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**The Hodag**

by

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Gargoyles: City of the Phoenix  
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## EXT. SCENE - CHICAGO - STREET (NIGHT)

On an arterial street in Chicago, in a part of town that's not quite gotten gentrified, traffic is beginning to thin out as the evening winds slowly into night. The shops have closed for the night, and there isn't anyone around. Out of the night, a city bus draws up to the curb, stops, and discharges a young man with a backpack--a college student--onto the sidewalk. The doors shut and the bus pulls away, and the man walks briskly down the side street.

Some of the houses on the side street are lit, and others are dark; the television is on in most of them, and it flickers feebly in the windows. The side street is dark, as most of them are, but especially so in one spot, where the street lamp has burned out and the adjacent three-flat is boarded up. As the man enters this area, he clutches his backpack a little tighter, and steps a little more briskly.

As he draws abreast of the gangway next to the three-flat, there is the faint sound of something moving in the gangway; faint, except to an already anxious pedestrian in a less-than-luxurious neighborhood. His head snaps around to look for the sound, but there is nothing visible in the shadows. With a tremble, he quickens his pace. Behind him, there is a louder rustle, followed by the sound of claws clicking on the paving, as though some great dog were following. He looks back, sees nothing, speeds his pace, and reaches for his belt, where a canister of pepper spray is secreted. There is a low, croaking growl, and the clicking speeds up. Looking back, the man gasps, and breaks into a full run, to the end of the block and around the corner.

Streaking past the buildings, the man ducks into a well-lit alley. Down past the side of his apartment building he runs, coming up on the corrugated-iron clad gate into the back stairs. He fumbles for the keys, flipping through them. He looks up toward the mouth of the alley: the clicking is still behind him, running now, the growling more insistent. He finds the key, shoves it in the lock, turns, pushes, dives through. He bounces up, grabs his key, and slams the gate shut. He stands, back to the wall, paralyzed with fear, as the clicking slows and approaches the gate. Desperately he tries to stifle his panting breath as the thing on the other side snuffles around the base of the gate, and to suppress his yells when it scratches the iron lightly. Then, it moves back off to the mouth of the alley, retreating into the distance.

The man, recovering himself, slowly moves over to the stairs up the back of the building. As he reaches the second floor, he looks over the gate, but there is nothing there but the alley. He continues to the third floor, and shakily pulls his keys from his pocket. He opens the screen door and, in the dim porch light, begins seeking his apartment key.

To one side, there is another croaking growl. The man looks up suddenly. There is a rapid clicking of claws running along the back porch from the other end of the building. The man clutches for his pepper spray, but it's too late. He screams, and all we see of the creature as it comes into the porch light and leaps upon him is teeth, then darkness.

INT. SCENE - MATT'S HOUSE. DINING ROOM.

GOLIATH is sitting at the dining room table. The overhead light shines brightly on a pad of paper on the table in front of him. He holds a pencil in one hand, preparing to write.

Caption: Chicago, Illinois. Tuesday, December 4, 2012. 7:48 PM

After a bit of thought, he starts.

GOLIATH (VO)

Dear Elisa. I would have written you before now, except that, as you may imagine, it has been difficult to find the opportunity. I am happy to report that we have found a safe haven here. We became separated along the way, however, and only half of the clan has arrived here. Where the others are is unknown to me.

He stops here and thinks, dropping into a flashback.

EXT. SCENE - MANHATTAN. (NIGHT)

Caption: Manhattan, New York. Sunday, October 29, 2012. 6:15 PM.

Hurricane Sandy is at full force and bearing down on New York. As the wind howls through the streets, it carries the rain with it, blotting out any view of the city--not that there is much to see, as the lights are out across the south end of Manhattan. In the streets, the storm surge rages, pushing trash barrels, tree limbs, cars, boxes, and whatever else there is to pick up. GOLIATH is on the roof of a building, hanging on against the wind, watching all of this in horror. He looks back over his shoulder;

in the darkness, two red eyes glow. There is a flash of lightning from the storm, and behind the eyes there is the silhouette of a slender gargoyle, seemingly unaffected by the gale or the rain.

Turning forward again, GOLIATH looks into the street, then, determined, he leaps into the wind.

EXT. SCENE — NEW YORK. ROOFTOP. (NIGHT)

On a different rooftop, some distance away, a large group of gargoyles crouch, waiting. BROOKLYN, BROADWAY, ANGELA, LEXINGTON, HUDSON, and BRONX are there, along with several others: COLDSTONE and COLDFIRE stand off a ways, spreading their wings as far as they dare in this weather. They shelter KATANA, a slender blue female dressed in a yellow kimono and bearing a katana on her waist. Accompanying her are NASHVILLE, a young blue male looking much like BROOKLYN and also carrying a katana, and "EGWARD", a gargoyle child. Near them crouches FU-DOG, a ferocious-looking green gargoyle beast. All of them are anxiously watching the skies. As they speak, they must shout to be heard.

BROOKLYN

He should have been back by now.

HUDSON

Give him time. He will be here, one way or another.

BROADWAY

Hudson, have you ever seen it this bad?

HUDSON

No, never.

LEXINGTON

The lights are out all the way up the island. How are Talon's people?

COLDFIRE

The Labyrinth is flooding. They were moving to higher ground when I left them.

LEXINGTON

Should we go help them?

BROOKLYN

Wait for Goliath. We'll go together.

LEXINGTON

We don't have much time.

The door to the roof bangs open as it is caught by the wind. Out steps ELISA MAZA in a heavy rain coat. As she steps out, BROADWAY goes to her and shelters her under his wing, though he struggles to hold it against the wind.

BROADWAY

How is the castle?

ELISA

It's holding, barely.

BROOKLYN

And the rookery?

ELISA

They're moving the eggs downstairs.  
Talon's watching it. He isn't back yet?

BROADWAY

Not yet. Soon, we hope.

BRONX and FU-DOG begin barking into the wind.

HUDSON

There he is!

GOLIATH lands on the roof with some difficulty. He comes over to ELISA and takes over sheltering her. He looks at her, and she at him. The look on his face says it all: they are in trouble.

BROOKLYN

What does she say?

GOLIATH

She is resolved. The storm remains as long as we do.

LEXINGTON

So how do we stop her?

GOLIATH looks at the city below and the horror being wrought upon it. Below, a car floats by. A young man is on the roof, drenched, terror-struck, able only to ride along. GOLIATH looks

around at his clan: they look back, aching to do something, anything, to save their city. His gaze returns to ELISA, who watches him with anticipation. She gives him a determined look, and nods. GOLIATH grimaces, knowing the effect of what he is about to say.

GOLIATH

We leave.

LEXINGTON

What?

NASHVILLE

Never!

BROOKLYN

What do you mean, we leave?

GOLIATH

We must. This storm was meant for us.  
If we stay, it destroys everything.

BROOKLYN

If we leave, they're just as destroyed.  
They need our protection more than  
ever!

GOLIATH

(angrily)

We have no time for a debate! I have  
said!

The others look at him, stunned. COLDSTONE walks over to him.

COLDSTONE

We will protect them best from a position of strength, not of weakness. I am with you, brother.

They clasp hands.

GOLIATH

Thank you. Gather everyone together. We are going across the bay.

COLDSTONE

At once.

He goes toward the edge of the building and the others gather around him. GOLIATH turns to ELISA and speaks as quietly as he can while still being heard.

GOLIATH

We could bring you with.

