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**Above, Below**

by

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Gargoyles: City of the Phoenix  
Season 2, Episode 1

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EXT. SCENE - MANHATTAN. STREET.

The place: New York City. The time: October 29, 2012.

The skies above New York are troubled. Hurricane Sandy is in full force, and the winds lash the city wildly. Manhattan is in darkness (or at least, the southern end of it), and rain and debris of all sorts lashes the buildings and the few residents still making their way to whatever shelter they can find. In the streets, the storm surge flows wildly, carrying cars, newspaper boxes, and anything else that's not nailed down with it.

Over the scene, the voice of a public television news reporter, calm and measured.

BRANNIGAN

It's been three months since Superstorm Sandy slammed into the Northeast, bringing storm surges that flooded the subway and knocked out electric and telephone service across New York City.

SHOT: SUBWAY TRAIN ENTERING PLATFORM (STOCK)

BRANNIGAN

The damage has mostly been cleaned up through truly legendary efforts. Subway service resumed within weeks.

SHOT: CON EDISON WORKERS (STOCK)

BRANNIGAN

Power has been restored for most of Lower Manhattan too, with the last few customers now being restored in Staten Island.

SHOT: VERIZON WORKERS IN STREET (STOCK)

BRANNIGAN

And while it's taken longer than anyone would want, telephone service is slowly returning across the area in one form or another. But while many things are returning to normal, one question remains on the minds of many New Yorkers:

SHOT: MAN IN STREET (VOX POP INTERVIEW)

MAN 1

Where are the gargoyles? I dunno, I haven't seen them in months.

SHOT: MANHATTAN. STREET. (NIGHT, STOCK)

GOLIATH, BROOKLYN, and others are standing in the middle of the Greenwich Village Halloween Parade, talking among themselves. BROOKLYN waves to someone off-camera.

BRANNIGAN (VO)

Some of New York's most well-known residents vanished in the aftermath of the storm, and now, many are asking where they went. Inspector Matt Bluestone heads the NYPD's Gargoyle Relations Unit and says they have no word.

SHOT: CU - BLUESTONE

BLUESTONE is in a suit at his desk, being interviewed.

BLUESTONE

One of our tasks from the start has been to keep tabs on them, but since the storm we've seen no sign.

SHOT: POLICE ON STREET AT NIGHT (STOCK)

BRANNIGAN (VO)

And that's been a concern for the police.

SHOT : CU - BLUESTONE

BLUESTONE

Half our mission has been to keep them safe, and obviously without knowing where they are, that's been hard enough. But the other half has been to work with them to make a better city.

SHOT: STREET AT NIGHT (STOCK)

GOLIATH and KATANA have their claws into two miscreants and are passing them off to a group of police officers, who take them into custody.

BRANNIGAN (VO)  
Just through community relations?

BLUESTONE (VO)  
No, not just that. They've been an invaluable addition to the force in their own right. We clear nearly twenty percent more property crimes and almost forty percent more person crimes than any other borough, and that's been almost entirely through their help.

SHOT: WS - CULPEPPER AND BRANNIGAN

CULPEPPER is in an easy chair, talking (silently) to BRANNIGAN.

BRANNIGAN (VO)  
But not everyone is concerned.

CULPEPPER  
No, I think it just proves what we've been saying, that they're opportunists.

BRANNIGAN (VO)  
Arlo Culpepper is a borough captain for the Quarrymen, one of the more well-known organizations that opposes gargoyles settlement.

CULPEPPER  
We've heard them promising to protect the city for fifteen years. Well, they've sure sold that picture of themselves as protectors, and it's sure been useful to keep them in the public's good grace. But the minute the city needs them most, they're nowhere to be found. Look at it with a clear eye, and what's that tell you?

SHOT: WS - PARKER WORKING AT BAR

ELI PARKER walks up to a table with a couple of drinks, and serves a couple there, with a smile and a laugh.

BRANNIGAN (VO)  
Others in the city have more direct concerns. Eli Parker has run a gargoyle viewing site in the Dumbo. For \$50,

visitors can go onto the roof at sunset, enjoy a cash bar, and possibly catch a glance at the winged creatures as they go out for the evening.

SHOT: CU - PARKER

PARKER

Yeah, I mean, we were shut down by the storm, and that was bad enough, but now word's gotten around that they're gone, and business has just gone off the cliff.

SHOT: MS - LUCINDA AT RAILING

LUCINDA looks out over the skyline at dusk.

BRANNIGAN (VO)

Parker's operation still draws a few die-hards, though. Lucinda has been coming every Thursday or two for five years.

SHOT: CU - LUCINDA

LUCINDA

Oh, yes. As long as the weather's not too bad.

BRANNIGAN

How many times have you seen them?

LUCINDA

Before the storm, probably every other time, maybe every third time.

BRANNIGAN

Ever met them?

LUCINDA

(laughing)

No, no, no. I think I'd be too nervous for that.

SHOT: WS - GOLIATH AND TOBE CREST (FILE)

GOLIATH and TOBE CREST (his attorney) exit the courthouse to a flurry of photo flashes.

BRANNIGAN (VO)

The gargoyles have had a fraught relationship with New York since their arrival in 1997. Early wins in court established them as proper residents of the city, and their reputation was strengthened in the weeks after September 11th when the leader, Goliath, made an appearance at the public memorial to the victims.

SHOT: WS - GOLIATH

GOLIATH stands stiffly at a lectern, speaking to a press conference.

GOLIATH

We mourn with our city tonight. I regret deeply that we could not protect it against this attack, but we pledge to protect it and stand ready to aid in its recovery in any way we can.

SHOT: WS - CONVENTION CENTER (FILE)

The convention center burns; fire and police personnel work it over as several of the survivors get medical help.

BRANNIGAN (VO)

But much of their reputation had faded when an attack four years ago cost six of their most dedicated human supporters their lives.

SHOT: CU - CULPEPPER

CULPEPPER

And that's the kind of thing I mean. If they won't even protect their own supporters, can we really trust them with this city? How do we really know this wasn't their plan all along?

SHOT: CU - BLUESTONE

BRANNIGAN (VO)

Inspector Bluestone sees things very differently.

## BLUESTONE

No. The intelligence we have on the 2009 attack shows it was planned as an attack against the gargoyles, definitely not on their behalf. Pretty much what you would expect if you were paying attention to the facts instead of fear. Year after year, the gargoyles have been very effectively reducing the crime rate in Manhattan, and that's hardly what we'd expect if they had some nefarious purpose.

## INT. SCENE - SUBWAY STATION

A crowded subway platform. Three youths work their way down the platform through the crowd as BRANNIGAN's report concludes:

## BRANNIGAN (VO)

And indeed, the rate of property crime has gone up in lower Manhattan since Sandy left its trail of destruction. No doubt some of this is just the aftermath of a devastating storm, but it remains open to interpretation how much less the rise in crime would have been if the city's most stalwart and well-known guardians had been around to protect the night.

For the News Hour, I'm Idris Brannigan, Manhattan.

CAPTION: 50 St Station, Manhattan. 5:41 PM, January 21, 2013.

