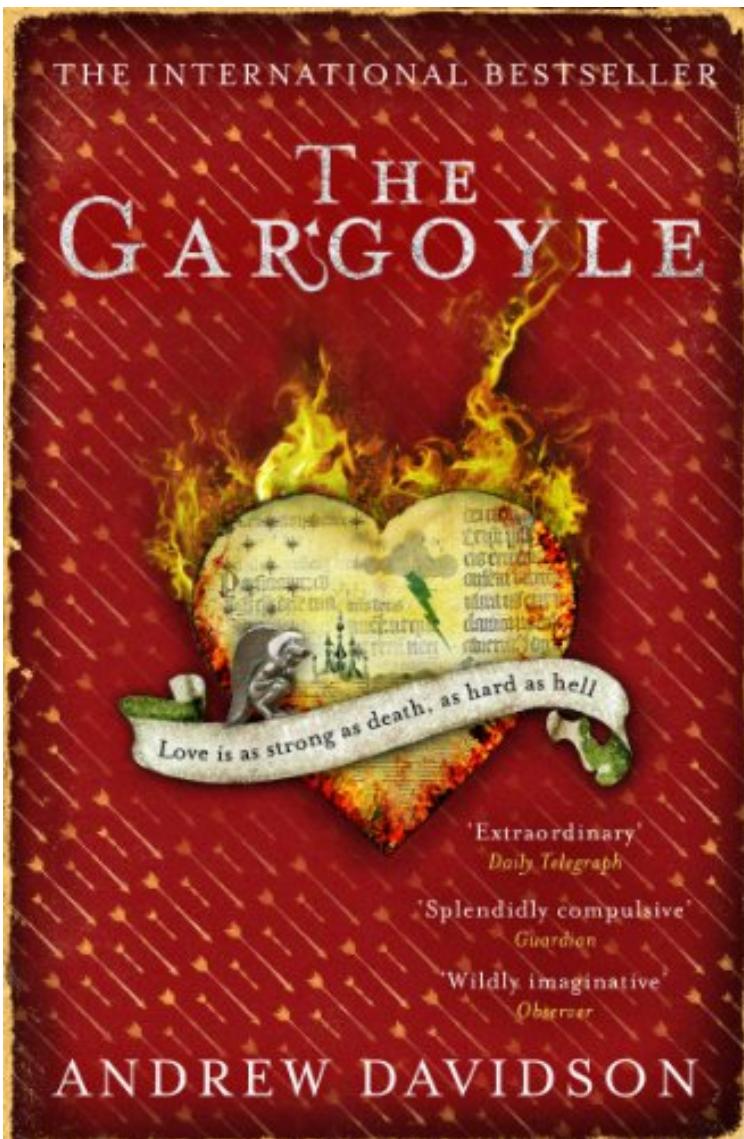


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The Gargoyle



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Par Andrew Davidson : The Gargoyle
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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurA young man is fighting for his life. Into his room walks a bewitching woman who believes she can save him. Their journey will have you believing in the impossible. The nameless and beautiful narrator of The Gargoyle is driving along a dark road when he is distracted by what seems to be a flight of arrows. He crashes into a ravine and wakes up in a burns ward, undergoing the tortures of the damned. His life is over he is now a monster. But in fact it is only just beginning. One day, Marianne Engel, a wild and compelling sculptress of gargoyles, enters his life and tells him that they were once lovers in medieval Germany. In her telling, he was a badly burned mercenary and she was a nun and a scribe who nursed him back to health in the famed monastery of Engelthal. As she spins her tale, Scheherazade fashion, and relates equally mesmerising stories of deathless love in Japan, Greenland, Italy and England, he finds

himself drawn back to life and, finally, to love..comProduct Description An extraordinary debut novel of love that survives the fires of hell and transcends the boundaries of time. The narrator of *The Gargoyle* is a very contemporary cynic, physically beautiful and sexually adept, who dwells in the moral vacuum that is modern life. As the book opens, he is driving along a dark road when he is distracted by what seems to be a flight of arrows. He crashes into a ravine and suffers horrible burns over much of his body. As he recovers in a burn ward, undergoing the tortures of the damned, he awaits the day when he can leave the hospital and commit carefully planned suicide for he is now a monster in appearance as well as in soul. A beautiful and compelling, but clearly unhinged, sculptress of gargoyles by the name of Marianne Engel appears at the foot of his bed and insists that they were once lovers in medieval Germany. In her telling, he was a badly injured mercenary and she was a nun and scribe in the famed monastery of Engelthal who nursed him back to health. As she spins their tale in Scheherazade fashion and relates equally mesmerizing stories of deathless love in Japan, Iceland, Italy, and England, he finds himself drawn back to life and, finally, in love. He is released into Marianne's care and takes up residence in her huge stone house. But all is not well. For one thing, the pull of his past sins becomes ever more powerful as the morphine he is prescribed becomes ever more addictive. For another, Marianne receives word from God that she has only twenty-seven sculptures left to complete and her time on earth will be finished. Already an international literary sensation, *The Gargoyle* is an *Inferno* for our time. It will have you believing in the impossible. Andrew Davidson Talks About Becoming a Writer Some of what follows is true. When I was about seven, I had a turtle named Stripe. I decided, because I liked my turtle and Jacques Cousteau, that I wanted to be a marine biologist. This ambition lasted until I was ten years old, when I spent a year gazing into the abyss, hoping that the abyss would not gaze back at me. At eleven, I longed for a master to teach me the secrets of the ninja, but the teacher did not appear; this probably means that as a student I was not ready. As I entered my teens, I set my heart upon becoming a professional hockey player. On weekend nights, the final game at the local arena ended around 10 p.m. but the icemaker was unable to leave the building until about midnight, as he had to clean the dressing rooms and do maintenance. I bribed him with presents of Aqua Velva aftershave to let me play alone on the rink until he headed home. Despite my devotion, I never developed the skills to make it off the small-town rink and into the big leagues. My dream shattered, at sixteen I started to spend more time writing. I began by changing the lyrics to Doors songs. I rewrote "Break On Through" so that it became "Live to Die": "Soldier in the forest / dodging bullets thick / only took one / to make him cry / All of us just live to die." Clearly, writing was my future. I soon realized that, since I still had no authorial voice of my own, I should at least imitate better poets than Jim Morrison. Soon I was word-raping Leonard