ELISA

No, you couldn't. Someone has to stay behind and look after the place.

GOLIATH leans forward and strokes ELISA's hair gently.

GOLIATH

I may never see you again.

She reaches up and strokes his hair gently in return.

ELISA

You know that's not true. I'd never let you leave me to clean up on my own.

They embrace. GOLIATH is weeping.

ELISA

One thing they taught us at the Academy was that you can't save anyone else if you don't save yourself first. You take care of yourself. We'll take care of the others later, starting with Demona.

GOLIATH

It is a promise.

They separate, looking deeply at each other.

ELISA

I love you.

GOLIATH

And I love you.

ELISA

Now fly fast and come home faster.

Resolved, GOLIATH leaves her and goes to the others. He prepares to take flight into the storm, cueing the others to do likewise. He looks back one last time, seeing her, wrapped in her rain-

coat, lashed by the storm, looking at him. He departs, followed by the others.

INT. SCENE - MATT'S HOUSE. DINING ROOM.

GOLIATH has stopped writing and is staring into the paper blankly. After a moment, he focuses himself and begins to write again.

GOLIATH (VO)

I miss you desperately. I have attempted to call you on the telephone many times, but am told the equipment is damaged. Therefore I write. Yet I cannot tell you our location out of fear for Demona, or another, using that information against you, us, or Manhattan.

The back door opens and closes, and BROOKLYN, BROADWAY, and LEXINGTON enter. LEXINGTON is carrying part of a wrecked drone.

LEXINGTON

Well, it's not the point, anyway. Just getting it off the ground was the point.

BROADWAY

Isn't keeping it off the ground part of the point too?

LEXINGTON

Details.

BROOKLYN

Seems like a pretty big detail, really. Matt's not home yet?

GOLIATH

No. But he said he would be late.

BROOKLYN

Late enough to go look for him? The Buttermilk Battalion may have got their revenge.

GOLIATH

Give him some time.



The front door opens and closes. MATT enters, carrying a shopping bag and holding a newspaper under his arm.

MATT

Hi, guys. Sorry I'm late. The buses were packed. I got a couple of frozen pizzas if you're interested.

BROADWAY

Sounds good.

MATT

And weird things going on, too. Check it out.

He tosses the paper to GOLIATH, who unfolds it.

MATT

Page six. "Avondale man." Hold on, I gotta go set this down.

MATT exits into the kitchen. GOLIATH opens the paper to page six.

GOLIATH

"Avondale man mauled by creature." What is an Avondale man?

MATT (OFF)

Man from Avondale. It's a neighborhood northeast of here.

GOLIATH

(reading)

"An Avondale man was found mauled by an unknown animal Monday night outside his back door. Aaron Ledbetter, 23, of the 3300 block of North Richmond Street, was found at about one o'clock in the morning by a neighbor, who reported hearing a scream, followed by what sounded like a bobcat growling. Ledbetter was taken to Our Lady of Mercy Hospital in stable condition, with bite wounds to his head and arms. Police have been unable to interview Ledbetter and have no description of the animal."

LEXINGTON

So, a loose dog. What's so special about that?

GOLIATH

(reading)

"This is the third attack in the area in as many nights. Police issued a community alert Tuesday afternoon, advising residents to be vigilant and to keep all pets and small children inside for the duration. The one description police have received so far is of a dark skinned animal, about four feet long, with 'exceptionally large teeth,' but they have not commented on any possible identity of the animal."

BROADWAY

Exceptionally large teeth?

MATT (OFF)

That's what it says.

BROOKLYN

That's...different.

MATT enters.

MATT

Ever see anything like that?

BROOKLYN

Yeah, several times. Nothing recently, though.

MATT

Like what?

BROOKLYN

There was a werewolf, once.

MATT

Werewolf?

BROADWAY

Well, it wasn't really a werewolf. More of a were-fox.

LEXINGTON

Close enough.

MATT

Were-fox?

BROADWAY

Long story.

MATT

All right. Anything else?

There is a gruff bark from outside. All look up.

MATT

Um.

HUDSON (OFF)

Yes, boy, I know where they are.

HUDSON enters, followed by BRONX, who rushes into the dining room to the others, who greet him warmly. MATT looks on, worried.

LEXINGTON

Hi, Bronx. Good to see you too.

GOLIATH

No trouble?

HUDSON

No, he had a good run round the park. It has been a while. Both of us needed to stretch out. Why? Has there been some trouble?

BROOKLYN

Some sort of creature's been attacking people.

HUDSON

Oh, is that right?

BROADWAY

Yeah. Four foot long and full of teeth. Ever see anything like that?

HUDSON

Oh, several times. Nothing like that around here, though.

MATT

Um, excuse me?

HUDSON looks at MATT, who is staring at BRONX, and then smiles.

HUDSON

Ha ha! No, no.

BROOKLYN

No, Bronx is good. Go on, say hello.  
That's Matt, he's good, too.

BRONX goes over to MATT and sniffs at him. MATT scratches him under the chin lightly.

BROOKLYN

He wouldn't attack anyone who hadn't earned it, now, would you?

BRONX

(snorts)

HUDSON

A finer guardian you could not ask for.

MATT

If you say so. Hello, Bronx, and welcome.

GOLIATH

But there remains a creature that has attacked three people.

BROADWAY

There's no chance it could be Fu-Dog, is there?

BROOKLYN

No. Fu-Dog can get cranky sometimes, but not like that.

BROADWAY

That's too bad. For a minute I thought maybe that meant the others had caught up to us.

GOLIATH

It may still mean someone is here. If there are other gargoyles in this city, it would be better for us to find them.

MATT

Do you think that's possible?

GOLIATH

Yes. Unlikely, but possible.

LEXINGTON

Let me drop a line to Amp. He's pretty well connected with the other clans.

BROADWAY

That's for sure.

MATT

I've got the pizzas in the oven. We can go after dinner.

BROOKLYN

What do you mean, "we"?

MATT

Well, if you think I'm going to sit here and let you have all the fun--

BROOKLYN

No.

BROADWAY

No, no.

GOLIATH

It's appreciated, Matt. But we should get an idea of what this is, first.

MATT

Oh, fine. Stay in touch, though. I'm dying to know what's out there.

HUDSON

Just so that stays a figure of speech, Bronx, you stay here and keep watch.

BRONX

(whines)

HUDSON

Aye, I know, but do it anyway. Get to know our new friend.

BRONX looks at MATT, grumbles, and goes into the living room.

MATT

I feel so loved right now.

HUDSON

You'll grow on him. Give him time.

EXT. SCENE — AVONDALE. AERIAL. (NIGHT)

Five gargoyles spread out through the sky, on patrol.

BROADWAY

Any news about Manhattan in the paper?

GOLIATH

Nothing of significance.

BROOKLYN

How's your letter going?

GOLIATH

Slowly. It is hard to explain our condition with the clan separated and without saying where we are.

HUDSON

Was Amp able to provide you with any information?

LEXINGTON

No. They were just about to go out for the night, so he didn't have much time, but he said he's never heard about a clan in Chicago.

BROADWAY

Maybe they're all beasts?

HUDSON

Perhaps. It has been said there were such things, back before stories. I would not expect it here, though.

LEXINGTON

We're there.

BROOKLYN

All right. Dark, four feet long and killer smile. Spread out a bit and start looking. Let's see what we can come up with.

BROADWAY

Right.

They spread out and begin patrolling below.

