

CASTLE

Created by Andrew W. Marlowe

"Here Be Monstrous"

Written by
Adrian Koltun

First Draft: Sept. 15, 2013
Revised Draft: Jan. 24, 2014

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

EXT. CENTRAL PARK, JOGGING PATH - MORNING

The morning sun rises over the parapets of Belvedere Castle. Victorian in design, the castle sits on a small cliff overlooking a large pond of water.

The American flag billows in the wind atop the tallest tower and above the castle doors resides a cockatrice.

A JOGGER, 40s, with an out-of-date jogging suit and a pair of earphones, runs along a path running parallel to the castle.

A FAINT GROWLING RUFFLES the LEAVES of nearby trees.

The jogger stops and pulls out his earphones. He looks around before his gaze lands on Belvedere Castle. He checks his watch, replaces his earphones, and runs up to the gates.

He trips over a hole in the ground and stumbles a bit before he falls to the ground.

The jogger pushes himself up and sees the burnt face of a CORPSE staring at him, mouth agape. It is completely charred black and still smoking in some places.

The jogger stumbles back from the corpse, sputtering incoherently.

A beat.

The FAINT GROWLING returns, steadily increasing in volume as a GUST OF WIND BLOWS through the trees. The jogger looks up into the sky and SCREAMS IN TERROR as a LARGE SHADOW passes over him.

CUT TO:

INT. CASTLE'S LOFT, LIVING ROOM - MORNING

RICHARD CASTLE yawns widely. He is sitting beside KATE BECKETT, both dressed in pajamas, on the couch while MARTHA RODGERS, dressed in slightly rumpled casual clothes as if she'd been out all night, paces in front of them.

MARTHA

... If that wasn't already bad enough, they actually had the gall to say I was being unfair in my assumptions of their talent!

CASTLE

I still don't see why this couldn't wait until morning.

BECKETT

It is morning, Castle.

CASTLE

Really? I thought it was still yesterday. Aren't you dressed for yesterday, Mother?

Martha tosses a couch pillow at Castle.

MARTHA

Oh, wake up, Richard! If I had to be up all night the least you can do is get up a little early!

CASTLE

A little, she says.

Beckett elbows him in the side.

CASTLE (CONT'D)

Right... So your students are unwilling to cooperate?

MARTHA

It's not just that my students are unwilling! It's that they don't even want to try and bring *A Midsummer Night's Dream* to its true potential!

CASTLE

Isn't that the point of teaching them how to act?

MARTHA

Oh they can certainly act it out, there's no doubt in my mind that they can, it's that they're incapable of bringing the illusions of life to the play, Richard.

BECKETT

The... illusions of life, Martha?

MARTHA

Oh, you know, the costumes, the special effects, what makes Shakespeare's play a true fantasy! The last time I saw "*A Midsummer Night's Dream*" on stage I thought I was watching some college frat boy's costume party!

As Martha continues her tirade in the background, Castle looks imploringly at Beckett, his hands clasped tightly in prayer.

CASTLE

Please, I beg you, get us out of here.

Beckett smiles.

BECKETT

Sorry, Castle, but I don't think a body's going to drop just for--

Beckett's cellphone RINGS. Castle grins and hastily leaps off the couch. He grasps Martha by the shoulders.

CASTLE

I'm so, so sorry, Mother, but it looks like we've got a case!

He looks over his shoulder at Beckett, his eyes wide and his smile a tad forced.

CASTLE (CONT'D)

We got a case right?

Beckett gets up from the couch as she answers her phone.

BECKETT

Beckett. ... Really? ... Right, we're on our way.

She hangs up her phone and turns to Castle.

BECKETT (CONT'D)

We got a case.

CASTLE

We got a case! GREAT!

He turns to his mother. Martha glares at her son's attempt at acting depressed.

CASTLE (CONT'D)
Sorry mother but we've got to go
to... To...

He calls after Beckett as she heads out of the living room.

CASTLE (CONT'D)
(yelling)
Where are we going?

BECKETT (O.S.)
To your namesake, Castle!

EXT. BELVEDERE CASTLE, FRONT LAWN - MORNING

Police tape and nearby CENTRAL PARK OFFICERS block off the scene of the crime on the grounds of Belvedere Castle.

Beckett and Castle walk up along the path leading up to its front gates. Beckett glances out the corner of her eye at Castle, whose staring up at the castle.

CASTLE
Belvedere Castle! Man, can you believe I almost forgot that America had one of these?

BECKETT
I'd have thought that castles were outside your usual repertoire.