The youths quietly surround a rather preoccupied man down at the end of the platform. Looking around quickly, they close into him. He looks up, but it's too late. One of them draws a knife.

## ROBBER 1

OK, man. You know what this is. Let's have it.

The victim looks around, but he's not going anywhere. Defeated, he reaches into his pocket for his wallet. ROBBER 2 snatches it quickly from his hand.

ROBBER 3

And the phone.

VICTIM

Oh, come on.

ROBBER 1 pushes the knife into him threateningly, and the VICTIM relinquishes it to ROBBER 1.

ROBBER 1

Thank you very much. Enjoy New York.

The robbers chuckle, and begin to move off, but behind them, someone else has approached, and she draws a gun from under her coat: it is ELISA MAZA. She is wearing a small knapsack.

ELISA

He'll enjoy it better with his phone.  
Police. Stop right there.

The robbers freeze for a moment, looking at her. So does the VICTIM. The robbers laugh.

ROBBER 1

Yeah, right, officer. C'mon.

The robbers begin striding down the platform, shoving through the bystanders. ELISA follows them and gives chase as they begin hurrying.

ELISA

You're gonna make this harder on yourself if you don't stop!

ROBBER 2

Hasn't been a problem before!

The robbers run into the tunnel with ELISA hot behind them.

INT. SCENE - SUBWAY TUNNEL.

The robbers run down the tracks with ELISA behind, falling slowly back. As they go, the robbers meet MAISHA and push past her, to her consternation. ELISA comes up behind.

MAISHA

Elisa! Need a hand?



ELISA  
Yeah, are they down there?

MAISHA  
Just left them.

ELISA  
Come on.

MAISHA joins the pursuit. ELISA calls out loudly:

ELISA  
Hey, stop those guys!

The robbers look back and laugh; they are clearly getting away. Suddenly ROBBER 3 is knocked down as the other two run on. They glance back; he's nowhere to be seen. They run onward, but are suddenly blocked as MALIBU, a lean beaked gargoyle, and TALON, a winged cat-faced creature, jump out in front of them from a side tunnel. They stumble to a halt.

TALON  
What, these guys?

ELISA  
Yes, them.

TALON  
Sure thing.

TALON and MALIBU catch hold of ROBBERS 1 and 2, respectively, and hold them as ELISA and MAISHA arrive. ELISA holsters her gun.

MALIBU  
Bad man?

ELISA  
Thief.

MALIBU  
Thief, huh?

MALIBU gives a nasty grin to ROBBER 2, who wilts.

MALIBU  
Have fun.

TALON  
Not yet. What'd they do?

ELISA  
Robbed a guy of his wallet and phone up  
at the station.

HOLLYWOOD, a heavysset gargoyle, appears out of the tunnel, dragging ROBBER 3 with him, and joins the group. TALON turns ROBBER 1 to face him.

TALON  
All right, let's have it.

ROBBER 1 reaches into his pocket, draws out the phone, and hands it to TALON, who tosses it to ELISA.

ELISA  
And the wallet.

ROBBER 1  
Wallet?

TALON grips him and pulls him in, practically nose-to-nose. ROBBER 1 gulps.

ROBBER 1  
Give 'em the wallet.

ROBBER 2  
What wallet?

TALON  
Malibu, get the wallet.

ROBBER 2  
(producing it)  
Oh, this wallet.

He hands it to TALON, who tosses it to ELISA.

TALON  
Thank you. You need them for anything  
else?

ELISA  
I don't think so. You?

HOLLYWOOD

Dinner.

TALON

No, it's not dinner time yet.

HOLLYWOOD

Oh.

HOLLYWOOD looks disappointed, looks at ROBBER 3, and thinks, with difficulty for a moment, then brightens.

HOLLYWOOD

Snack!

ROBBER 3 whimpers with fear at this. MALIBU licks his lips.

MALIBU

Snack time!

TALON

You see what I have to put up with?  
Okay, go get the utensils.

HOLLYWOOD and MALIBU need no further coaxing: they throw down ROBBER 2 and 3 and hurry off into the side tunnel. TALON shrugs.

MAISHA

You're not actually going to eat them,  
are you?

TALON

Me? No. I'm out of hot sauce.

He releases ROBBER 1.

TALON

Anyway, I think it'll take those two  
about, oh, five or ten minutes to find  
everything, and these guys will have  
taken off by then.

He looks hard at ROBBER 1, who gulps visibly.

TALON

Right?

ROBBER 1

Yes, sir.

TALON

And won't be coming back here, because I'm sure they won't want to face those two again, having run out on their snack time. Because they may not bother with the utensils next time.

All three ROBBERS, not wanting to discuss the matter further, take off back up the tunnel toward the station. MAISHA, ELISA, and TALON watch them go. Once they're out of earshot, they all start to laugh.

ELISA

You're getting too good at that, Derek.

TALON

I know. Not helping our image much, I guess. But it is fun. Come on out, guys.

HOLLYWOOD and MALIBU come back out from the side tunnel.

HOLLYWOOD

We won game?

TALON

You did fine. You won.

HOLLYWOOD

Yay!

MALIBU

Now snack?

TALON

Maybe. You got something?

ELISA takes off her knapsack and opens it.

ELISA

A few things. I don't suppose you want a pound cake, do you?

MALIBU

Oh! Yes!

HOLLYWOOD

Pound cake!

TALON

I think that will work.

ELISA hands the pound cake to TALON, who turns to MALIBU.

TALON

You share this, all right? That's for the whole Labyrinth.

MALIBU

Yes, Talon.

TALON hands the cake to MALIBU.

TALON

Okay, go on.

HOLLYWOOD

Let me carry.

MALIBU

No. I share.

HOLLYWOOD and MALIBU exit into the side tunnel.

ELISA

Sorry I'm late. That was meant for you.

MAISHA

Oh, it's fine. Thanks for the thought, but I'm eager to get home. It's been so long.

TALON

You're going to be all right?

MAISHA

Yeah, now. Thanks again for everything.

TALON

It's been our pleasure.

ELISA

Good luck. Oh, and, here.

ELISA hands MAISHA the recovered phone and wallet.

ELISA

That belongs to a guy on the uptown platform. Red jacket.

MAISHA

Sure thing. Take care of yourselves.

She waves, and exits back up the tunnel toward the station. ELISA slumps a little.

TALON

You're all right?

ELISA

As much as ever. You?

TALON

Same. Anything new about...?

ELISA

No. Nothing.

TALON places a hand on her back.

TALON

I'm sure he is fine.

ELISA

I hope so.

There is a distant rumbling as the train approaches the station.

TALON

Come on. I don't want those two eating a whole pound cake between them.

ELISA

Right.

They exit into the side tunnel.

INT. SCENE - MAISHA'S APARTMENT. LOBBY.

Lobby of a well-worn apartment building, once glamorous, now run-down but with a fresh coat of plaster and paint covering the recent flood damage. TYKO DENMAN, a general contractor, in his work clothes, stands there with MANNY THORBURN, the building inspector.

DENMAN

See, but this is the thing, Mr. Thorburn. We got tenants moving back in today. We told them today was the day.

THORBURN

That's your problem, not mine. You don't pass inspection, you don't get occupancy. You don't get occupancy, you don't get tenants. Them's the rules.

