGELA.

MATT

Man, is this scene hard.

ANGELA

Yes, it is.

MATT

I'll get over myself.

ANGELA

I hope that you will. You are a good human. Even Coldstone says so.

MATT

Oh, I bet he does.

ANGELA

He has Goliath on the telephone. He wants you.

MATT

Be right there.

ANGELA turns to return to the group. TACHI uncrosses her arms and looks at MATT, who returns the look. Suddenly, TACHI leaps on MATT, grabbing him around the shoulders and knocking him backward a step. She puts her eyes right up to his.

TACHI

(mimicking COLDSTONE)

Stop being weird.

MATT

Yes, ma'am.

TACHI

Good.

She releases him and jumps down, then follows ANGELA. MATT rubs the back of his neck. He licks around his teeth quickly.

MATT

Well...

He shakes his head, and then goes to follow TACHI toward the main group.

At the main group, COLDSTONE has Matt's phone in his palm, facing up.

GOLIATH

(on phone)

But you did not find Doctor Cotter.

COLDSTONE

No. She proved elusive.

GOLIATH

Once again.

COLDSTONE

I have your messenger here, Goliath.

GOLIATH

He is unharmed?

COLDSTONE

He is safe, despite his best efforts.
And so I am returning him to you. Now.

MATT

You're sure about that? I could still
help you to--

COLDSTONE

We are gargoyles. We need no human
help.

MATT

Seems to me that rumble at the hotel
might say otherwise.

COLDSTONE

That rumble, as you call it, only hap-
pened because you came. Had you not
gone to the hotel, the children would
not have followed you there, nor would
I.

MATT

How can you say that I would--

GOLIATH

Matt, enough! Return home.

MATT

But, I...

He looks around at the others. They give him no comfort.

MATT

Message received. See you tomorrow
night.

He puts out his hand for the phone.

ANGELA

May I speak with Broadway?

COLDSTONE

Matt must leave, now.

He ends the call and hands the phone to MATT, who pockets it.

MATT

Be safe. Nice to meet you.

The others do not respond. MATT goes to the roof stairs and exits.

ANGELA

And you will send away our only connection to the rest of the clan, just like that?

COLDSTONE

A messenger, nothing more. The clan is here.

ANGELA

Half the clan is here.

COLDSTONE

And will return home soon, I am sure. Without help from a..."groupie."

KATANA

I do not know what you mean by "groupie," but I do not believe he is that.

NASHVILLE

Yeah, he was nice.

COLDSTONE

"Nice" is not what we need. We survive, with or without "nice."

ANGELA

You would keep me from my father and my mate to soothe your ego, then?

ANGELA goes to the edge of the roof, looking down.

COLDSTONE

He is in as much danger from us as we are from him. Do not call this ego. This is protection, of all of us.

ANGELA

You are not sending him out on his own.

COLDSTONE

I have.

ANGELA

It was not a question.

She leaps over the parapet and takes to her wings.

=END=