CASTLE
Oh don't get me wrong, I'm a crime mystery novelist to the end but there's just... There's just a kind of magic to places like this isn't there?

BECKETT
Magic, Castle?

CASTLE
There's quite a few of them around the world you know. Of course, they're all occupied by dogs, ducks, and mice...
(off Beckett's look)
Hear me out! Belvedere Castle has been used time and time again in many a fantasy tale though primarily more often as a place of villainy than of heroism...

Beckett shakes her head as they arrive at the BURNT CORPSE, with LANIE PARISH kneeling down beside it cutting a sample of cloth from the remains.

In the daylight, it is clearly evident that the body had been moved to the scene as nothing but the BODY appears to have been set aflame.

LANIE

Yeah, well villainy was certainly done before breakfast this morning.

Castle looks down at the body.

CASTLE

Yeah, a tad overcooked I'd say...

BECKETT

What have we got?

LANIE

The victim is female, late thirties to early forties, and wherever she was killed, it wasn't anywhere close by.

BECKETT

Cause of death?

A beat.

Lanie looks up at Beckett.

LANIE

Aside from the obvious?

Lanie shakes her head.

LANIE (CONT'D)

Sorry. I'm not much of an early morning kind of girl.

From down near the jogging path, comes KEVIN RYAN and JAVIER ESPOSITO, both carrying steaming cups of coffee in hand.

ESPOSITO

(to Lanie)

This ought to take the sting off.

Esposito hands one cup to Lanie, who smiles.

ESPOSITO (CONT'D)

(to Beckett)

No witnesses to the crime save for the guy who stumbled onto the scene.

RYAN

Guy was spooked like you wouldn't believe too. Said he'd talk only when he was someplace safe and far away from here.

ESPOSITO

He's off to the precinct now.

Castle approaches Ryan and takes both cups from him and hands one over to Beckett. Castle takes a long drink of his cup.

CASTLE

Ah, that's the stuff...

Ryan shoots him a disgruntled look.

ESPOSITO

There's a few security cameras atop the castle, hopefully we'll have our perp on film once we get them.

BECKETT

What's the hold up?

RYAN

The grounds keeper has better hours than we do for one.

(off Beckett's look)

We're just waiting for him to show up. With morning commute being how it is though...

Beckett nods and turns to Esposito.

BECKETT

Were you able to get anything out of the jogger?

Esposito shrugs.

ESPOSITO

Not much. The guy says that he was out for a early morning run, thought he heard something, took notice of the castle and made for a quick side trip before actually tripping--

CASTLE

He tripped? Over what? The body?

Esposito and Ryan exchange looks. Esposito frowns while Ryan smiles knowingly. Ryan points over to a marked spot several meters away from the feet of the CORPSE.

RYAN

He tripped over those.

Castle and Beckett walk over to it.

From above, it looks like a pair of large footprints, each nearly as large as a man's torso. The footprints are four-toed in a distinctly reptilian alignment.

Castle turns to Beckett, mouth open to speak.

BECKETT

It's too early for one of your theories Castle. Wait until we have something more than some odd holes in the ground at least.

CASTLE

Fine, but I reserve the right to proclaim them at the next opportunity.

RYAN

(aside to Esposito)
Twenty bucks says she'll let him get one out before lunch.

ESPOSITO

(aside to Ryan)
Don't be stupid.
(beat)
Make it fifty.

CUT TO:

INT. FORENSICS LAB - DAY

Beckett and Castle stand beside the table where the burnt body lies. Lanie is standing near a computer, typing and looking over the results.

LANIE

It's too soon for a full chemical analysis of the body but I can tell you that she wasn't doused in anything prior to being burned.

BECKETT

Anything on X-rays?

LANIE

Nothing that can't be attributed to her being set on fire first. I'm afraid that whoever did this, did it while she was alive and standing. Yet here's something odd...

Lanie walks over to the body and carefully lifts it up to show the back. Its charred, but to a far lesser degree than the front.

LANIE (CONT'D)

Whoever burned her came at her from the front. Given the degree of the burns, it looks like someone was shooting the flames as they approached her, focusing mostly on the face. I've got melted remains of her glasses along her eye sockets and upper jaw.

CASTLE

Wait, so someone used a flamethrower to kill her? That's a bit...

Lanie sets the body back down.

LANIE

Extreme? Yeah, well that's murder for you.

CASTLE

Do you think it's the opening act of a pyromaniacal serial killer?

Lanie shakes her head.

LANIE

Given the intensity of the burns, I'd say that whoever did this, did it up close and personal.

BECKETT

Meaning that they knew the victim and the victim knew them... Can you get any DNA off her?