INT. SCENE - MATT'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

MATT is lying on the sofa, asleep. BRONX is lying on the floor nearby. The television is on, showing an infomercial for a blender or something.

There is a faint growl from behind the house. BRONX looks up suddenly, then stands and goes to the back door. He scratches a couple of times at it. MATT wakes up.

MATT

Ehh...ah? Oh. Right. Okay. I guess I ought to get the trash out, anyway.

He gets up.

MATT

But make it quick. Don't need to make things any weirder around here.

MATT opens the door, and BRONX goes outside.

EXT. SCENE - MATT'S HOUSE - BACK YARD (NIGHT)

BRONX circles the yard several times, sniffing here and there. MATT watches from the back door. After a few moments, BRONX growls, dissatisfied, and heads back inside.

MATT

Well, all right.

MATT goes inside. As he does, a shadow moves from behind the garage, and growls.

EXT. SCENE - AVONDALE. AERIAL. (NIGHT)

The gargoyles are still patrolling in a wide formation.

LEXINGTON

This is getting nowhere. May as well be  
on rat patrol.

GOLIATH

Keep looking. It must be down there  
somewhere.

BROADWAY

Where?

There is a yell from below them, followed by a croaking growl.

BROOKLYN

How about right there?

BROADWAY

Show-off.

GOLIATH

Take it.

They descend.

EXT. SCENE - AVONDALE. STREET. (NIGHT)

They land on several roofs on a residential street. Down that street, a young man runs, yelling. Behind him, a dark shadow gallops down the street, chasing him. As the man passes, BROADWAY jumps down, crouched and ready, facing the shadow. It skids to a stop. BROADWAY claps his hands a few times.

BROADWAY

Hey! Puppy puppy! Come on!

The creature cocks its head and looks at him, and then snarls.

BROADWAY

No, now, don't you be a naughty doggie.

The others drop down, surrounding the creature. It looks from one to another, then turns and runs into a gangway.

GOLIATH

Follow it.



Which they do.

EXT. SCENE - AVONDALE. BACKYARDS (VARIOUS). (NIGHT)

Out of the gangway and into the backyard, the creature turns and leaps up and over the fence, into the next yard. BROADWAY and LEXINGTON give chase along the ground. BROOKLYN jumps up and climbs to the roof, and begins bounding from rooftop to rooftop. They continue through three yards. On the fourth, the shadow enters the yard, surprising a man there. He yells, and the creature turns and snarls at him. BROADWAY clears the fence and charges it, and it turns and heads into the gangway toward the street again. BROADWAY stops in front of the man, and turns to face him.

BROADWAY

Are you okay?

The man screams, shrilly.

BROADWAY

Right, thanks.

He turns and runs into the gangway. LEXINGTON vaults the fence and, from on top of it, faces the man.

LEXINGTON

Which way did they go?

The man looks at him, terror-struck, and babbles.

GOLIATH (ABOVE)

This way!

LEXINGTON

Thank you!

He goes up the gangway after them. The man looks around after them, still babbling slightly.

EXT. SCENE - AVONDALE. STREET. (NIGHT)

Back on the street, the creature runs at full tilt, followed by BROADWAY and LEXINGTON on all fours, with BROOKLYN still along the rooftops, and GOLIATH and HUDSON flanking the chase in the air. As the creature reaches the end of the block, HUDSON dives to the ground in front of it, drawing his sword as he does. The creature snarls at him, skids, turns, and dives down another gangway. BROADWAY and LEXINGTON chase it into the gangway as

BROOKLYN leaps onto the roof of the house and heads toward the back. HUDSON runs down the street toward the alley, followed by GOLIATH in the air.

EXT. SCENE - STASH HOUSE. BACK YARD. (NIGHT)

A residential back yard. An overgrown garden and lawn speak of the home having long been vacant. BROADWAY and LEXINGTON enter the yard from the gangway, and stop. The creature is nowhere to be seen. BROOKLYN comes up to the back edge of the roof, looking down.

BROADWAY  
Where is it?

LEXINGTON  
Did you see it?

BROOKLYN  
No. Hudson!

HUDSON (OFF)  
Nothing here!

GOLIATH lands on the garage roof.

BROOKLYN  
Goliath, did you see where it went?

GOLIATH  
No. It must be here. Check the garage.

LEXINGTON and BROADWAY check the garage, looking for openings.

LEXINGTON  
Nothing.

HUDSON climbs over the fence from the alley and into the yard.

GOLIATH  
It cannot have just vanished.

LEXINGTON  
Into the house, maybe?

BROADWAY crosses the yard and tests the back door. It is locked up.

BROADWAY

How? It's all closed up and the windows  
are all fine.

HUDSON

Not up in the air, perhaps?

GOLIATH

No. Into the earth?

BROOKLYN

I don't see how. Doesn't look from here  
like anything has been disturbed.

BROADWAY

Not in, not up, not down, not out. So,  
where?

They continue to examine the yard.

EXT. SCENE - MATT'S HOUSE. BACK YARD. (NIGHT)

The yard lights come on. MATT opens the back door and exits,  
holding a bag of garbage. He goes into the back yard, opens the  
garbage bin, and begins to drop it in. As he does, he hears a  
croaking growl from the shadows alongside the house. He looks  
up, startled.

MATT

Um? Who's there? Bronx?

From out of the shadow comes a dark creature, full of teeth, and  
growling. Its claws click on the pavement alongside the house.  
As it enters the light, we start to see it: red eyes, black fur,  
short legs, long claws, and white spines sticking up out of its  
spine, and all the way down a tail that is almost as long as its  
body.

MATT

No, I guess not.

It stares MATT down and growls more loudly. MATT begins to back  
away from it.

MATT

Now, now, easy there, big fella, easy  
there. Don't do anything you'll regret  
later.

This fails to deter the creature.

MATT

Because, uh...I'm a big, mean human being, and I'm armed with, uh, a sack of garbage. Grr!

He brandishes the sack, as well as he can, anyway. The creature growls more vigorously in response to this.

MATT

No, huh?

It advances on him, eyes gleaming.

MATT

(panicking)

Now, now, wait, wait just a minute.  
Come on, give me a break here!

MATT stumbles backward, until his back is to the garage, eyes fixed on the creature. It matches him, step for step, until it is about four feet away, its eyes locked on him. Suddenly, a large, snarling, blue streak knocks it sideways and into the fence. With a yelp, MATT takes the opportunity to clear out the other way.

BRONX has the creature by the back of the neck. It screeches and lashes out at him, its tail whipping into him. Its tail connects with BRONX, and he releases the creature and snaps at its tail. The creature rolls back upright, turns, and makes a break for the gangway to the street. BRONX bounds ahead and leaps onto the creature with a snarl. Digging into its neck, he whips it around, and it cries out and slumps down. BRONX shakes its head back and forth a couple of times, then releases it. It drops limply to the ground and stops moving.

MATT, having recovered slightly, comes over and looks at it.

MATT

Y-y-yeah, and that goes for your uncle,  
too! Come around my yard, huh?

He pokes it cautiously with his toe, and it does not react.

MATT

That'll show him. Oh.

MATT starts back up to his porch, but drops to his knee after a couple of steps. BRONX, alarmed, comes over to him.

MATT

No, I'm good. I'm good.

Bracing himself on BRONX's back, he stands again, shakily.

MATT

Let's get inside. You know, I think  
you're my new favorite.

They go up the stairs, BRONX supporting him.