Cohen, e.e. cummings, Sylvia Plath, William Blake, and John Milton. After writing much abusively derivative poetry, I moved onto stage plays written in a mockery of the style of Tennessee Williams, which also didn't work out so well. Next, I tried to put baby in a corner, until it was explained to me that nobody puts baby in a corner. Following this, I produced short stories that would have been much better if they were much shorter. Then, screenplays that even Alan Smithee wouldn't direct. Somewhere along the way, I managed to get a degree in English Literature; this was strange, as I thought I was studying cardiology. Undaunted, off to Vancouver Film School I went, but naturally not to study film. Instead, I took the new media course, because there was this thing called the internet that was just taking off. I also spent a fair amount of time using digital editing software for video and audio. An example project: I slowed down the final movement to Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, looped it backwards, put in a heavy drumbeat, and end up with a funeral dirge. "Ode to Joy"? I think not. "Ode to Bleakness" is more like it; I was very deep, and showed it by destroying joy. After this course finished, I had tens of thousands of dollars of student debt, and could no longer avoid getting a job. I soon discovered, in no uncertain terms, that work is no fun. I stuck it out for as long as I could, which was way less than a lifetime. As my thirtieth birthday approached, I became incredibly aware that I had never lived abroad, so I moved to Japan. I had no idea if I would like Japan, but I vowed to stick it out for a year. I did, and then another year, and another, and another, and another. In the beginning, I worked as a kind of substitute teacher of English, covering stints in classrooms that needed a temporary instructor. I lived in fifteen different cities during my first two years, traveling from the northern island of Hokkaido all the way down to the southern island of Okinawa. It was a great introduction to the country, but eventually the constant relocation became too much. I got a job in a Tokyo office, writing English lessons for Japanese learners on the internet. I lived in the big city for three years, and loved it: hooray for sushi, hooray for sumo, and hooray for cartoon mascots. While in Japan, I entertained myself by writing and, having already mangled poetry, short stories, stage plays and screenplays, I thought it was time to give a novel a shot. A

strange thing happened: I found that I dont write like other people when it comes to novels or at least, none of which I know. Its true that Ive read comparisons of my novel to a number of other books The Name of the Rose, The English Patient, The Shadow of the Wind but I havent read any of them. (To my great shame, really, and I suppose I should. Since they are my supposed influences, I should become familiar with them. Ill appear more intelligent in interviews.) I liked writing The Gargoyle, and I think Ill write another novel. If I can, Ill make up new characters and a new plot. Thats my plan. While in Japan, I entertained myself by writing and, having already mangled poetry, short stories, stage plays and screenplays, I thought it was time to give a novel a shot. A strange thing happened: I found that I dont write like other people when it comes to novels or at least, none of which I know. Its true that Ive read comparisons of my novel to a number of other books The Name of the Rose, The English Patient, The Shadow of the Wind but I havent read any of them. (To my great shame, really, and I suppose I should. Since they are my supposed influences, I should become familiar with them. Ill appear more intelligent in interviews.) I liked writing The Gargoyle, and I think Ill write another novel. If I can, Ill make up new characters and a new plot. Thats my plan. Extrait I. Accidents ambush the unsuspecting, often violently, just like love. It was Good Friday and the stars were just starting to dissolve into the dawn. As I drove, I stroked the scar on my chest, by habit. My eyes were heavy and my vision unfocused, not surprising given that Id spent the night hunched over a mirror snorting away the bars of white powder that kept my face trapped in the glass. I believed I was keening my reflexes. I was wrong. To one side of the curving road was a sharp drop down the mountains slope, and on the other was a dark wood. I tried to keep my eyes fixed ahead but I had the overwhelming feeling that something was waiting to