LANIE

Not much that I can use to get DNA from but I should be able to get some dental records easily. Once I can cut her mouth open anyway.

BECKETT

Thanks, Lanie.

CASTLE

In the meantime, let's go see what had that jogger so spooked. Oh! What if it wasn't some kind of pyromaniac? Maybe it was a--

BECKETT

Castle. What did I say earlier?

CASTLE

This doesn't count?

BECKETT

This doesn't mean what you think it means, Castle.

CASTLE

Oh? What do you think I think it means?

BECKETT

I think that you think that I think that it's not what you think it is.

A beat.

Beckett smirks victoriously at Castle and leaves the lab. Castle looks to Lanie.

CASTLE

... Is it wrong that I found that incredibly sexy?

Lanie shakes her head, smiling slightly.

INT. PRECINCT, INTERROGATION - DAY

The jogger sits visibly agitated and breathing raggedly. He twitches his gaze between the mirror and the door. He licks his lips and rubs at his brow.

The door opens. Beckett and Castle enter the room. The jogger YELPS and leaps to his feet.

CASTLE

Whoa man, relax. Nobody is going to hurt you here...

JOGGER

(panting)

Yeah... Yeah I know that. I just thought it had found-

The jogger snaps his mouth shut. He sits back down, trembling.

BECKETT

What is it? What did you see that has you so scared?

JOGGER

You...

(swallows)

You wouldn't believe me if I told you.

The jogger clutches his head and takes a shuddering breath of air.

JOGGER (CONT'D)

I don't quite believe it myself... but the body... and that noise, that god awful growl... It just couldn't be but it was! Unbelievable but it was!

Castle leans forward and steeples his hands.

CASTLE

Listen to me. Whatever it is you saw, chances are we've already seen it. We've seen everything.

(off the jogger's disbelieving look)

No, seriously. We've had zombies, ghosts, vampires, and even bigfoot so whatever it is you saw--

BECKETT

Or think you saw.

She glares at Castle who holds up his hands in surrender.

BECKETT (CONT'D)

There is a reasonable explanation behind it.

(MORE)

BECKETT (CONT'D)

No matter how unbelievable it might appear, there's always a reasonable explanation behind everything.

The jogger looks back and forth between Castle and Beckett. He swallows and opens his mouth to speak when the DOOR SLAMS OPEN. The jogger SHRIEKS and ducks beneath the table.

Beckett and Castle turn to the door. Ryan is standing there, eyes wide.

JOGGER

It's here! Its found me! Oh god don't let it roast me!

Beckett's eyes narrow at the jogger and she turns to glare at Ryan. Castle sits back with an amused smile.

RYAN

Sorry but... but you two have got to see this.

INT. PRECINCT, BULLPEN - MOMENTS LATER

Castle and Beckett follow Ryan to the monitor where Esposito is waiting impatiently. Castle and Beckett stand beside Esposito as Ryan grabs the monitor's remote.

The MONITOR shows the open night sky with a full moon shining behind a parapet of the castle. On the bottom right of the video, there is a date and time stamp, with a running clock.

RYAN

Okay, bad news first. According to Belvedere Castle's grounds keeper, the security cameras facing the grounds have been moved so that they don't aim down on the grounds but up into the air.

ESPOSITO

Meaning that our perp either knew about the security cameras or...

BECKETT

Changed the angle himself so that he would get caught.

RYAN

Yeah, I'd agree with you except... Well, the cameras actually did catch something.

He presses the remote and the video fast forwards. The night rapidly zooms into dawn until Ryan hits the remote again. The timestamp stops at 05:35 AM and the video starts playing normal speed.

RYAN (CONT'D)

Now this was recorded about five minutes before our jogger called 911.

On the monitor, the video shows a slow pan over the parapets of Belvedere Castle before a CREATURE SOARS by.

Castle and the others jump in surprise.

ESPOSITO

The heck was that?

BECKETT

Some kind of bat...?

Ryan holds up a finger as the video continues to play.

RYAN

Wait for it... There!

He pauses it on the image of the creature flying past the camera again. The image of the creature is blurry but there's no mistaking the stream of flames shooting forth from its jaws.

Castle's eyes widen.

CASTLE

That's no bat...

Castle starts to smile like a man who just won the lottery. He slowly approaches the monitor, looking over the paused video. He holds his hand over the creature's image before sharply turning to Beckett.

CASTLE (CONT'D)

Our killer is a dragon!

Beckett stares between him and the image in disbelief.

Esposito wordlessly hands a fifty dollar bill to Ryan who grins smugly in return.

END ACT ONE

*