

The Godzilla Heist

‘He’s a right little slag for it,’ said Hugo taking a hit from his vaporiser, ‘rooting for druggy-druggy truffles like a little druggy piglet.’

‘What a filthy creature!’ cackled Crisis.

‘Yes! I found it!’ Cheung gibbered from beneath the table.

‘That ain’t speed, Alvin,’ drawled Lightning, ‘that’s carpet cleaner.’

The woefully inebriated chemist climbed to his feet and scraped a distressing colony of fluff and cigarette ash from his pale spotted tongue with a laminated plastic drinks coaster, glugged a syrupy pink cocktail and stuffed another smouldering Lucky Strike in his mouth.

‘It *tastes* like speed,’ he said, shrugging.

‘Well, you’re the professional, you know best,’ said Crisis raising his glass. ‘Here’s to us, my friends,’ he said, all teeth and movie poster cool. ‘We’ve actually survived long enough to be famous.’

The UHC had reached the gritty sediment at the bottom of a Bacchanal that began in the sun-dappled Atrium of the Infinite Combine Gdansk building two days prior. Crisis, Lightning and Hugo were shifting uncomfortably on oversize couches and kicking their legs like restless toddlers while waiting for their hosts. Weak spring sunlight filtered through towering acres of smoky glass, silhouetting staff scurrying between workstations and offices like the occupants of an ADHD ant farm.

‘This place is *medieval*,’ said Hugo taking a swig from an oversize silver hipflask.

‘This is an example of what was once called *working*, dear Hugo,’ said Crisis. ‘A torment long consigned to history in the FER, but fairly commonplace in other less-developed parts of the world.’

'Here they come,' said Lightning. He jumped down from his seat and preened his hair. 'Look sexy.'

A Slavic man and Scandinavian woman in matching gunmetal silk and crisp white linen strode across the atrium floor, the man extending a hairy hand to be shaken twenty feet before he reached them. 'Gentlemen!' he said enthusiastically, his smile impossibly wide and pearly, 'I'm Dmitri Bogdanov, Assistant Senior Human Resources Advisor. This,' he indicated his companion, 'is my boss, Agneta Sundqwist, HR and Engagement Business Partner. We're very excited to meet you! We're both big, big fans!'

'Uh-huh,' said Crisis, 'sure you are, big fans, never miss a gig, like family, whatever. Listen, my poor asshole is very angry with you for the unfriendly probing it received at the border from some of your more adventurous immigration officers. The emotionally sensitive Dr Cheung is locked in his hotel room scrubbing himself in the shower. Your offer had better be uncommonly generous or we litigate.'

'I'm sure we can be competitive...' said Dmitri with an oily grin.

'*Competitive* doesn't salve a bruised rectum, buddy,' said Crisis. 'C'mon boys, let's go.'

Dmitri's smile froze hard. Agneta stepped in. 'Double,' she purred. 'I can offer you double your fee.'

Crisis turned to the UHC. 'Will double repair your dignity?' he asked. Lightning shrugged. Hugo nodded. 'Okay lady,' he said, turning back to Agneta, 'we'll play your staff party, but our rider is going to be *ludicrous*.'

'Nothing my department can't cover,' replied Agneta with a thin smile. 'We booked Comsat Raiders last year and they negotiated much harder than you.'

'Ass-fucked again,' chuckled Lightning, slapping a scowling Crisis on the back. 'I think you're beginning to like it.'

'Shall we arrange a bank transfer for the fee?' asked Dmitri. The Ukrainian looked smug.

'What are the alternatives?' asked Crisis.

Dmitri blinked. 'Well, I suppose there's the option of *cash*...' he replied uncertainly.

Crisis stared hard at him. 'Seriously, you have *cash* here? *Cash money*?'

'Shit man,' Lightning muttered, 'you've found his Kryptonite.'

'I want the whole fee in paper currency!' said Crisis, eyes wide with excitement. 'Low denomination notes!'

'What's got into him?' Hugo asked Lightning, bemused.

'You ever handled a fat roll of bills, dude?' Lightning replied.

'The FER hasn't used physical money since before I was born.'

'You wait,' said Lightning. 'You'll like it.'

The UHC stood in a semicircle, looking down reverently at Crisis' hotel bed.