INT. SCENE - CENTRAL CONTROL - CONTROL ROOM

A command and dispatch center, housing several consoles along one wall, with several technicians monitoring them. In front of one of these, a technician is arguing with his supervisor, who is dressed in a white shirt, dark trousers, and a tie. On the other wall are several bookshelves and desks with other technicians working at them.

TECH

I'm telling you, there was something  
there.

SUPERVISOR

And I'm telling you that there's no  
way. Seventy-two was working the crea-  
tures, and it's miles from there.

TECH

Well, did it spot all of them?

SUPERVISOR

Yes. I was watching it myself, and it  
spotted all five.

TECH

And there couldn't be more?

SUPERVISOR

Yes, there could be more. Of course  
there could be more. But it'd be an aw-  
fully big coincidence to have them show  
up both places, wouldn't it?

TECH

I guess.

SUPERVISOR

Look, you know these units tend to give up all sorts of images when they drop out. Now, did you see it clearly?

TECH

Well, no.

SUPERVISOR

Well, there you go. Just a hallucination.

The door opens, and DR. COTTER enters, dressed in jeans and a bright tie-dye shirt. She walks over to where the supervisor and the technician are talking.

COTTER

You know, it's taco night down at the road house. This had better not be another snipe hunt.

SUPERVISOR

No, Dr. Cotter. We've got your creatures located for sure, over in Avondale.

COTTER

Is that so? Now, what are they doing over there?

SUPERVISOR

No idea now. They chased unit seventy-two back to the house.

COTTER

But they haven't gone in?

SUPERVISOR

I don't think so. We haven't seen an alarm yet.

COTTER

How long ago was that?

SUPERVISOR

About half an hour.

COTTER

I guess not, then. So what have you got here?

SUPERVISOR

We had a unit on Pegram, but it's gone dead.

COTTER

What unit?

TECH

Sixteen.

COTTER

That one? That one's so old, no wonder it's gone dead. Probably dropped of a heart attack.

SUPERVISOR

I don't think so, ma'am. We had him cornered, and then the accelerometers went wild, and then the thing went dead. It's like it got hit by a truck or something.

COTTER

Where was this?

TECH

His back yard.

COTTER

He doesn't have a truck there, does he?

TECH

No, doctor. Well, he has one in his garage, and that's near there.

COTTER

And was he driving his truck in his backyard? What was he, spinning donuts?

TECH

No, ma'am.

COTTER

(sharply)

Then why would you say it was like a truck hit it? What sense does that make?

SUPERVISOR

It was a metaphor, ma'am.

COTTER

Simile, you mean. Did you get a video capture?

SUPERVISOR

Yes, doctor, only....

COTTER

Now what?

TECH

Some other creature got it.

COTTER

I beg your pardon?

SUPERVISOR

He swears he saw something attack the unit just as it went dead.

COTTER

Bring it up.

TECH

Yes, ma'am.

With a few keystrokes, he brings up a video captured from the creature's point of view, starting from its threatening of MATT.

MATT

(on video)

No, huh?

The creature advances on him, growling.

MATT

(on video)

Now, now, wait, wait just a minute.  
Come on, give me a break here!



The creature continues to advance, but there is suddenly a snarl from out of view, and the shot flings itself to one side with a crash. It whips back and forth sharply. Suddenly it is released with a yelp, rights itself, and turns toward the house. Silhouetted against the yard lights is BRONX, but the only things distinguishable are two glowing eyes and a wide-open maw. The video freezes.

TECH

That's it, right there.

Both the SUPERVISOR and COTTER are wide-eyed at this: the SUPERVISOR with astonishment, COTTER with barely-contained glee.

SUPERVISOR

What the...

COTTER

It sure is. How many units do we have out tonight? I thought it was only the four.

SUPERVISOR

Yes, ma'am. Sixteen and seventy-two out of the Avondale building, seventy-seven's running in a new spine in Bridgeview, and seventy-four is on trials out in the forest preserve. All accounted for.

COTTER

(collecting herself)

Ooh, this is very interesting. This is extraordinary.

SUPERVISOR

More creatures, doctor?

COTTER

Yes, but especially the fact they'd show up in connection with Pegram. Ooh hoo hoo. (quickly) Are you still getting any feed from sixteen?

TECH

A little, but it's pretty badly damaged.

COTTER

Tacos, wait for me. Get that feed back up, and if you get anything else, call me right away.

SUPERVISOR

Yes, ma'am.

COTTER begins to leave.

COTTER

And give that man a raise!

SUPERVISOR

At once, doctor.

EXT. SCENE - MATT'S HOUSE - BACK YARD (NIGHT)

The five gargoyles land on the roof of Matt's house. They go toward the back porch and climb down, one by one.

BROOKLYN

It beats me. How does something like that just vanish into thin air?

LEXINGTON

Maybe it went into that house.

BROOKLYN

Could be.

BROADWAY

Should we go back and check?

GOLIATH

No, not tonight. If it did go there, it's already had enough of a chance to get away, and--

BROOKLYN

What's that?

He looks down toward the hulk of the creature alongside the house, hidden in the darkness.

BROOKLYN

Tell me someone's dumped an old carpet there.

BROADWAY jumps down to the ground. He goes up to the creature, then, realizing what it is, recoils.

BROADWAY  
It's the beast!

BROOKLYN  
Oh, no, no, no. Matt?

GOLIATH  
Check him.

BROOKLYN charges in through the back door of the apartment as the other gargoyles leap down to the body of the creature.

INT. SCENE - MATT'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

MATT is on the couch, staring straight ahead and looking stunned. He is absently scratching BRONX behind the ears. BROOKLYN bursts in through the back. BRONX looks to him, somewhat lost.

BROOKLYN  
Matt!

MATT  
Here.

BROOKLYN  
What happened? Are you all right?

MATT  
Found the creature.

BROOKLYN  
I see that. What happened to it?

MATT  
(simply)  
It wasn't very friendly. I don't think it liked me very much. Bronx didn't like it much, either.

BROOKLYN  
Hey, Matt? Hello?

MATT snaps to and looks at him.

BROOKLYN  
Are you all right?

MATT  
(gradually recovering)  
Yeah. Yes. Yes, I'm fine. Bronx is a  
bit cut up, but nothing serious.

BROOKLYN  
All right. Are you sure?

MATT  
Yeah, I'm sure. Just a bit shaken,  
that's all. I've never had something  
like that come after me, that's all.  
I'm just glad I had some help.

BROOKLYN  
I told you he was good.

MATT  
Yeah, you did. He is.

BROOKLYN  
So, want to see your creature, or have  
you had enough?

MATT  
Are you kidding? I wouldn't miss this  
for anything.

BROADWAY enters at the back door.

BROADWAY  
Hey, Brooklyn? This is weird. Come and  
see.

He exits. MATT stands, and he, BROOKLYN, and BRONX exit through  
the back door.

EXT. SCENE - MATT'S HOUSE - BACK YARD (NIGHT)

GOLIATH, HUDSON and LEXINGTON are near the creature's body, HUD-  
SON near its feet, and LEXINGTON crouched behind its head.  
BROADWAY, BROOKLYN, MATT, and BRONX descend from the porch and  
join them.

BROOKLYN  
What is it?

HUDSON

I've never seen anything like this before.

GOLIATH

Nor I.

MATT

I think I might have.

BROADWAY

Really?

MATT

Yeah, but I can't think of where.