DENMAN

C'mon, have a heart, will you? These people have been out of doors for three months already.

THORBURN

Then you ought to fix things up better. Maybe you can pass an inspection then.

DENMAN

That work is tight, and you know it. That's as tight as these people can afford, anyway.

THORBURN

Yeah?

DENMAN

Yeah.

THORBURN

Look, my job is to make sure you're not chiseling them out of the work they deserve. Whatever it is they can afford, you got a duty to live up to the building codes.

DENMAN

Don't you get all sanctimonious on me--

THORBURN

You going to start fighting with me? 'Cause, you know, I can end this inspection right now if you want to play the tough guy.

DENMAN

I'm not going to--

MAISHA enters through the front door, and the two stop arguing.

MAISHA

Oh, Mr. Denman.

DENMAN

Evening, ma'am. We're just about done, just working out a couple of details.

MAISHA

Oh, yeah?

DENMAN

Yeah. Uh, this is Mr. Thorburn. He's the building inspector.

THORBURN

How do you do, ma'am?

MAISHA

I'll do a lot better when I got my apartment back.

THORBURN

Well, we're working that out right now. Don't worry about a thing. Should be all right soon enough.

MAISHA

I hope so. Can't I even go up and take a look?

THORBURN

No, but won't be long now, will it?

DENMAN gives THORBURN a hard look, which THORBURN receives with equanimity.

DENMAN

I tell you what, let me get back to you.

MAISHA

Oh, come on.

DENMAN

It's just a few details, honestly. Just give me a little while to work things out. Gimme an hour, tops.



MAISHA

Well, all right. Give me a call when you're ready.

DENMAN

Sure will, I promise.

MAISHA leaves.

THORBURN

Such a nice lady. And been through so much. You don't want to disappoint someone like that, now, do you?

DENMAN

Mr. Thorburn, please. You got to understand. I put every penny I got into fixing up people from the storm. It's all they can do in some of these places to pay for the work I do at all. I don't got an extra ten grand for you.

THORBURN

All these jobs you're doing out of the kindness of your heart, huh?

DENMAN

Yeah, actually. Anyway, they ain't going to pay me until they pass inspection. They don't pay me, I can't pay you.

THORBURN

Yeah, you're breaking my heart over here.

THORBURN begins filling out the inspection report.

DENMAN

All I'm asking you for is time. You sign off the work and I'll get right back to you once the insurance check clears.

THORBURN

No credit. You know better.

THORBURN tears a sheet off his pad and hands it to DENMAN, who accepts it like it were a dead rat.

THORBURN

Get it fixed up and give me a call.

DENMAN

And what am I supposed to tell the people who live here?

THORBURN

I dunno. Get a better contractor next time, I guess.

THORBURN exits, leaving DENMAN alone in the lobby. He fumes a minute, and then crumples up the inspection report and flings it into the wall.

INT. SCENE - LABYRINTH. ROOKERY.

In a side room of the Labyrinth sit a trio of large spotted eggs, carefully positioned and secure. ELISA is turning them gently, reverently, as TALON watches from the doorway, silent. After a moment, she speaks.

ELISA

There hasn't been any trouble up here, has there?

TALON

None at all. I've got someone on watch all the time. Not even the rats get in here.

ELISA

Good. Good.

TALON

You're worrying.

ELISA

And you're not?

TALON

I know Goliath almost as well as you do. No, I'm not worried about that. He'll land on his feet.

ELISA

And the others?

TALON  
Not worried.

ELISA  
Really?

TALON  
(sighing)  
All the time. I want them back here  
soon.

ELISA  
Yeah.

TALON  
We can't fill in for them, not forever.

ELISA  
I know.

TALON  
I'm proud of what we've built here. But  
we're not them.

ELISA  
Yeah, I know that.

She has stopped, and is gently stroking the third egg.

TALON  
How do they look?

ELISA  
Fine, fine.

TALON  
Hey?

ELISA  
Yeah, what?

TALON  
They really are all right. You know  
that, right?

ELISA  
I guess so.

TALON

Come on.

ELISA gets up and goes to him.

ELISA

Yeah, you're right. But, still.

TALON

You miss him.

ELISA

I miss all of them.

TALON

Well, so do I. So does half this city,  
I think. But I bet he misses you twice  
as much.

HOLLYWOOD approaches, followed by DELILAH, a female gargoyle who  
looks uncannily like ELISA.

TALON

What's up?

HOLLYWOOD

Malibu was mean. He took two of cake.

TALON

Oh, did he?

HOLLYWOOD

Yeah. Said he do twice the work.

TALON

Tell him I'm coming down there and he'd  
better not have ate the other piece.

HOLLYWOOD

Okay.

He exits.

TALON

I'd just be happy to have more adults  
around here, some nights. What else?

DELILAH

Maisha's back.

TALON

Already?

DELILAH

Yeah. You'd better come down and talk to her.

TALON

Why's that?

DELILAH

Her contractor just got arrested.

ELISA

What?

TALON

What happened?

DELILAH

They say he was going to bribe the building inspector.

INT. SCENE - LABYRINTH. COMMON AREA.

MAISHA is talking to some of the other occupants of the Labyrinth, of which there are dozens: mostly humans, a few mutants. It is clear that living space has been in short supply recently, as beds have been cast around the common area with a few personal items surrounding them to make what passes for a private few square feet of the floor. The TV is set up at one end of the room, with "Nightwatch" playing out on it and MAGGIE and a few of the occupants (including MALIBU) seated on the floor, watching. The cake is set up on a rickety table near the center, and is mostly gone by this point. DELILAH, TALON, and ELISA enter from above, and descend into the pit of the common area. As TALON approaches MAISHA, the others part to let him in.

TALON

I know I said you would be welcome back any time, but I didn't expect you quite this soon.

MAISHA

Neither did I.

TALON

You're okay?

MAISHA

Yeah, I guess so. I was just looking forward to getting back into my place, and now...

She shrugs.

DELILAH

I'm sorry.

MAISHA

It's all right.

TALON

Is it?

MAISHA looks at him.

MAISHA

Not really.

MAGGIE

Hey, is this him?

They go over to the television set, which is showing DENMAN leaving the courthouse, trying to cover his face.

REPORTER

...including 46-year-old Tyko Denman of Long Island City, charged with improper influence of a city official--

MAISHA

Yeah. That's him.

REPORTER

--securing inspection approval of his work. Building Department officials say they continue to investigate, but that they are committed to safe buildings for New Yorkers and that bribery will not be tolerated. Denman is released on \$15,000 bond. He's due back in court March 18. His license has been suspended.

MAGGIE

Ouch. So much for swift justice.

MAISHA

Now what am I supposed to do? He's gonna cool it on bail and all that time my apartment's sitting unfixed.

ELISA

Maybe. Maybe not.

TALON

What do you think?

ELISA

I think that if the Building Department's serious, they're going to be really interested in finding the other side of that bribe.

TALON

And I think that maybe they could use a hand with that.

ELISA

Yes, I think they could.

MAGGIE

Could you use some help?

ELISA

Sure could.

MALIBU

Want to help too.

DELILAH

Yeah, count me in.