'Now that is a thing of beauty,' whispered Lightning.

Sat open on the blood red coverlet was a plain aluminium case packed with banknotes arranged in tidy denominational bricks. Crisis leaned forward and sniffed them appreciatively.

'There's an awful lot,' said Hugo. 'What are we supposed to do with it all?'

'Spend it,' said Cheung, eyes glassy with excitement. 'Spend it, then go get some more and spend that! Stuff it in stripper's thongs while eating dolphin sashimi wrapped in platinum leaf and doing raw cocaine off the naked ass of a desperate minor celebrity!'

'Your man here speaks wisely,' said Crisis. 'You can trust him, he's a doctor.'

'Well, as we're richer than Croesus I'm opening the fucking minibar,' said lightning.

Crisis grinned his Lucifer grin and hefted a block of notes. 'Why don't you take Hugo out and book us a table somewhere to celebrate, something befitting our new status as idle dilettantes. Surprise me.'

It had started as a comparatively civilised gathering. Always needing an audience the UHC assembled some of the FER's most committed sybarites below the vast crystal chandelier of the Gdansk Hilton ballroom: Poppy Hiroshima and her foxy sister Holly Nagasaki, Sally Brown (legendary music journalist and voracious cougar), Gregor (Sally's smug cameraman and perpetrator/victim of a ludicrous moustache), Space Platform, The Pocket Money Collective, the half of Comsat Raiders who didn't hate them, the Cornelius Brothers (who had called a literal ceasefire for the evening), and Big Lava, a Samoan gridcloud specialist who preferred to manifest holographically. Mick, their roadie/bodyguard/avuncular-font-of-folksy-wisdom stated he had better things to do than watch them eat too much and get wasted. Besides, he didn't like fancy restaurants (or Gdansk for that matter).

It turned out to be a wise choice. During the following forty-eight hours he would have had to witness one marriage, two divorces, three hundred and sixty-four orgasms (some arrived at in a solitary fashion, some in astounding multiples), several hundred rambling miles, two traffic accidents, a coma, a delightful visit to a modern sculpture exhibition, and a border incident involving a cargo dirigible being shot down over Gdansk by overzealous border guards armed with shoulder-mounted missile launchers. Finally the survivors had lurched into the cocktail lounge of an Old Town nightclub proclaiming itself 'Das Algarve'; a shabby all night hostess bar equipped with a sticky laminate dance floor populated by psychotically drunk out-of-town businessmen and kids too young to be served anyplace else. Crisis had scanned the shambling crowd, the pinched and tired faux-bunny girls, the pink neon, and declared they had found the Promised Land. He immediately ordered a huge stash of amphetamines to ensure maximum drinking potential and drunkenly tipped the lot onto the dirty red shag pile as soon as they had arrived. Cheung, distraught at the loss, dived after the gear and spent a demeaning ten minutes tonguing carpet.

'I feel a little queer,' he said, his jaw churning like a bulldog chewing a wasp. 'I think I might be coming up.' A Sudden greasy speed/upholstery cleaner rush hit Cheung's nervous system. Without preamble he burst into a frenzy of poor quality Kung-fu movie moves, randomly scattering cocktail glasses and plastic plants with his epileptic martial arts parody.

'*Tong tong tong!*' he yelled, eyes feverish. 'Tiger whips his tail! Dragon soars over the river!' He bounded about the lounge like a floor gymnast at the Special Olympics, his thin body contorting perilously. His explosion of blocks and strikes battered a tray from the hands of a hostess already inching towards a nervous breakdown and sent it spinning across the dance floor like an obese shuriken. It struck the knees of a would-be gigolo who fell gracelessly to the floor like a turd hitting tarmac.

'You're like Jackie Chan!' bellowed Crisis.

'I met Jackie Chan once,' drawled Gregor. He smoothed his luxuriant moustaches while struggling to simultaneously lift his cocktail and catch the multiple drinking straws in his mouth.

'Horseshit,' snorted Lightning. 'Jackie Chan was dead before you were born.'

'Haven't we lost this moustachioed fucktard yet?' growled Crisis.

'We should use our martial arts to right wrongs!' dribbled Cheung, attempting an incompetent wristlock on a panicking glass collector.