ambush me from behind the trees, perhaps a troop of mercenaries. Thats how drug paranoia works, of course. My heart hammered as I gripped the steering wheel more tightly, sweat collecting at the base of my neck. Between my legs I had wedged a bottle of bourbon, which I tried to pull out for another mouthful. I lost my grip on the bottle and it tumbled into my lap, spilling everywhere, before falling to the floorboard. I bent down to grab it before the remaining alcohol leaked out, and when my eyes were lifted I was greeted by the vision, the ridiculous vision, that set everything into motion. I saw a volley of burning arrows swarming out of the woods, directly at my car. Instinct took over and I jerked the steering wheel away from the forest that held my invisible attackers. This was not a good idea, because it threw my car up against the fencepost wires that separated me from the drop. There was the howl of metal on metal, the passenger door scraping against taut cables, and a dozen thuds as I bounced off the wood posts, each bang like electricity through a defibrillator. I overcompensated and spun out into the oncoming lane, just missing a pickup truck. I pulled back too hard on the wheel, which sent me once again towards the guardrail. The cables snapped and flew everywhere at once, like the thrashing tentacles of a harpooned octopus. One cracked the windshield and I remember thinking how glad I was that it hadnt hit me as the car fell through the arms of the convulsing brute. There was a brief moment of weightlessness: a balancing point between air and earth, dirt and heaven. How strange, I thought, how like the moment between sleeping and falling when everything is beautifully surreal and nothing is corporeal. How like floating towards completion. But as often happens in that time between existing in the world and fading into dreams, this moment over the edge ended with the ruthless jerk back to awareness. A car crash seems to take forever, and there is always a moment in which you believe that you can correct the error. Yes, you think, its true that Im plummeting down the side of a mountain in a car that weighs about three thousand pounds. Its true that its a hundred feet to the bottom of the gully. But Im sure that if only I twist the steering wheel very hard to one side, everything will be okay. Once youve spun that steering wheel around and found it doesnt make any difference, you have this one clear, pure thought: Oh, shit. For a glorious moment, you achieve the empty bliss that Eastern philosophers spend their lives pursuing. But following this transcendence, your mind becomes a supercomputer capable of calculating the gyrations of your car, multiplying that by the speed of the fall over the angle of descent, factoring in Newtons laws of motion and, in a split second, coming to the panicked conclusion that this is gonna hurt like hell. Your car gathers speed down the embankment, bouncing. Your hypothesis is quickly proven correct: it is, indeed, quite painful. Your brain catalogues the different sensations. There is the flipping end over end, the swirling disorientation, and the shrieks of the car as it practices its unholy yoga. Theres the crush of metal, pressing against your ribs. Theres the smell of the devils mischievousness, a pitchfork in your ass and sulfur in your mouth. The Bastards there, all right, dont doubt it. I remember the hot silver flash as the floorboard severed all my toes from my left foot. I remember the steering column sailing over my shoulder. I remember the eruption of glass that seemed to be everywhere around me. When the car finally came to a stop, I hung upside down, seatbelted. I could hear the

hiss of various gases escaping the engine and the tires still spinning outside, above, and there was the creak of metal settling as the car stopped rocking, a pathetic turtle on its back. Just as I was beginning my drift into unconsciousness, there was the explosion. Not a movie explosion but a small real-life explosion, like the ignition of an unhappy gas oven that holds a grudge against its owner. A flash of blue flame skittered across the roof of the car, which was at a slanted angle underneath my dangling body. Out of my nose crawled a drop of blood, which jumped expectantly into the happy young flames springing to life beneath me. I could feel my hair catch fire; then I could smell it. My flesh began to singe as if I were a scrap of meat newly thrown onto the barbecue, and then I could hear the bubbling of my skin as the flames kissed