LEXINGTON

You notice something weird? No blood. A beast like this dies, you expect it to bleed out.

MATT

No, look at how wet the sidewalk is here. It's not water.

GOLIATH

Colorless blood? How can that be?

LEXINGTON

It's more than that, though. Check this out.

He twists the creature's head down. Through a cut at the back of the neck, a number of wires can be seen.

LEXINGTON

A cyborg.

BROOKLYN

What?

BROADWAY

No way.

LEXINGTON

Looks like it. It's not a robot. There's too much flesh on it.

MATT

So, what, it's not really alive?

LEXINGTON

Well, not anymore.

MATT

Ugh.

GOLIATH

Who would do such a thing?

LEXINGTON

I'd like to find out. Grab a leg. Let's get this inside.

MATT

Inside for what?

LEXINGTON

To take a look inside it.

MATT

Wait, no.

LEXINGTON

What?

MATT

Clear blood or not, I'm not having that on my kitchen floor. Hold on. I'll get a tarp. We can put it in the basement.

BROADWAY

What, really?

MATT

Really.

LEXINGTON

All right.

INT. SCENE - CENTRAL CONTROL - CONTROL ROOM

The technician is working fiercely on the keyboard, trying to reestablish contact with creature number sixteen. The supervisor comes over.

SUPERVISOR

Any luck so far?

TECH

Yeah, I'm getting telemetry from the accelerometers again. They say it's moving.

SUPERVISOR

Walking?

TECH

Being carried, more likely.

SUPERVISOR

By who? Any video yet?

TECH

Not yet. That pathway's pretty ripped up. I'm trying to reroute. Should only be a couple more minutes, now.

INT. SCENE - MATT'S HOUSE - BASEMENT

MATT's basement is semi-finished, which is to say it has drywall and some lights, but no furniture. There are a washer and dryer, and a small cluttered workbench. On the floor is a blue plastic tarpaulin, with the body of the creature spread out on it. A set of work lights are set up over it. LEXINGTON is prodding the creature's body. BROADWAY and MATT are standing by, watching.

LEXINGTON

Don't see why you're so squeamish about this.

MATT

'Cause I eat my corn flakes in that kitchen. I don't want to be thinking about the invisible bloodstains all around me. Anyway, I didn't see Hudson or Goliath exactly clamoring to watch this either.

LEXINGTON continues to work on the creature. BROADWAY looks at MATT, who is watching the operation, fascinated.

BROADWAY

Are you all right?

MATT

Yeah, why?

BROADWAY

Brooklyn said you were a bit catatonic upstairs.

MATT

Just a bit of shock, that's all. I'm fine, really.

BROADWAY

Good. (pauses) Still glad to have us here?

MATT

What?

BROADWAY

I mean, all this happening.

MATT

Are you kidding me? Sure I am.

BROADWAY

I'm serious.

MATT

I'd have been lunch for that thing if you guys hadn't come.

BROADWAY

Do you think it would have come if we hadn't?

MATT

Maybe. If it would, then it's a good thing you were here to stop it. And if it wouldn't, then I'd never have had the chance to see it up close if you hadn't come. Either way, I'd say I come out ahead.

BROADWAY

Yeah.

MATT

You?



BROADWAY

Me, what?

MATT

Are you still glad to be here?

BROADWAY

Oh, yeah.

MATT

Good.

LEXINGTON

Now that we got that settled, can one of you move the light over here a bit?

MATT

Sure.

He shifts the light around the creature. As he does, it seems to twitch slightly, but maybe it's just a trick of the light.

MATT

How's that?

LEXINGTON

Fine, thanks.

MATT

Anything yet?

LEXINGTON

Not much. This thing's all meat. There's a big wire bundle going up the back, but that's about it. I don't feel any servos or anything down the body, and there's no dataports or anything like that.

BROADWAY

So, what is it?

LEXINGTON

Well, let's open it up and have a look.

Suddenly, the creature twitches more vigorously. Its legs start pumping furiously. LEXINGTON springs back from it.

MATT

Oh, not again!

BROADWAY

Get back from it.

The creature rolls onto its feet. Shrieking, it runs blindly into the wall, falls over, rights itself, and runs into the wall again.

BROADWAY

What's it doing?

LEXINGTON

It's blinded, I think.

It jumps, turns back on itself, and charges the three of them.

LEXINGTON

Watch it!

They dodge it, and it crashes into the opposite wall, falling over yet again. It leaves behind a large hole in the drywall. It gets back up, turns, and stares down the three of them.

BROADWAY

Nothing wrong with its hearing, though.

Growling, it charges directly at LEXINGTON. He attempts to dodge, but it grabs onto his arm with its jaws and holds on.

LEXINGTON

Aaagh!

BROADWAY

Get off him!

BROADWAY grabs the creature's jaws, forces them apart, and throws it back. It lands on its feet and charges back at him.

INT. SCENE - CENTRAL CONTROL - CONTROL ROOM

TECH

Got it. Video coming back.

On a screen in front of the technician, we see the creature's point of view again, but full of static and dropouts. It sees BROADWAY's face: he is struggling to keep the creature off of him.

SUPERVISOR

What the--what is that?

TECH

I don't know.

SUPERVISOR

Is that for real?

TECH

Yes sir. Live video feed.

INT. SCENE - MATT'S HOUSE - BASEMENT

BROADWAY continues to struggle with the creature. MATT rushes to the workbench and pulls out a plastic mallet. He rushes back, and whacks the creature on the head with it. It moans, and then snaps at him as he goes for a second strike.

BROADWAY

Harder!

MATT

I'm trying!

BROADWAY

Lex, now's your chance!

MATT swings and connects again. As he does this, LEXINGTON gets the creature around its neck with one arm. He reaches into the slit in the back of its neck with his free hand, grabs the wire bundle, and pulls. With a snap, it comes free. The creature spasms once, and then slumps to the floor with a low moan. BROADWAY follows it down, releasing it as it hits the floor.

BROADWAY

(panting)

Yeah. Yeah, kitchen would have been a bad idea.

MATT

Are you all right?

BROADWAY

Of course. Covered in clear blood, but not bad. Good thinking on the hammer.

MATT

Panic move.

LEXINGTON holds up the chunk of wiring he has pulled out.

LEXINGTON

I don't think it's going to try that again without this.

MATT

Well and truly dead, then?

LEXINGTON

Yeah.

MATT

Shame. It's kind of a cool critter, actually--I mean, aside from the viciousness.

BROADWAY

Yeah, aside from that, it'd make a fun pet, I guess.

LEXINGTON

Hang on, what's this?

He grasps a thin, transparent tape at the broken end of the wire bundle, and pulls it free.

MATT

Looks like a marker tape.

BROADWAY

What?

MATT

Marker tape. They put it in at the factory. Gives you the name of the manufacturer, usually.

LEXINGTON

(reading)

"H-O-D-A-G, serial number 16, copyright 2012 by--" uh, "Rubin Electronics Company. Patents pending."

BROADWAY

Patents pending?

MATT

I don't like the sound of that.

LEXINGTON

Come on, let's go up and let them know.

INT. SCENE - CENTRAL CONTROL - CONTROL ROOM

The technician and supervisor are watching a set of blank screens. One shows the video feed, which is completely dark; the other shows telemetry data, all of which is zeroes, red and flashing. The tech is typing away, trying to reestablish the signal, but then shakes his head.

TECH

No, sorry, sir, that's all she wrote.  
Control module's completely dead.