'Where's that skinny blonde chick gone?' said Lightning, absently picking his nose and flicking the dry mucous at Gregor's head.

'Sally? She's on her honeymoon. She married Mischa, remember?' said Crisis, belching wetly. 'She said she'd catch us up before we left for Milano.'

'Mischa's gay!' laughed Hugo.

'True,' said Crisis, 'but he's dreamed of a white wedding just as long as I've known him.'

'How much cash have we got left?' slurred Lightning.

‘Um, about, ah... three hundred whatever-these-are’s’ said Crisis.

‘Fuck,’ said Lightning. ‘That won’t even pay the bar bill.’

‘How did we run out?’ said Silicon.

‘It’s my fault,’ said Crisis ruefully. ‘I should never have indulged Cheung when he asked to fill an indoor swimming pool full of tweaking thousand-euro hookers.’

‘We should rob a bank!’ shrieked Cheung. ‘Yes! Rob a bank like Robin Hood, with nothing but our Water Lotus Fist! Like Wong Fei Hung! Like Mao Tse Tung! We would be *heroes!*’ He punctuated his mission statement with a wobbly axe kick to the drinks table, sending a cloud of cigarette butts and plastic cocktail glasses into the air.

Crisis brushed ash and umbrellas from his recently purchased, hand-stitched black leather bell bottoms and made a savage lunge for Cheung’s midriff, wrestling him to the ground and attempting to suffocate him with his own Berkeley-U track team sweatshirt. They began an undignified wrestling match on the filthy carpet, their hair matted and sticky with spilled drink and ash.

‘Y’know,’ Hugo mused, lifting a jug of booze to his lips with exaggerated care, ‘that’s not actually a bad idea. What do you reckon, Crisis?’

‘Honestly?’ grunted Crisis, pinching Cheung’s nose shut and sticking a finger in his ear. ‘I think it’s a stupid plan, and whoever dreamt it up is a fucker with no respect for expensive bespoke leather garments!’

‘He’s so *hostile*,’ said Gregor.

‘Shut up,’ snarled Lightning.

Hugo waved a sheaf of notes at the bar staff. ‘Don’t be so negative, mate,’ he said as a hostess with a cracked face lined fresh jugs of fruity alcohol on the blurry plastic table top. ‘It sounds wicked to me! We could all dress up like Shaolin Monks, or, wait for it...’ he paused dramatically, ‘*big fucking rubber turtles!*’ Hugo stood up, gesticulating wildly with his cocktail

jug and slopping booze over the nasty carpet. 'We dress in big rubber turtle costumes so that no-one knows it's us!'

'It's a stupid idea,' snarled Crisis, spitting in fury as Cheung pulled his hair.

'Why?' whined Hugo.

'Because it's 0100,' snarled Crisis, 'the banks closed hours ago!' He punched Cheung in the belly with a bark of prehistoric triumph. 'Besides,' he gasped, 'this little bastard's the only one who knows any Kung-fu.'

'Yeah, right,' Lightning muttered into his whisky. 'He was born in Oakland, not on Wudan.'

'Ah!' smiled Hugo, 'But the ATM won't know that, will it? We just have to *look* like we know what we're doing! We hold our arms like Cheung and we'll be alright, right?' Hugo whooped and attempted an unconvincing guard someplace between Bruce Lee and Elvis. 'So, you bastard!' he dribbled in an unconvincing mid-Atlantic accent, 'you killed my master... And burned... My temple!'

Cheung managed to manipulate Crisis' arm behind his back and pressed his face into the nasty carpet. 'I hate you, Alvin' he mumbled, gagging at the smell.

'Shaolin! Shaolin! Home of the martial arts!' crowed Cheung tunelessly. 'Oh what a charming place!'

Lightning stood, whipped a beer from a neighbouring table with a cobra-like hand, chambered his leg dramatically and kicked Cheung in the base of the skull. Cheung's eyes defocused. He abandoned his hold on Crisis with a phlegmy croak and then collapsed in further agony as the livid VJ rocketed an uppercut to his balls.

Crisis spat and staggering upright. 'Thanks man,' he said to Lightning as he shook out his lapels. 'I though he had me there.'

Lightning shrugged nonchalantly and toasted Crisis with his stolen beer. 'My pleasure, boss,' he said.