TALON

All right. Any idea where he's at now?

MAISHA

Home, I guess. I got a card from him here. Hang on.

She reaches into her back pocket, digging around. After a moment, she extracts a business card and hands it to TALON, who reads it.

TALON

All right. Let's go talk to him.

DELILAH  
I'll go get ready.

ELISA  
I'll meet you up top.

DELILAH and ELISA exit.

MAISHA  
I didn't mean to pull you in on this.  
Thank you.

TALON  
The Labyrinth takes care of its own.  
Anyway, can't have you stuck here, now,  
can we?

MAISHA  
Well, it wouldn't be so bad, in a way.  
You guys have been great.

MALIBU picks up a slice of cake and offers it to MAISHA.

MALIBU  
Maisha want cake?

MAISHA  
Yes. Thanks, Malibu.

She takes it, with a smile that is returned by MALIBU.

INT. SCENE - DENMAN'S APARTMENT.

A low-end apartment, shrouded in darkness. The door unlocks and opens, and DENMAN enters, switching on the light. He is obviously having a bad evening. He closes and locks the door behind himself, hangs up his coat, and goes in to collapse on the couch. After a moment, there is a knock on the door. DENMAN looks up, but doesn't move. There is a second knock.

DENMAN  
Go away. It's late.

ELISA (OUTSIDE)  
Mr. Denman? I'd like to speak to you.

DENMAN  
I'm not here. Come back tomorrow.



ELISA (OUTSIDE)

I think you may want to talk to me now.

DENMAN, irritated, gets up and opens the door.

DENMAN

Why?

ELISA

You let down a friend of my friend, and I'm hoping you can make it right.

DENMAN

I let down a lot of people. Not going to deal with it tonight.

ELISA

Actually, I think you will.

DENMAN

Actually, no. Goodbye.

He shuts the door. He leans his head on his arm behind the door for a moment, and then turns to go back to the couch, but runs straight into TALON, who is standing right there.

TALON

Actually, yes. Go sit down.

DENMAN is paralyzed briefly, but having no other plan, complies. TALON opens the door to let ELISA in. MALIBU and DELILAH enter from the back of the apartment. DENMAN looks around.

DENMAN

How'd you get in here?

MALIBU

Window open.

DENMAN

No, no. I keep that locked.

MALIBU

Window open now.

DENMAN looks at him, and then, realizing, drops his head into his hands.

DENMAN

Good Lord above. Haven't I got enough to contend with already?

DELILAH

You're not going to get any sympathy from us. One of our friends is homeless because of you.

DENMAN

Which friend?

TALON

Maisha Taylor.

DENMAN

Oh. Yeah, I bet she's homeless. Lot of people are.

TALON

I know. I've been taking a bunch of them in.

DENMAN

Well, aren't you nice.

TALON puts his hand onto DENMAN's stereo, and, using his innate electrical abilities, zaps it. DENMAN is startled by this, and gives him a sour look.

TALON

Not always.

DENMAN

What do you want?

DELILAH

The news says you were busted for paying bribes to the city.

DENMAN

They were right.

ELISA

So you did it?

DENMAN

Yeah. Yeah, I did.

TALON  
To whom, exactly?

DENMAN  
Why do you care?

ELISA  
Because the City's gonna want to know  
who's been taking bribes. If we can get  
that back to them--

DENMAN  
--then they can lock us both up. No  
sale. I'll take my chances on trial.

TALON  
You're going to take a fall for that  
guy?

DENMAN  
I ain't taking a fall for nobody. I  
just got enough sense left to keep my  
mouth shut, is all.

DELILAH  
Law of the streets, is that it?

DENMAN  
Kept me alive so far, so yeah.

TALON  
Well, we tried. Least it'll keep one  
shoddy builder off the market. Come on.

They start to leave him, but the fire comes into DENMAN's eyes  
at this.

DENMAN  
Hey!

He gets up and chases TALON.

DENMAN  
Hey! Get back here!

He grabs TALON by the shoulder and spins him.

DENMAN  
Who are you calling "shoddy," huh?

MALIBU

Not hit.

TALON

Well, what else would you be bribing building inspectors for?

DENMAN

Look, Catman, I put my heart into fixing up those buildings since the storm. I am one of the best builders this side of the river and I ain't never been told different!

TALON

Yeah. Lotta folks will keep their mouths shut for fifty bucks.

DENMAN punches TALON in the head. TALON takes this with equanimity. MALIBU does not.

MALIBU

Not hit!

MALIBU's eyes light up, and with a snarl he grabs DENMAN and flings him back over the couch, where he crashes into the wall and falls to the floor, leaving a dent in the wallboard. He sits up, and MALIBU goes toward him threateningly.

MALIBU

Do not hit Talon!

DELILAH

Malibu, hold up.

MALIBU

Eh?

DELILAH

What do you mean, you put your heart into it?

DENMAN

Forget it!

DELILAH

You want him to get it out of you instead?

MALIBU growls at him. DENMAN reels back.

DENMAN  
C'mon, then. Do your worst. Least it'll  
mean not living with this any more.

MALIBU  
I fix living fast.

TALON  
Living with what?

DENMAN  
What? You think these people can pay to  
get fixed up all nice and all?

TALON  
I know a lot of them can't, but what's  
your angle?

DENMAN  
Call him off and I'll talk.

DELILAH  
Malibu, settle down.

And he does. DENMAN climbs out from behind the couch.

DENMAN  
What are you, anyway? You're not the  
gargoyles, are you?

TALON  
We're friends of theirs.

DENMAN  
I bet.

ELISA  
So what is going on, then?

DENMAN  
I've been fixing up apartments since  
the storm went through. People can't  
get the insurance to pay out, so they  
call me. I go in and I do what I can  
with what I can get.

DELILAH

And they're in no position to fight,  
right?

DENMAN

Oh, come on! Of course they are.  
They're the first ones to fight it.  
They can't afford not to, and anyway, I  
wouldn't con them. Maybe I might con  
someone up in the Hamptons. They can  
afford it. They got six other houses to  
go to. I ain't gonna con nobody in the  
City, they know better. All my work for  
them is tight as a drum.

TALON

So why are you paying off the building  
inspectors, then?

DENMAN

Because they got me in a corner. If I  
don't pass inspection, I don't get  
paid. If I don't get paid, I got the  
lumber yard and all the rest riding me.  
I blow my credit, and I'm done. They  
know I can't say no to that.

MALIBU

They beat up for money?

DENMAN

Yeah, more or less.

MALIBU

They robbers.

DENMAN

Yeah, they are.

ELISA

So why haven't you told anyone at the  
City?

DENMAN

Why do you think? I talk, and he'll  
know right away who talked. I got two  
friends sitting in Riker's right now

because of him. I don't know how, but he's got ears.

DELILAH  
So do we. So tell us.

DENMAN looks at her.

DENMAN  
Seriously?

DELILAH  
Seriously.

DENMAN  
You think he's not gonna know I talked?

TALON  
Do we look like the kind of people who'd let him know that?

DENMAN looks at each of them, and then resolves himself.

DENMAN  
No, I guess not. Manny Thorburn's the guy. Buildings, Manhattan office.