it. I could not reach my head to extinguish my flaming hair. My arms would not respond to my commands. I imagine, dear reader, that you've had some experience with heat. Perhaps you've tipped a boiling kettle at the wrong angle and the steam crept up your sleeve; or, in a youthful dare, you held a match between your fingers for as long as you could. Hasn't everyone, at least once, filled the bathtub with overly hot water and forgot to dip in a toe before committing the whole foot? If you've only had these kinds of minor incidents, I want you to imagine something new. Imagine turning on one of the elements of your stove--let's say it's the electric kind with black coils on top. Don't put a pot of water on the element, because the water only absorbs the heat and uses it to boil. Maybe some tiny tendrils of smoke curl up from a previous spill on the burner. A slight violet tinge will appear, nestled there in the black rings, and then the element assumes some reddish-purple tones, like unripe blackberries. It moves towards orange and finally--finally!--an intense glowing red. Kind of beautiful, isn't it? Now, lower your head so that your eyes are even with the top of the stove and you can peer through the shimmering waves rising up. Think of those old movies where the hero finds himself looking across the desert at an unexpected oasis. I want you to trace the fingertips of your left hand gently across your right palm, noting the way your skin registers even the lightest touch. If someone else were doing it, you might even be turned on. Now, slam that sensitive, responsive hand directly onto that glowing element. And hold it there. Hold it there as the element scorches Dante's nine rings right into your palm, allowing you to grasp Hell in your hand forever. Let the heat engrave the skin, the muscles, the tendons; let it smolder down to the bone. Wait for the burn to embed itself so far into you that you don't know if you'll ever be able to let go of that coil. It won't be long until the stench of your own burning flesh wafts up, grabbing your nose hairs and refusing to let go, and you smell your body burn. I want you to keep that hand pressed down, for a slow count of sixty. No cheating. One Mis-sis-sip-pi, two Mis-sis-sip-pi, three Mis-sis-sip-pi. i. i. i. At sixty Mis-sis-sip-pi, your hand will have melted so that it now surrounds the element, becoming fused with it. Now rip your flesh free. I have another task for you: lean down, turn your head to one side, and slap your cheek on the same element. I'll let you choose which side of your face. Again sixty Mississippis; no cheating. The convenient thing is that your ear is right there to capture the snap, crackle, and pop of your flesh. Now you might have some idea of what it was like for me to be pinned inside that car, unable to escape the flames, conscious enough to catalogue the experience until I went into shock. There were a few short and merciful moments in which I could hear and smell and think, still documenting everything but feeling nothing. Why does this no longer hurt? I remember closing my eyes and wishing for complete, beautiful blackness. I remember thinking that I should have lived my life as a vegetarian. Then the car shifted once more, tipping over into the creek upon whose edge it had been teetering. Like the turtle had regained its feet and scurried into the nearest water source. This occurrence--the car falling into the creek--saved my life by extinguishing the flames and cooling my newly broiled flesh. ***Accidents ambush the unsuspecting, often violently, just like love. I have no idea whether beginning with my accident was the best decision, as I've never written a book before. Truth be told, I started with the crash because I wanted to catch your interest and drag you into the story. You're still reading, so it seems to have worked. The most difficult thing about writing, I'm discovering, is not the act of constructing the sentences themselves. It's deciding what to put in, and where, and what to leave out. I'm constantly second-guessing myself. I chose the accident, but I could just as easily have started with any point during my thirty-five years of life before that. Why not start with: I was born in the year 19----, in the city of----? Then again, why should I even confine the beginning to the time frame of my life? Perhaps I should start in Nurnberg in the early thirteenth century, where a woman with the most unfortunate name of Adelheit Rotter retreated from a life that she thought was sinful ...