‘So,’ chirruped Hugo brightly, ‘where do we get some big rubber Godzilla costumes from?’

‘You lost me at turtles,’ grumbled Crisis, picking through his crushed cigarettes.

Hugo pursed his lips, squinting. ‘Well,’ he said, ‘I’ve been thinking...’

‘Debatable,’ muttered Crisis, ‘but do continue.’

‘Well, it’s simple, *but fucking brilliant*. Everyone knows who the turtles are, right? Icons of the martial arts world; have been for years. So the ATM would spot us a mile off. If we dress as Godzilla, Mechagodzilla and them other Zilla-blokes from those movies we could sneak up on the ATM before it realised what was happening and raise the alarm. We threaten it with our *spectacular* Kung-fu then make off with the loot, *and* they would never suspect it was us, because they would be looking for a bunch of Japanese blokes. Why?’ Hugo smiled slyly and tapped his nose, ‘Because Godzilla is from *Japan* and not *China*, which is, of course, where Kung-fu is from.’ He spread his arms and beamed at them, waiting for their applause.

‘Genius!’ said Gregor, ‘Criminal genius: I’ll get my camera!’

‘Did anyone follow that?’ said Crisis.

‘Stupid,’ muttered Lightning, ‘Why are we even talking about this?’

‘We’ve been drinking and bombing drugs for two days,’ said Crisis. ‘Isn’t there some kind of law against being under the influence while dressed as a giant radioactive lizard?’

‘And we’re already in the shit for messing with that dirigible,’ said Lightning.

‘I think you can blame Space Platform for that,’ purred Gregor.

‘Shut the fuck up,’ growled Lightning.

‘Okay,’ said Crisis. ‘Say we get the money, how do we get away with our mythical loot?’

‘We make a run for Switzerland,’ said Hugo. ‘They’re neutral or something and they don’t give a hoot where your money comes from.’

'Switzerland is part of the FER,' said Gregor. 'You're thinking of The Grand Duchy of Lichtenstein.'

'Hey, knuckleheads,' said Lightning. 'Why don't we just stay here, huh?'

'Aw!' whined Hugo, deflating. 'Come on lads! It's my first-year-in-a-counterculture-collective party and you're all trying to find excuses.'

'That's not until next month,' said Lightning.

'Alright, it's my first I've-been-paid-in-cash party, which is true!'

'That was on Tuesday,' said Lightning.

'Ah, got you!' barked Hugo triumphantly, 'It might have started on Tuesday, but we haven't slept since then! So technically it's still the same day, right?'

An uncomfortable silence settled. The UHC fidgeted.

'I think he's got us,' admitted Lightning.

'I'm going to be sick,' moaned Cheung. He vomited explosively over the table, drenching glassware and smoking paraphernalia in colourful bile and semi-digested bar snacks.

'Oh Jesus Christ,' sighed Crisis as the stink began to rise. 'I think it's time to move on.'

'So,' continued Hugo with brainless levity, 'as we're going I'll sort out the costumes, shall I?'

The Candy Apple Dragon purred unsteadily along the wide boulevard. It was tricky to drive a classic red stick-shift V8 convertible packed with Japanese movie monsters while encumbered by a big foam Mothra costume.

Hugo outlined his master plan from the smooth leather expanse of the back seat. 'Righty-ho,' he mumbled, his voice thick and muted behind his fierce foam snout, 'Sumoman; when we approach the target area, (from now on referred to as *The TA*,) I'll expect you to distract the ATM by adopting a dangerous-looking series of Kung-fu poses. Whilst it's scared

Mechagodzilla grabs the inexpensive and potentially defective cutting torch that Crisis inexplicably had in the trunk of his car from Sumoman's nappy pouch, making the first incision someplace sensitive, okay?'

Mechagodzilla raised an aluminium-scaled paw to signal his understanding.

'Damn it, Sumoman!' barked Hugo, 'Are you in this gang of desperados or not? Act like a team player and come on in for the big win or get off the ride!'

The giant inflatable Sumo wrestler suit shuddered as its occupant was violently ill over himself again.

'Any of that puke touches the upholstery of my car and the motherfucker in question walks home, am I clear enough?' snapped Mothra nastily.