ELISA  
Manny Thorburn. Got it.

DENMAN  
And you're gonna get Maisha back home this way?

TALON  
That's the idea.

DENMAN  
Hey, tell her I'm sorry, all right? She's too good to get hit by this.

DELILAH  
We will. Thanks for your help.

DENMAN  
Well, thanks for not killing me or anything. I mean, you know.

TALON

Yeah, we know. Come on.

They exit, leaving DENMAN watching after them.

INT. SCENE - TUNNELS

ELISA, TALON, MALIBU, and DELILAH are returning to the Labyrinth through the tunnels.

DELILAH

So, do we pick off Thorburn?

ELISA

Eventually, but not now. Otherwise there's a good chance he'll know Denman talked.

TALON

True enough, but I don't like the idea of him being at large.

ELISA

You think he's working more contractors over?

TALON

I'd count on it. All the building work going on around here?

DELILAH

Well, maybe we can put that to work.

TALON

How?

They make a turn in the tunnel, and enter the core of the Labyrinth.

DELILAH

Figure it this way. If he's got a bunch of people under his thumb, how likely is he to be keeping good track of them?

TALON

He's probably keeping good books on all his victims, anyway.



ELISA

Probably, but I'll bet he wouldn't be shocked to find one more.

DELILAH

Maybe one that could bait him into a trap?

TALON

Gonna need to get on his list for that.

MALIBU

Al can help get on list.

TALON

I bet he can. Al? Al!

AL, an older and rather shaggy man, appears from above.

AL

Yeah, whatcha need?

TALON

Computer working tonight?

AL

Yeah, working fine.

TALON

Need a couple permits looked up.

AL

What?

TALON

Inspector named Thorburn. Elisa and Delilah will explain.

AL

You got it, boss-cat.

DELILAH goes up to AL. ELISA holds back.

TALON

Everything all right?

ELISA

I'm just thinking. If this guy is putting the squeeze on, why'd he put two of his victims away?

TALON

Keeps them from talking.

ELISA

Does it? Jailhouse informants have got big mouths.

TALON

Maybe. Might depend on who they were.

ELISA

I should probably find out. There may be something there.

TALON

(grinning)

Still a detective even after promoting.

ELISA

Now and always.

TALON

Go get 'em, then.

She follows after DELILAH.

INT. SCENE - EYRIE BUILDING. XANATOS APARTMENT. LIVING ROOM.

The next evening. ALEXANDER XANATOS, a teenaged human with red hair, sits in a chair, feet up on the coffee table. Across from him sits PUCK, fingers tented in front of him, staring him down. ALEXANDER gestures in the air, and a glowing orb appears in his hand. After a moment, he clenches his hand, extinguishing it. He gestures again, and the glowing orb reappears. PUCK sighs.

PUCK

If that is all you plan to do with your time, I fail to see how you are going to advance your studies.

ALEXANDER

Well, that makes two of us.

PUCK

A child of Lord Oberon is capable of so much more than a parlor trick like that.

ALEXANDER

It's a good trick.

PUCK

That's as may be. You had that one down when you were three years old.

ALEXANDER

Yeah.

DAVID XANATOS enters. He watches ALEXANDER for one cycle of lighting and extinguishing the orb before speaking.

DAVID

Break time?

ALEXANDER

Something like that.

PUCK

For two hours.

DAVID

Is that right.

ALEXANDER

Something like that.

DAVID

Alexander?

ALEXANDER continues lighting and extinguishing the orb, not looking at DAVID.

DAVID

Do I need to tell you about opportunities again?

ALEXANDER

No, you don't. I know about that already.

DAVID

And you think this is making the most of what you have available to you?

ALEXANDER

Nope.

DAVID

And you're fine with that?

ALEXANDER

Yep.

PUCK exhales sharply, and stands up. He makes a couple of gestures and transforms into OWEN BURNETT. He picks up an earpiece from the side table and puts it on.

OWEN

It's no use, Mr. Xanatos. I think training time is over for tonight.

DAVID

Maybe so.

ALEXANDER

Great, it's unanimous.

ALEXANDER stands up. There is a chirp from OWEN's earpiece, and he touches it and turns away.

DAVID

Hold on.

ALEXANDER

Dad, I have other things I need to do tonight.

DAVID

More important than your future?

ALEXANDER

They are my future.

OWEN

Just a moment. Sir? Captain Maza is here to speak with you.

DAVID

Oh, is she? Send her in.

OWEN

Yes, sir.

(into the earpiece)

Send her up. Right.

OWEN touches the earpiece and then goes to DAVID's side.

DAVID

You have a great future ahead of you.  
You know that.

ALEXANDER

Yes, of course I do. I just want it to  
be my future. Not yours.

DAVID

Now, that hurts, Alex.

ELISA enters.

ALEXANDER

I doubt that. It's not like real estate  
investing is such a great contribution  
to humanity, anyway. Good evening.

DAVID

Good evening, Captain. Any word from  
our gargoyles?

ELISA

No, Mr. Xanatos. There is not.

DAVID

Hm. Pity. I was hoping they'd come  
home. Will you excuse us, Alexander?

ALEXANDER

You wanted me to learn a few things to-  
ward my future, right?

DAVID

Alex.

ALEXANDER

Father.

DAVID

All right. Suit yourself. How can I help you, Captain?

ELISA

I wanted to ask you about Manny Thorburn.

DAVID

Well, you can ask. I don't think I can tell you much because I've never heard of him.

ELISA

How about Avalon Realty Company?

DAVID

One of my subsidiaries.

ELISA

They've been pretty busy fixing up apartment buildings?

DAVID

Everyone has. There was a storm, you know that, Captain?

ELISA

You get very involved in their affairs at all?

DAVID

No. Strictly arms-length, strictly an investment for me. Is there something wrong with that?

ALEXANDER

Plenty.

ELISA

Manny Thorburn's an inspector with the city. He seems to have been looking at a lot of work done on behalf of Avalon Realty.

DAVID

Well, that should be no surprise. It's not exactly a ma-and-pa operation. It has--what is it now, about sixty?

OWEN

Sixty-three.

DAVID

Sixty-three residential buildings all around Manhattan. All of them need work.

ELISA

They seem to have been picking up a lot of new buildings recently, too.

DAVID

Of course. Plenty of buildings out there needing work. Plenty of good bargains to be had. That's how real estate works. Seek, and you will find, after all.

ALEXANDER

Not always.

ELISA

Well, I'd imagine you were getting good bargains. The records I'm seeing say about twenty of them were failing inspection until you turned up.

DAVID

Well, I'm proud to be able to help improve the quality of housing in New York City. Is that such a crime?

ALEXANDER

When you're doing it, I'm not so sure.

OWEN puts a finger to his lips, shushing ALEXANDER.

ELISA

Not a crime, exactly. But I wonder, how many carryover tenants are you taking with these buildings?

DAVID

Carryover tenants? What do you mean?

ELISA

Are those buildings coming to you with tenants, or empty?

DAVID

Well, now, you know, when they have code violations, it's not like anyone should be living in them, after all.

ELISA

No, I suppose not.

DAVID

Was there something else?