SUPERVISOR

They must have got the harness. Can you hit the self-destruct?

TECH

If the harness is out, that's going to be gone, too.

SUPERVISOR

Well, fine. Whatever those things are that have it, they'll have to clean up themselves.

He picks up the phone and dials.

SUPERVISOR

Control room, ma'am. We got video back for a minute. You'll want to see this.

INT. SCENE - MATT'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

All six gargoyles are sitting or standing variously around the room. MATT is sitting on the couch. LEXINGTON is examining the marker tape.

GOLIATH

So what does H-O-D-A-G mean?

LEXINGTON

Acronym, most likely. Something, organization, uh...

BROADWAY

Designed?

LEXINGTON

Designed...at Germantown?

BROADWAY

Attack Gargoyles?

HUDSON

You're missing a word in there, I think.

MATT

H-O-D-A-G...no. Hodag?

BROOKLYN

Hodag?

MATT

Yeah. That's it! The hodag.

GOLIATH

What is a hodag?

MATT

Mascot of Rhinelander, Wisconsin. Oh, wow, that goes back a while.

BROOKLYN

Explain.

MATT

Yeah, well, years back my brother and I were in summer camp, and they told us about a creature of the woods. The hodag, they said, was a vicious creature that ate white bulldogs and junior campers. So they set my brother up on watch duty overnight, to watch out for the thing. After three nights of that, he finally had to tell the counsellor why he was so sluggish during the day, and the counsellor told him it was a hoax.

BROADWAY

Really?

MATT

Yeah. Pretty well known up there, but we were just campers; what did we know?

Anyway, we had an attack on the fourth night.

LEXINGTON

But you just said it was a hoax.

MATT

So was the attack. My brother got me to sneak out in the woods at midnight and scream my head off, and he told the whole cabin I'd been taken off by the hodag. Had them going pretty good for a while.

BROOKLYN

Well done.

MATT

Yeah, well, my mom didn't really think so when she had to come pick us up the next day. But it was worth it.

GOLIATH

And now, Rubin Electronics has brought this thing to life.

MATT

I think so. It squares with the description that I remember, anyway.

BROOKLYN

So, why turn it loose on the streets?

LEXINGTON

I have another question. That tape says hodag number sixteen. So where are the others?

GOLIATH

A fleet of these creatures on the street, attacking strangers. I would say someone's trying to get attention.

BROADWAY

From us?

HUDSON

Aye, perhaps.

MATT

Thing is, my office is up in Avondale, where that first one was. Now this one shows up in my backyard. Coincidence?

BROOKLYN

Maybe not.

MATT

What would Rubin Electronics have against me, though? I've never even heard of them.

GOLIATH

It could be a coincidence. But just in case, you should not walk through there alone.

MATT

You offering to keep an eye on me?

GOLIATH

I am demanding it. If someone wants our attention, they shall have it.

MATT

Far be it from me to turn you down. Not like I'm going to fight this thing on my own.

BROOKLYN

Shouldn't have to fight it at all. That's our job.

MATT

Sure, and let you have all the fun?

GOLIATH

No.

MATT

Yes.

GOLIATH

This is not fun. This is our fight, not yours.



MATT

Bah. It's my city they're haunting, not yours. Anyway, if these things are following me around, won't you need me to draw one out?

GOLIATH

If it is our attention being sought, we cannot put you in danger over that.

MATT

Oh? Lexington, was there anything about that creature downstairs you saw that would make it shut down during the day?

LEXINGTON

No, nothing.

MATT

Unlike, at the risk of being rude, you. So what's to stop Rubin, or whoever, from sending out one during daylight?

BROOKLYN

He makes a good point, Goliath.

MATT

I appreciate your concern. Really, I do. I want this thing shut down fast, though, and it seems to me that the fastest way to shut it down involves me working with you, not just being under your protection the whole time, which I can't be, anyway.

GOLIATH looks firmly at MATT, who looks back at him, just as determinedly.

GOLIATH

You will not be moved on this?

MATT

Nope.

GOLIATH

Very well. We work together.

MATT

There. Simple enough. Now, if you don't mind, I need to get to bed. Would you mind cleaning up what's left of that beast?

LEXINGTON

Wait, it's your house.

MATT

Yeah, but it wasn't my idea to bring it inside.

LEXINGTON

But you helped.

GOLIATH

They will clean it up. Go and sleep.

MATT

Thank you. Good night.

MATT goes into his bedroom and shuts the door. GOLIATH looks after him, and shakes his head.

GOLIATH

Stubborn man.

HUDSON

Aye. But an honest one, at least. He does his part.

GOLIATH

He should not have a part in this. We put him in danger by giving him one.

BROOKLYN

Rubin did that already. Isn't it better to be working alongside him on this, where we can watch out for him?

GOLIATH

Yes, it is. Go on, now. Clear that thing out of the house.

LEXINGTON

Can it wait a while? I want to get a better look at that thing's control unit.

GOLIATH

Yes, but not too long.

HUDSON

Aye. His landlady might object if she finds it there.

INT. SCENE -- CENTRAL CONTROL. CONTROL ROOM.

The SUPERVISOR and DR. COTTER are reviewing the latest video capture on the console. They run it back and forth a couple of times as the SUPERVISOR points out the gargoyles.

SUPERVISOR

Here's one. Here's another.

COTTER

(indicating)

And here's Pegram. That confirms it.

SUPERVISOR

Wow.

COTTER

Yeah. Kinda cool, isn't it?

SUPERVISOR

Cool, doctor?

COTTER

We get two targets for the price of one, and they're actually doing all the work to find us. Is the stash house ready?

SUPERVISOR

Yes, ma'am.

COTTER

Good. Excellent. Get one unit ready and out on the prowl. We're having a house party.

EXT. SCENE -- AVONDALE. AERIAL. (NIGHT)

Five gargoyles are gliding through the sky, patrolling. LEXINGTON takes the lead. He holds a small box with a coil of wire on top and a dial on the face. This is slung over his neck on a strap.

BROADWAY

You got that thing working?

LEXINGTON

Yeah, now. Had to tune it up a bit.

GOLIATH

So what is this device?

LEXINGTON

Radio direction finder. Those things are radio controlled, and this points out what direction they're transmitting from. Should pick up the creatures since they're transmitting back home.

BROADWAY

Great. So, which way is it pointing?

LEXINGTON points the box this way and that, and finally turns it on its side.

LEXINGTON

Uh...down.

BROADWAY

Swell.

LEXINGTON

Well, we know they're down there somewhere. It does work. Mostly.

BROADWAY

Great.

HUDSON

I do not see an improvement here over the old ways of tracking.

LEXINGTON

Well, it should give us--

He is interrupted by the cell phone ringing. (It is not playing the "Colonel Bogey March" this time, and has been reset to something more dignified like a normal beeping ring.) He hands the direction finder to BROADWAY, and then answers the phone. As LEXINGTON talks, BROADWAY twists and turns the box this way and that, watching the effect.

LEXINGTON

Hello, aerial unit. Hi, Matt. Yeah, we're here now. All right. See you in a few. No, nothing so far. Right. Bye.

He hangs up and puts the phone away.

LEXINGTON

He's leaving work now.

GOLIATH

Fine. Let's go and pick him up from there.

BROADWAY

Okay. Hey, Lex? What's this?

He shows an indication to LEXINGTON.

LEXINGTON

Uh, something over there, looks like.