'There's not much chance of that,' said Gregor checking his camera battery. 'It looks like the suit is waterproof and filling up from the bottom.'

'Oh, that's just *nasty*,' said Mothra.

'Focus, please,' said Hugo. 'Mothra stays in the car with the engine running and keeps an eye out for the Peelers. I will extract the cash from the terrified ATM, placing it in my tail. If you find yourself threatened use your laser eyes and nuclear fire breath to incinerate your aggressors, if they push it then wade upriver and tread on their capital city. Questions?'

'Yeah,' said Mechagodzilla, 'what the hell is a "Peeler"?''

'A rozzer,' replied Godzilla. 'Next?'

'Why is Cheung in a giant Sumo suit?' asked Mothra.

'The late night costume emporium ran out of giant Japanese monster suits. Apparently they've had quite a run on them this evening, which makes me wonder if this isn't an original heist caper after all. Anyway, I had to take the chance on the Sumo suit; it was just Japanese enough.'

Gregor raised his hand. 'What shall I do?'

‘You could shave off that stupid moustache,’ said Lightning. ‘Failing that, skin your face.’

‘Take pictures, of course,’ said Godzilla. ‘Record it for posterity, so that when we’re old and looking back on our golden youth on some tropical beach we can open them up and smile together. Okay then, you rampaging sex-tigers - Let’s go get rich!’

Crisis pulled up across the road from a branch of Gdansk Happybanke and switched off the engine. ‘Hugo, I know it’s your almost-anniversary first-cash-payment-party and all, but are you sure this is what you want?’

‘Mothra, we are living my dream,’ replied Hugo feverishly. ‘Switch the engine back on and get ready for a devil-drive to freedom.’

Two hideous monsters and a tubby fellow resembling a giant baby with a plastic topknot struggled from the car and into the bustling night. The busy crowd watched with entertained bemusement as Godzilla tripped over Mechagodzilla’s tail, falling heavily to the pavement and cursing effusively. A young couple politely helped him upright and dusted him down when it became evident that Mechagodzilla couldn’t see below his own snout level and the Sumo couldn’t reach past his vast gut to offer a hand up.

Crisis had watched the idiotic pratfall and agonisingly slow waddle across the broad boulevard with gritted teeth. It was Thursday night (the unofficial start of the weekend) and inevitably the ATM was busy. By the time the robbers had shuffled conspicuously into line seven people had joined the queue behind them. The monsters tried to appear nonchalant while the queue whispered and smirked.

‘I want to go home!’ wailed Cheung. ‘I don’t feel well!’ he flopped at the waist and threw up again to groans from behind.

‘Don’t let them fluster you,’ hissed Godzilla, ‘they don’t know a thing!’

After some minutes of self-conscious shuffling forward the troop of horrors finally reached the ATM set into the smooth marble of the bank wall. The biometric scan flashed momentarily over Mechagodzilla's gunmetal visage.

'I'm sorry, patron,' it sang in a pleasant female voice, 'Please remove any eyewear so that I can get a clear scan!'

'I'll give you a clear scan!' snarled Mechagodzilla, rummaging in the Sumo's bulging nappy. 'I'm Mechagodzilla from Nippon! Rarr!' He brandished the clumsy oxy-acetylene torch with a flourish and thumbed the hissing blue flame into life. 'This is it you smug bitch, you're going to give it all up to daddy!' He began to cut into the brushed aluminium fascia.

Godzilla raised both arms above his scaly rubber head and gave a muted roar. 'Yarr! Our Kung-fu is mighty!' he yelled, 'Give up the cash or we'll kick your head in!'

Realising that the covert part of the operation was over, the bilious Sumo thrust out a chubby pink hand to obscure the ATM's camera. The crowd began to take a curious interest in the flare of the cutting torch.

'Excuse me?' said a young woman tapping Godzilla on his bulging reptilian shoulder. 'Excuse me, I don't wish to appear rude, but what is it that you're doing?'

'Five Ancestor Southern Style Fist, actually,' said Godzilla casually, waving his podgy green claws about and lumbering from foot to foot. He took in her coiffed auburn hair and tailored cerulean frock coat in an appraising glance. Being quite taken with her he attempted to strike a suave pose.

'Are you supposed to be a dinosaur?' asked the smiling girl.