ELISA

Do you know a Tyko Denman by any chance?

DAVID

Yes, I do. He was arrested for bribery the other night, wasn't he?

ELISA

Yes, he was.

DAVID

Is that what this is about, Captain? I didn't know you'd switched to investigating public corruption.

ELISA

Well, it's just funny that a bunch of this Denman's last few jobs were at buildings that Avalon just bought.

DAVID

He must do good work. Shame he thought he had to bribe his way up.

ELISA

Yeah, it is. Thanks for your time.

She turns to leave.

ELISA

By the way, place looks nice. You had work done here recently?

OWEN

Mr. Xanatos has work being done here all the time.



ELISA

Oh? Like what?

OWEN

I'd be glad to get you a listing, Captain. I'm sure all of the permits were in order.

ELISA

I'm sure they were. I just notice that Thorburn's been inspecting a lot of work here, too. Good night.

OWEN

I will show you out.

ALEXANDER

No, I'm going out anyway. I'll show you out, Captain.

ELISA

Thank you.

DAVID

Now, just a minute. Don't you have some studying to do?

ALEXANDER looks at him firmly, gestures in the air, produces a glowing orb, and flips it at DAVID's feet, where it pops into a burst of flame. DAVID jumps back.

ALEXANDER

Nope. All done.

ELISA and ALEXANDER exit.

OWEN

The boy is sharp, sir.

DAVID

They make a good pair, then. Keep an eye on them.

OWEN

Yes, sir.

INT. SCENE - EYRIE BUILDING. XANATOS APARTMENT. FOYER.

ALEXANDER and ELISA enter. ALEXANDER gets his coat as they speak.

ALEXANDER

Dad's a little too shrewd for bribery,  
if that's where you're going.

ELISA

No, I know that. I don't put it past  
him, but this feels too raw on its own  
to be that simple.

ALEXANDER

Anything I can do to help?

ELISA

Not at the moment, no. Has there really  
been a lot of work going on around  
here?

ALEXANDER

Other than up in the castle, no. All of  
that's just been masonry stuff, setting  
some of the blocks back where they'd  
blown out.

ELISA

How is it up there?

ALEXANDER

Not that bad, actually. It must've seen  
a lot worse in a thousand years. You  
headed to the Labyrinth?

ELISA

Yeah, you?

ALEXANDER

That was my plan. Come on, I'll walk  
you over.

They exit.

INT. SCENE - MAISHA'S APARTMENT. LIVING ROOM. (NIGHT)

The apartment is dark and empty, lit only from the street lights  
coming through the window. The apartment is freshly painted and

lightly decorated, but most of the furniture is missing except for a chair or two. There is a click at the door, and then it opens. MAISHA enters, with a flashlight. She pushes the door closed behind her.

She begins to explore the apartment. It is quite familiar to her, and at the same time very strange in its fresh decoration. She makes her way around the living room, stepping carefully around a sofa and a coffee table that are no longer there but loom large in her muscle memory. She approaches a bookshelf and scans it with the light. Not seeing what she wants, she reaches up to the shelf above and begins feeling along it.

From behind her, the door squeaks open. MAISHA suddenly pulls down her hand and turns the light on the door. THORBURN enters.

MAISHA

Oh!

THORBURN

Hello again, ma'am. Come for a preview?

MAISHA

Something like that.

THORBURN

You know, the City code says this is all off limits until the inspection is passed. You shouldn't be here.

MAISHA

It's my apartment.

THORBURN

That may be. Nevertheless, the law's the law.

MAISHA

Come on. I can't help it if I got a contractor who's a crook.

THORBURN

No, I suppose you can't. You can help it that it's so dark in here.

THORBURN switches the lights on.

THORBURN

There. Isn't that better?

MAISHA

I suppose.

THORBURN

Why were you creeping around in here with the lights off, anyway? It looks kind of suspicious.

MAISHA

Why are you? Never heard of nobody getting a building inspection in the middle of the night.

THORBURN

Oh, you know. Just trying to keep an eye on things. Watching out for trouble.

MAISHA

What is it that you want?

THORBURN

I just want to be sure this building is fit for human occupancy. You know, just doing my job. At night. On overtime hours. You know?

MAISHA

No.

THORBURN

Let me put it to you straight. You want to move in. You need the building approved before you can move in. Now, I just happen to be here now. I could sign it off right now and you could spend the rest of the night here, all legal.

MAISHA

Yeah?

THORBURN

I'd have to collect the overtime charges, you understand. But, you know, I'm also not all that thrilled to spend the whole night here, you know, looking in every nook and cranny.

MAISHA

And what are the overtime charges?

THORBURN

Oh, you know, let's see: twenty by seventy, two bedrooms...say about twenty-five hundred?

MAISHA

Huh! Think I got that around here?

THORBURN

Well, I mean, I'd expect you got your valuables out of the apartment after the storm. But I do think you got it somewhere. Them, somewhere. Maybe you offer me something of comparable value?

MAISHA

And if I don't?

THORBURN

Well, you know. I could also just point out to the cops that you were in an off-limits building. That I just happened to go past the building and saw a light upstairs. Might give you some extra time to think your priorities over.

MAISHA

You're nuts. They'd never bust me for being in my own apartment.

THORBURN

Maybe. Maybe they'd make the most natural connection between you and your contractor friend. A word or two in the right places...

MAISHA

I'll need a little time.

THORBURN

No problem. Tell you what. Come back here tomorrow evening. Pay the charges and I'll sign you right off. Cash.

MAISHA

I'll be here.

THORBURN

Great. I look forward to getting you home. Have a good night.

He retreats through the door and is gone. MAISHA clicks off her flashlight, turns, and begins to search the bookshelves more vigorously.

INT. SCENE - LABYRINTH. COMMON AREA.

ELISA and ALEXANDER enter the common area. It is teeming, as ever, with people, mutants, and fellow travelers. They work their way through the crowd.

ALEXANDER

But nothing more since then?

ELISA

No, just that they were okay and had found footing somewhere.

ALEXANDER

Half of them, anyway.

ELISA

I know. Any insight?

ALEXANDER

When they're nearby I can usually pick them up pretty well. I'm just not strong enough yet to be able to find them out without knowing where they are. I've been working on it.

ELISA

Puck won't help?

ALEXANDER

No, he has his own lesson plan, or so he says.

INT. SCENE - LABYRINTH. GALLERY.

Up on a gallery that circles the common area of the Labyrinth stands a young man of 15, crouched down and watching alertly from the shadows. This is MICHAEL MAZA. He focuses on ALEXANDER as he and ELISA work their way through the crowd.

ALEXANDER

It could be I don't have that power at all. I just don't know.

ELISA

Maybe.

ALEXANDER

For what it's worth, I don't sense they're gone. It's hard to describe. It's like hearing a background hum. You'd notice it if it were gone.

ALEXANDER and ELISA have moved into a clear area from MICHAEL's vantage, and he stands up.

ALEXANDER

I can focus, and once in a while I think I'm able to pick up Katana or Angela, or both of them, just for a moment. But it's never enough--

MICHAEL

Hey, mystic! Catch!