He points to the street below, pointing toward a police car that is crossing their path, left to right.

INT. SCENE -- PATROL CAR.

SANCHEZ and MILLER are patrolling along the street, MILLER driving. SANCHEZ is looking out toward the sky, absently. Both SANCHEZ and MILLER are wearing new and rather chunky badges. MILLER is telling a story with relish.

MILLER

...gave him this look like, hey, you know I'm a big deal around these parts, you know that?

SANCHEZ

(absently)

Mm-hmm.

MILLER

So I says to him, you may be a big deal in these parts, but these are small parts, you get me?

SANCHEZ

Right.

MILLER

So then he tells me, you tell your captain that I'm working to light up the 23rd ward, and, eh, you know, a little thing like being in the wrong company, could slow down a project, you know?

SANCHEZ

Yeah, I guess.

SANCHEZ suddenly sees a shadow against the moon, and sits bolt upright. He knows what this is, instantly.

SANCHEZ

Hey, Miller! Miller! Stop the car!

MILLER does, abruptly.

MILLER

What is it? What you got?

SANCHEZ jumps out of the car, looking at the sky.

SANCHEZ

Hey. Hey! You up there! Get down here, I gotta talk to you!

There is no response.

MILLER

Sanchez, you okay? What you got?

SANCHEZ

I got...nothing.

MILLER

You don't look like you got nothin'.

SANCHEZ gets back into the car.

SANCHEZ

Miller, you think...you think we mighta got gargoyles in this city?

MILLER

Nah. No way. I been out here fifteen years, ain't never seen them. Thank goodness. N'York can keep 'em. Why? You think we do?

SANCHEZ

I don't know.

MILLER

Huh.

He starts driving again. As he continues telling his story, SANCHEZ goes back to looking out the window, more thoughtful this time, and completely not paying attention to MILLER's story.

MILLER

Anyway, so the guy says, look, I can get you in touch with the alderman, or both you and your captain, we can get you in touch with the alderman, and she'll tell you...

They pass MATT PEGRAM in the street, who is walking home.

EXT. SCENE - CALIFORNIA AVENUE (NIGHT)

There is not much traffic on the street at this point, and MATT is the only pedestrian. He heads south down the street, looking up once in a while to reassure himself that the gargoyles are still there. As he comes through the residential section, he hears a croaking growl from behind him. He hesitates, then keeps moving. After a moment, he takes out his phone and dials.

MATT

It's behind me now.

LEXINGTON

(on phone)

We see it. Take the next right and stay in the middle of the street.

MATT

Got it. (hangs up)

He turns right into the next street. The sound of claws clicking on the pavement follows him. He outwardly keeps his cool, but his pace picks up slightly.

MATT

Okay, now. Okay, now. Okay guys, now would be good too. Come on. Come on.

He begins to lose his cool a little, and his pace picks up. The growling behind him gets more insistent.

MATT

Where are you guys? Come on.

The growling gets closer, and the clicking speeds up. MATT begins to hurry up. The growling is suddenly almost on top of him. He stops, frozen with fear. The clicking also stops, the growling almost on top of him. Over his shoulder, we see the hodag only a couple of feet behind.

MATT

Don't look back, don't look back, don't  
look back.

The hodag coils up, ready to strike. It is blindsided by BROADWAY, who roars as he swoops down. MATT jumps at the sound, then turns around. BROADWAY and the hodag square off. They are ready to rumble, when suddenly, the hodag springs off to the side and takes off down the street. BROADWAY starts off after it. MATT doesn't.

BROADWAY

Come on!

MATT

I can't sprint, I'm a middle manager!

BROADWAY

Oh, for--come on!

BROADWAY grabs MATT, slings him onto his back, and carries him down the street, running awkwardly after the hodag.

MATT

Waaugh!

BROADWAY

Knock it off, and get Lex on the line.

MATT

Yeah. Right, okay.

He pulls out his phone and dials.

MATT

Yeah! You got it? Yeah. Because I can't  
run, that's why!



BROADWAY

Focus!

MATT

Right. Where? Oh. (to BROADWAY) He says  
last house on the left.

BROADWAY

Got it. Hang on.

He bends forward and runs faster.

MATT

Whoa. (to phone) We're on the way.  
Right. (hangs up)

EXT. SCENE - STASH HOUSE. BACK YARD. (NIGHT)

BROADWAY (carrying MATT) arrives through the gangway, and puts  
MATT down on the walk. LEXINGTON lands in the back yard, fol-  
lowed by the others.

BROADWAY

Back here again. Where did it go this  
time?

LEXINGTON

It ducked down under the porch.

BROADWAY goes down the back stairs to the basement door, and  
tries it. It doesn't open.

GOLIATH

Would it have gone in there?

HUDSON takes a cautious look under the porch.

HUDSON

Only place it could have. It isn't  
here.

MATT

So how do we get in?

They look at him, puzzled, then BROADWAY punches the door and  
rips the lock out.

BROADWAY

Like that.

MATT

Whoa.

BROOKLYN

Got to remember who you're dealing with here.

MATT

Right. You first.

GOLIATH

No. Us, alone. You stay here. Hudson, watch him.

HUDSON

Aye, Goliath.

MATT

Don't I get to see it?

GOLIATH

No, and that is final.

MATT

But I want--

HUDSON

Enough. Go on, I will watch him.

BROADWAY goes into the basement, followed by LEXINGTON, BROOKLYN, and GOLIATH.

HUDSON

This is not the fight for you to have, Matt. He means to protect you.

MATT

Well, I know, but--

HUDSON

Much as you meant to protect Brooklyn. Now it is our turn.

MATT

All right.

They watch the basement door, expectantly.

INT. SCENE - STASH HOUSE. BASEMENT.

The basement is dark, except for the few flickering lights from electronic equipment visible deep inside. Otherwise the space is deep gray and it is hard to see more than a couple of feet in from the door.

GOLIATH

Keep alert. That beast could be anywhere down here.

LEXINGTON

Lights?

BROADWAY finds the light switch and clicks it, without effect.

BROADWAY

No such luck.

GOLIATH

Spread out.

They step cautiously into the basement, searching.

BROOKLYN

I don't hear anything.

BROADWAY

Lex, does that thing work down here?

LEXINGTON

Sure.

He pulls up the box, and twists it to and fro.

LEXINGTON

Well, it's supposed to, anyway.

BROADWAY

Nothing?

LEXINGTON

Everything. It's hearing signals all around us.

BROOKLYN

Don't say that.

BROADWAY

Wait, did you hear something?

BROOKLYN

Or that. What?

BROADWAY

Listen.

They listen. There is a faint wheezing from deeper in the basement.

LEXINGTON

It would have to go in the far corner, wouldn't it?

GOLIATH

No, it's off to the left.

BROADWAY

Or to the...right.

The wheezing increases, then builds to a low, croaking growl. From all around, one by one, half a dozen pairs of red eyes appear out of the darkness.

LEXINGTON

You know, you really need to trust your instruments more.

BROOKLYN

Escape route?

GOLIATH

Straight back--

He looks back. A hodag has stepped in front of the doorway, head down and growling at them.

BROOKLYN

And straight into that one. Oh. Great.

GOLIATH

Positions. Here they come!

The four gargoyles stand back-to-back, eyes alight, as the hodags attack them and the fight is on.

LEXINGTON and BROADWAY charge into the group and meet them head-on. The hodags leap at them and attempt to bite them, and are met with punches.