'Umm, I think I'm technically a giant mutant amphibian,' Godzilla mused.

'Dude!' hissed Mechagodzilla, 'I could do with a hand here!'

Realising with sudden abashment that he was neglecting his robbery duties Godzilla made a tough call; now was not the time to try and pull chicks. He switched on his fierce red eyehole LED's.

'Initiate death!' he mumbled, rather embarrassed.

'I'm sorry,' said the girl leaning forward, 'I didn't catch that. Perhaps if you tried European?'

'*Initiate death!*' he bellowed.

'I'm sorry, I still can't quite catch what you're saying,' said the girl.

'Oh, bog off,' muttered Godzilla wearily.

'Hey friend!' snapped an athletic looking lad in the queue, 'Are you going to be much longer?'

His monstrous patience worn to tatters, Godzilla dropped open his fearsome maw to reveal rows of blunt plastic teeth. '*INITIATE DEATH!*' he roared. A weak amber flicking issued from his throat. 'Nuclear fire breath attack! You're on *fire!* Hah ha! How do you like *that* then, laughing boy?'

'Right!' said the boy, 'I want to know what you're up to!' He pushed briskly past Godzilla and grabbed Sumoman's nappy from behind.

'White Lotus Hurricane Attack!' yelled Godzilla and slapped ineffectively at the back of the young man's head.

'I've had enough of you, you bastard!' yelled the lad, turning on his heel and planting a solid punch on Godzilla's snout. Godzilla overbalanced, grasped his attacker's coat and dragged him to the ground as he fell. The young man, humiliated and furious, pounded on the foam rubber face.

'Initiate death!' howled Godzilla and thrashed feebly under the rain of blows. Mechagodzilla, meanwhile, had carved a respectable hole in the politely protesting ATM and was blindly groping around in its metal guts for cash while attempting to keep the sputtering cutting torch away from his natty silver hide. Unfortunately the searing flame intersected with the taut plastic skin of Sumoman, bursting him. The bulbous wrestler began to deflate with a terrifying screech of rushing gas.

'Fuck!' blurted Mechagodzilla. He tossed the cutting torch into a nearby rubbish disposal unit, which promptly immolated. 'God damn!' An aggressive looking remote plummeted whining from the sky and began to spray retardant powder over the blaze.

Sumoman was propelled into a spin by the jet of gas escaping from his ruptured skin. A slack flap of plastic slapped over the face of Godzilla's attacker and instantly began to suffocate him in its greasy pink folds. Forgetting his assault on the prone city-crushing terror the young man clawed desperately at his face, toppling the rapidly diminishing Sumo as congealed vomit began to pump from the gaping hole.

'I can't breathe!' choked the young man.

'Aieeeee!' screeched Sumoman like an injured vixen.

'I've got the money!' yelled Mechagodzilla. 'Run!'

'*Initiate death!*' wailed the hysterical Godzilla, his snout warped by a savage pummelling.

'Make the bad men stop,' whimpered Mothra. A horseshoe of spectators had gathered to watch the spectacular melee. 'Gregor, you're the only one who looks nearly normal (apart from that moustache). You've got to do something, man! Gregor?' He tried to peer over his shoulder but his diaphanous wings prevented this. 'Gregor, answer me...'

Mothra choked in horror as Gregor shouldered into the crowd to get action shots. He heaved his way out of the car and hopped across the road, narrowly avoiding whispering electric cars and flapping madly to build up speed. He barged into the ring of excited onlookers who applauded the spectacle while waiting expectantly for the television crew to reveal themselves. Mechagodzilla was spooning armfuls of notes into his detached tail while Sumoman strangled the young German with folds of loose skin and Godzilla repeatedly rammed him in the stomach with his mutilated snout. The remote had extinguished the flaming bin and turned its attention to the fracas taking place, activating its speakers and lights.

'Would all participants in the present violent disturbance, assault, criminal damage and robbery be advised that they are under arrest? Please desist your activities and await the arrival of CAZ Law Enforcement Agents. Thank you so much for your cooperation.'

The blue running lights of drones appeared, spiralling down out of the night sky.

'Get in the car!' bellowed Mothra, 'The cops are coming!'