MICHAEL doubles his hands, aims them at ALEXANDER, and lets fly a brilliant electric arc, which shoots out toward him. ELISA dives for cover. ALEXANDER winds up and pitches a glowing orb toward the arc. The arc and the orb meet and destroy each other with a loud boom and a brilliant flash. The bystanders are startled, but also delighted. ALEXANDER looks up at MICHAEL, grinning widely.

ALEXANDER

(cheesily dramatic)

Your powers are no match for mine, dynamo!

MICHAEL

(same)

Curse you, wizard! You win this round!

(normal)

Hang on, I'll come down.

He turns and begins toward the ladder down. From the crowd, however, TALON comes forward, eyes lit. He points at MICHAEL, who winces and stops.

TALON

Michael! We have talked about this!

MICHAEL

Aw, Dad, it was just a little light show, that's all.

TALON

You know better than that! Not in the commons!

MICHAEL

Sorry.

TALON looks toward ALEXANDER and points at him.

ALEXANDER

Sorry, Mr. Maza.

TALON

All right, then.

TALON's eyes go dark again, and he begins working his way down toward ALEXANDER and ELISA as MICHAEL continues climbing down.

INT. SCENE - LABYRINTH. COMMON AREA.

ALEXANDER, meanwhile, helps ELISA back to her feet.

ELISA

Your aim is improving.

ALEXANDER

It better be. So's his.

TALON approaches.

TALON

Everyone all right?

There is a general mumble in the affirmative.

TALON

You may become only the third or fourth person to be ejected from the Labyrinth if you keep encouraging that kind of nonsense. You get that, right?



ALEXANDER

Well, father says I'm destined for greatness.

TALON

It's not good company you'd be keeping.

ALEXANDER

No, you're right. Everything else all right?

TALON

As much as ever. Still crowded, still hopeful.

ALEXANDER

Good to hear. The blankets got to you?

TALON

They did, thanks, all spoken for as soon as they arrived.

MICHAEL approaches ALEXANDER. They clasp arms.

MICHAEL

Good to have you here.

ALEXANDER

Good to be here. I was just telling Elisa your aim's improving.

MICHAEL

Thanks. Been working on it a lot recently.

ALEXANDER

Oh, yeah? That makes one of us.

MICHAEL

Puck's been stalling on you again.

ALEXANDER

Oh, it's awful. It's all "focus, focus, focus," and it's just sitting there doing nothing for four hours.

MICHAEL

Come on, we'll go up the tunnels.

ALEXANDER

Now you're talking.

TALON

Be back before eleven.

ALEXANDER puts his arm around MICHAEL, and the two of them begin leaving toward the tunnels, when MAISHA comes into the Labyrinth, looking very distraught. ALEXANDER stops and looks at her.

TALON

Maisha? What's wrong?

MAISHA

That inspector came back.

ELISA

What, this late at night?

MAISHA

Yeah. Said I need twenty-five hundred in "overtime fees" or he's gonna get me locked up.

TALON

Overtime for what, exactly?

ELISA

Shakedown. That's bold.

TALON

That kind of boldness we can do without. What terms?

MAISHA

Cash on the table, tomorrow night. Or "something of equivalent value," like I got that.

TALON

And you're meeting him there?

MAISHA

Yeah, that's the idea.

MICHAEL

Not alone, you're not.

ALEXANDER

Right.

TALON looks at MICHAEL firmly. MICHAEL looks back at him.

MICHAEL

Dad, don't start.

TALON

Who's starting? I think it's a good idea.

ELISA

Really?

TALON

Yeah. I mean, Maisha's got to get the money from someone. Maybe a cousin who just happens to come along for the ride?

MICHAEL

With two or three others for backup.

TALON

Now you're thinking.

ALEXANDER

I should be able to get you some funds to bait the trap. Hold on.

ALEXANDER focuses on one hand. After a moment, a small dove appears. He tosses it into the air, and it flies around the room rapidly, then alights on a cloaked figure toward the back. He shoos it off, but it immediately returns.

ALEXANDER

There you are.

The cloaked figure uncovers his head; it is OWEN. The dove fizzles and disappears.

OWEN

Yes, Master Xanatos.

ALEXANDER

You know what we need?

OWEN

Quite well. It will be ready as soon as the banks open.

ALEXANDER

Thanks, Owen. What else?

MICHAEL

Should be plenty to catch one guy, right?

TALON

I agree. Good plan.

MICHAEL

Let's go.

ALEXANDER and MAISHA remain, as the others disperse. He looks at her.

ALEXANDER

You didn't find it?

MAISHA shakes her head. ALEXANDER sighs, disappointed.

INT. SCENE - MAISHA'S APARTMENT. LIVING ROOM.

MAISHA and MICHAEL stand in the center of the darkened living room, waiting. MICHAEL has a thick envelope in one hand.

MAISHA

This is going to work, right?

MICHAEL

Of course. I'm sure of it. No way it can--

TALON (OFF)

Don't say that.

MICHAEL

I won't jinx it, Dad.

TALON (OFF)

Make sure of it. He's coming.

MICHAEL

Everyone ready?

There is no answer. A moment later, the door opens. THORBURN comes in, carrying an aluminum contractor's clipboard, with a satchel over his shoulder.

THORBURN

Good evening. You have company; I don't think we've met.

MAISHA

No. Mr. Thorburn, this is my cousin, Adam. He's helping get the funds together to pay for your time.

MICHAEL

How do you do?

THORBURN

Fine, fine. Everything's ready?

MAISHA

Everything's fine.

MICHAEL hands the thick envelope to THORBURN, who briefly inspects it.

THORBURN

Good. Fine. Well, let's have a look here.

He switches the lights on. There is nobody else in the room.

MAISHA

Is that really necessary?

THORBURN

It is sort of the point of an inspection, isn't it? Now, let's see, here.

THORBURN begins to go around the room. He opens the door to the hall closet cautiously and looks in, finding nobody. Closing the door, he continues to circle around.

THORBURN

Nothing behind door number one.

MICHAEL

What's this about?

THORBURN

I think you know. Just stay put there.

His eyes wander across the doorway back to the back hall, and fix on the doorway. He reaches into his satchel and draws out a fat orange pistol.

THORBURN

What a shame, that paint job's already been scratched. Whoever's back there, you can come out.

There is no response.

THORBURN

Well, if that's your attitude, I can just blast these two and draw you out.

MICHAEL

That's a flare gun.

THORBURN

Yes. You're very smart. Also very effective for torching wise guys. Come on!

A door squeaks in the back of the apartment, and ELISA steps out, gun drawn.

THORBURN

Aha, knew it. Come in here.

ELISA

I don't think so. Police. Put that down.

THORBURN

Oh, police, huh? I'm'a quaking. Get in here, deputy.

ELISA

You think you're going to win a shootout with a flare gun?

THORBURN

Yeah. You'll find out why in a minute. Okay, that's you. Now, who else is back there?

Again, no response.

THORBURN

Now, you're not going to have come out of there on your own unless someone was covering you. I am not that stupid, so please don't treat me as though I were. Who else?

ELISA moves over to be with MAISHA and MICHAEL. THORBURN covers all three of them with his gun. There isn't any other reply to his question.