GOLIATH sets into the one by the door, punching it in the face and driving it back. It rips its tail around into GOLIATH's leg, pulling him off balance, before leaping onto him. GOLIATH answers by putting his foot up into its belly, and throwing it over himself before rolling backward and up on his feet again to continue the fight.

LEXINGTON leaps onto one and gets it around the neck. It will not be so easily taken, and begins bucking around the basement, trying to flick him off, but LEXINGTON has a good grasp of his and will not be thrown. He tries to force its head down, but it turns its head and begins snapping at his arm.

BROADWAY simply wrestles his, throwing it onto the floor and then leaping upon it. It wriggles loose and slashes out at him with its claws. BROADWAY dodges the slash, grabs at its leg, twists it around, picks it up, and throws it into the water heater, which topples over, dumping water on the ground. There is a loud hiss from the gas line.

GOLIATH is finally able to subdue the hodag and rushes back to the door.

GOLIATH

To me! Out, now!

The others break loose of the hodags and make for the door, piling out. LEXINGTON is last, and slams the door behind him.

EXT. SCENE - STASH HOUSE. BACK YARD. (NIGHT)

GOLIATH, BROOKLYN, BROADWAY, and LEXINGTON scamper away from the house and toward HUDSON and MATT.

GOLIATH

Down! Get down!

HUDSON

Get down, Matt!

He grabs MATT and they, and the others, go to the back of the back yard and dive to the ground. HUDSON throws one arm and one wing over MATT to cover him.

INT. SCENE - STASH HOUSE. BASEMENT.

The hodags are stacked up against the basement door, forcing it more tightly closed. They snarl and growl and snap at one another. Gas builds up.

EXT. SCENE - STASH HOUSE. BACK YARD. (NIGHT)

The house explodes. Debris rains down on the gargoyles as a large fireball rises into the sky where once there stood a neat house with half a dozen hodags in the basement. The gargoyles and MATT all sit up and look back.

BROADWAY

Well, that's one way to take care of it.

MATT

Yikes.

HUDSON

Are you all right?

MATT

Fine, thanks. Never done that before. You?

LEXINGTON

Maybe, but I don't think so.

GOLIATH

Any signal now?

LEXINGTON checks the direction finder.

LEXINGTON

Nothing, now.

MATT

So, that's it? No more hodag?

BROADWAY

I think that's it.

MATT

Too bad.

GOLIATH

Why's that?

MATT

Twenty years on, and I still haven't caught the hodag.

In the distance, sirens approach. They look up.

BROADWAY

That's our cue. You need a lift?

MATT

Thanks all the same, but I think I'd better take the bus this time.

GOLIATH

Perhaps that is best. We'll see you back at the house.

MATT

See you there.

MATT vaults the back fence into the alley and begins walking toward the street. The gargoyles climb up on the garage and begin leaping from roof to roof, working their way toward a good high spot to launch from, as the fire department begins to arrive.

EXT. SCENE - STASH HOUSE. FRONT. (NIGHT)

Across the street from the stash house stand J-MO and BRAD LEVIN, watching. The fire department begins to set up.

LEVIN

Well? What would you do?

J-MO

Block the back door. Trap them in.

LEVIN

And if the door were guarded? They are experts, you know. They might post a guard.

J-MO

Then take the guard down.

LEVIN

How?

J-MO

Blow to the head, knock him out. Secure the door, then come back to finish the job.

LEVIN

Very good. Good answer. You see the danger they pose?

J-MO

Yes, Mr. Levin.

LEVIN

Excellent. You may be about ready for a field test.

J-MO

Thank you, sir.

They continue to watch the fire response for a moment as the fire department busies itself with putting the fire out. A police cruiser pulls up nearby them, and SANCHEZ and MILLER get out.

J-MO

Hey, officer!

The officers turn to look at him.

J-MO

I saw what happened.

EXT. SCENE - MATT'S HOUSE. BACK PORCH. (NIGHT)

GOLIATH and BROOKLYN stand on MATT's porch, waiting. MATT exits from the back door and comes onto the porch, and they look toward him. He is in a cheery mood. They are not.

MATT

There you are. Quite an adventure tonight.

They continue to look at him, impassive.

MATT

Glad you were able to take care of things so quickly.

They give no response. MATT's mood wilts.



MATT

You're not happy.

GOLIATH

There is no cause for celebration.

MATT

I guess you're right, but on the other hand, think of it this way. Those creatures were attacking people--

GOLIATH

That is not what I meant. Those creatures were unnatural. They were a threat and we are better without them.

MATT

So what's the matter?

BROOKLYN

The matter is, someone sent them after us, and got to you.

GOLIATH

Placing you in danger is not acceptable.

MATT

Well, I'll agree with that in principle, but it's not your fault.

GOLIATH

Neither is it something we can prevent.

BROOKLYN

As you said, they could send another attack during the day. We can't protect you against that.

GOLIATH

We cannot stay here and put you in danger.

MATT

Okay.

He goes to the rail and looks out.

MATT

So what's your plan?

GOLIATH

We will find lodging elsewhere.

MATT

So this is goodbye, then?

BROOKLYN

Not entirely, but we can't spend our days here. It draws too much attention.

MATT

All right. But...may I suggest something?

GOLIATH

I will not be moved on this.

MATT

No, I respect your decision, and you're probably right. But if you need to find other digs, I've got an idea.

BROOKLYN

What's that?

MATT smiles.

MATT

Twelve blocks east, and three south.  
Across from the high school, can't miss it.

GOLIATH and BROOKLYN look at each other, and then at MATT.

EXT. SCENE - HUMBOLDT STATION. ROOF. (NIGHT)

This is a large substation, ten floors high, brick, nearly windowless, and easily the tallest building for blocks around. The roof is in three or four terraces, capped off with a large iron structure that, at one time, had held a large sign of some kind. GOLIATH and BROOKLYN have landed on the roof, as MATT enters from the penthouse.

MATT

Welcome to Humboldt Station. Pride and joy of the Edison system. At least it was eighty years ago.

GOLIATH

What is this place?

MATT

Electrical substation. Serves most of the area around here. Two hundred megawatts contained below. Used to be a busy place. They had a whole control room in here and a library and everything.

BROOKLYN

And now?

MATT

Disused, mostly. The station's still running but there are just a couple of guys in and out, and they stay downstairs. The upstairs still has a kitchen, though, for the night dispatchers when they were still here. If you're careful, you should be able to use it and nobody would notice.

GOLIATH

Is nobody watching it?

MATT

It's massively protected. Alarms and cameras and armed guards on call. But they're watching for anyone coming in from the street.

BROOKLYN

Not from the sky.

MATT

Right.

GOLIATH

So it is a castle.

MATT

I guess so, yeah. It is a kind of castle.

BROOKLYN looks around. He looks toward MATT, and smiles slightly.

BROOKLYN

This is great. Up out of sight and clear flight lines in all directions.

GOLIATH

And this is ours?

MATT

As far as I'm concerned. Can't say the company would necessarily agree, but as long as you don't make a mess of it while you're here, can't say they would object much, either.

GOLIATH

Thank you.

MATT

One price for this.

BROOKLYN

What's that?

MATT

Keep coming to my place. Or at least keep in touch. You said before you didn't want to lose track of me. I don't want to lose track of you either, not now.

GOLIATH

Indeed. It is a bargain.

He reaches out with one hand, and MATT takes his arm in a handshake.

=END=