Abandoning their grisly work, the three hardened criminals turned tail (literally) and began a lumbering waddle toward the Candy Apple Dragon spilling a trail of loose bills across the road. Cars shrieked as they swerved hard to avoid them.

'Sorry, sorry,' waved Mothra, 'we've lost our monster-themed birthday party, ever so sorry.'

'Gregor!' shouted Godzilla, flapping in panic, 'We've left Gregor behind!' Mothra glanced behind. The Romanian cameraman was engrossed in photographing the slagged ruin of the ATM while CS and Police drones hovered over him threateningly.

'Fuck Gregor!' yelled Mothra, punching Godzilla in the chest as he struggled to turn about. 'No one likes him but you! Get in the goddamned car!'

'We never leave a man behind!' shouted Godzilla.

'Horseshit!' snapped Mothra, 'We constantly leave people behind, forget about them, piss them off so much that they hate us or get so out of our face we lose them for months at a time! We're selfish bastards! So get in the car before I kill you!'

'We are not selfish! We're not!' hollered Hugo Bernstein, tearing off his ruined Godzilla headpiece. 'We're disintegrating boundaries, making the future happen!'

'The future?' raged Mothra. 'The future is ten years in the Corsican Penitentiary if you don't get in the car! Lightning, grab him!'

Mechagodzilla grabbed Hugo's shoulder, span him about and pushed him into the back of the car.

'What the hell are we going to do with these monster suits?' said Crisis, wrestling with the car door.

'Dump them on some waste ground, pay the security deposit on them in cash and say that someone got drunk at the party and threw them in the river,' said Lightning.

'That's as good a plan as I've heard so far this evening,' said Crisis. 'We burn the rubber monsters on a pyre in the exercise field of an ailing pet sanctuary that we bribe to keep quiet with a substantial cash donation. The rest of the money we give to bums, Agreed?'

'I don't think there are any bums here, dude,' said Lightning, opening a beer for the road. 'Europe is a bumless continent.'

'Crap!' snapped Crisis over his shoulder. 'There are bums everywhere! The whole world's full of bums, you just have to know where to look! Now stop being obstructive Lightning Chadwick Tyson Interior and help me out!'

'Okay,' said Lightning. 'Here's a suggestion: Why don't you turn off the engine and raise your hands nice and slow?'

'What?' spat Crisis, 'Why? How's that going to help me out?'

'Because,' Lightning said carefully raising his own hands, 'there's a serious looking cop pointing her sandbag pistol at you through the window of the car, and I think she might intend to shoot you.'

Crisis turned his head slowly to the left and took his hands off the wheel. The gaping black muzzle of a pistol was pointing at his chest. Behind it was a very unsympathetic looking policewoman. 'Is this your car, sir?' she asked.

'I think there's been a mistake, officer,' he said, tipping off the Mothra headpiece to reveal his sweat-streaked face. 'I know what it looks like, you're thinking "these guys just tried to rob the ATM using kung-fu and disguised as giant monsters", but it's not what you think! We just wanted to get some money out, right, *our* money, but the ATM wouldn't let us, and,

okay, we lost it a little. We're good people, officer. I,' he announced, proudly tapping his chest, 'am a *vegetarian*, and he,' he pointed at Hugo, 'is a Buddhist!'

The cop looked down on him coldly. 'Out of the car, sir,' she said, 'nice and slow.'

'Okay, okay,' Crisis sighed. 'Fine, you have no pity. I can see where this is going.'

'Don't do anything rash, sir,' said the cop. Her gun audibly selected a velocity and rate-of-fire setting.

'Go ahead then,' said Crisis, tidying his hair. 'Make me your dirty whore. I'll have rough sex with you in return for our freedom. I've been necking speed and whisky non-stop for two days now so I'm a bit numb down south, but you demand hard cock in return for liberty and that's fine. I feel cheap, but I'll take one for the team. Drop them pants.'

Two thuds sounded almost simultaneously: The first was the guttural thump of a sandbag round exiting a gun; the second was it impacting in Crisis's belly.

The cop turned her pistol on Hugo. 'I'll need you to step out of the car *now*.' She gestured with her gun. The implication was clear.

'I'm trying,' grunted Hugo. 'I've got my tail stuck.'

'Now that,' said Lightning, grinning at the wheezing Crisis, 'was a big night out.'