THORBURN

Setting up for a bust, is that it? This have anything to do with that Drummond or Dynamon or whoever he was? You guys friends of his, or what?

MICHAEL

No.

MAISHA

Friends of mine.

THORBURN

Touching.

ELISA

So now what? You're going to just take off? Or are you waiting for your accomplice to show up?

THORBURN

I'm taking off. That's all you need to know.

There is a faint crackle from behind the group: MICHAEL's hands are lighting up.

MICHAEL

That's what you think.

TALON (OFF)

Michael, stop!

THORBURN turns the gun on the doorway as TALON approaches. He is somewhat startled by TALON's appearance, but doesn't drop his gun at all.

TALON

I smell gas.

THORBURN

Oh, do you? You know, I guess I didn't expect to find a mutant in here, but it doesn't matter much, and anyway you've saved me a few minutes of explanation. Get over there.

TALON's eyes light and he growls at THORBURN.

THORBURN

I mean it. Gas plus flare gun. Even you got to know what that equals.

TALON, reluctantly, joins the others.

THORBURN

I guess I hoped too much to pull off one more gig. Should have cut it after Denman got busted. Oh well, the choices we make and all.

MAISHA

You can't be serious about this.

THORBURN

Very.

MICHAEL

What, you're gonna blow yourself up for \$2,500?

THORBURN

No! \$2,500? That's just bait. For you. I don't need that. I got seventy-five grand locked up and waiting for me out there. I walk out of here and that's just gravy.

TALON

But the building's full of gas! You can't shoot us or you lose it all.

THORBURN

Maybe I do. Then my kid gets it. It'll put her through school. Get her someplace good. 'Course, I got no plan to



not be there for her to walk across the stage, you get me?

He starts to move toward the back of the apartment. MICHAEL begins to tense up.

THORBURN

Now, you all are going to wait right here, or maybe you are gonna go look for where all that gas is coming from. I don't really care. Long as you don't follow me out, I got no reason to shoot. If I don't shoot, nothing goes up. You get me?

MICHAEL suddenly bounds across the floor and dives for THORBURN. He whips his clipboard around and catches him square on the side of his head, knocking MICHAEL out. He tumbles to the floor. TALON's temper flares.

TALON

Michael!

THORBURN

That's one warning. Don't try anything else.

He backs out of the room. TALON rushes to MICHAEL's side to check on him. Then, enraged, he starts to pursue THORBURN. ELISA stops him.

ELISA

Derek!

TALON

Let go, I can still get him!

ELISA

One jolt and we go up.

TALON

I'm not going to jolt anyone! Let go of me, Elisa!

He breaks free, and makes for the back of the apartment.

MAISHA

How can I help?

ELISA

Help me get him out.

They pick MICHAEL up by the shoulders and begin to drag him out of the apartment.

EXT. SCENE - MAISHA'S APARTMENT. FIRE ESCAPE. (NIGHT)

THORBURN bounds out of the window and onto the fire escape, and begins to descend rapidly. TALON is right behind him, and sticks his head out, watching him descend. Above him, a shadow extends from the parapet: it is MAGGIE.

MAGGIE

What's happened? I smell gas.

TALON

Maggie! That guy clobbered Michael!

MAGGIE

What? Where?

TALON points. MAGGIE's eyes light up, and she roars as she leaps off into the air, spreading her wings and descending after him. TALON takes to the fire escape and leaps off into the air behind her.

EXT. SCENE - STREET. (NIGHT)

THORBURN runs along down the street. In the air above him, MAGGIE and TALON are roaring down in hot pursuit. THORBURN turns and aims, but MAGGIE is right there on top of him, knocking him back. They wrestle briefly on the ground. TALON drops beside them and gets hold of THORBURN's gun arm, struggling for control.

MAGGIE

Get off!

TALON releases THORBURN, and MAGGIE fires a jolt of electricity into him. He yelps. His gun arm droops, but comes back up. TALON grasps it and pushes it up, but THORBURN is able to fire. There is a pop as the flare arcs up from the gun. TALON turns to watch it.

TALON

No!

The flare arcs up through the air and toward the apartments, its fuse leaving a sparking trail behind it. As it reaches its apex, a bright ball flies up into it from the ground. There is a brilliant explosion, well clear of the building. THORBURN, who had been watching the flare go up toward the building, flops back, defeated. MAGGIE and TALON hold him down, relieved. ALEXANDER runs over to the group.

ALEXANDER

This the guy?

TALON

This is him. Good shooting.

ALEXANDER

Told you my aim was improving. How's Michael?

TALON

Down.

MAGGIE

Have you got him?

TALON looks down at THORBURN. He is totally exhausted and defeated, lying in the street, eyes shut and panting.

TALON

Yeah, I think so.

MAGGIE

Good. I'm going to check on my son, who'd better be fine or we're going to have a more serious discussion.

THORBURN lies there, listless. He weeps slightly. TALON reaches into his pocket and pulls out the envelope.

TALON

Hold on. Here.

ALEXANDER takes the envelope.

ALEXANDER

Thanks.

In the distance, ELISA and MAISHA are dragging MICHAEL out of the building. MAGGIE rushes over to them, followed by ALEXANDER.

At a different part of the street, within sight, OWEN stands in his cloak, watching. DAVID walks up to his side.

DAVID

Well?

OWEN

A clean takedown. No need to get involved.

DAVID

Good. And it will stick?

OWEN

You would need to speak to the lawyers about that, sir. I believe it will.

DAVID

And no property damage.

OWEN

Well, then, Avalon Realty's sixty-fourth building should be ready for tenants very soon.

DAVID

Any sign of the other thing?

OWEN

None, sir. We checked thoroughly. It's not there.

DAVID

Hm. Shame. Oh well, can't win them all. At least most of us are going home tonight. Call the police, would you please? And make sure he ends up in the same cell as those other builders. They should have plenty to discuss.

OWEN

At once.

OWEN pulls out a phone from under the cloak and dials as DAVID leaves.

INT. SCENE - ELISA'S APARTMENT. LIVING ROOM.

ELISA unlocks the door, comes in, and hangs up her coat. She begins to unstrap the holster from her chest, but something catches her eye: it is the light on her answering machine, blinking at her. She stops removing the holster, and regards this briefly as an alien thing: it has been three months since her phone was working. The mood passes, and she nearly leaps for the machine, jamming her thumb down on the playback button. The machine beeps, and messages begin to play. The first voice is an excited female one:

VOICE 1

We've been trying to reach you about  
your car's extended warranty--

ELISA

Figures.

She stabs her thumb on the "Delete" button, cutting the message short with a beep. The next message begins, a very professional male voice, cutting in mid-sentence:

VOICE 2

--vice has now been restored. You  
should now be able to make and receive  
calls as normal. We would like to apol-  
ogize again for the extended duration  
that your telephone service was inter-  
rupted. We know you rely upon--

ELISA

Old news already, guys.

She stabs her thumb down on the "Delete" button, cutting the message short with a beep again. The next message begins, but the speaker takes a deep breath before speaking:

GOLIATH

Hello, Elisa. This is Goliath.

ELISA sits up sharply, astonished. This is exactly the voice she has waited six months to hear.

=END=