

Gargoyles

As my mother lay dying in her bed, the doorbell rang. I assumed that it was the ambulance, because I'd called them 20 minutes ago. Instead, it was a young man and a young woman, wearing exotic glasses, so I assumed that they were either selling something or members of a religious cult. I blocked the door: "May I help you?"

"Yes ma'am," the attractive girl said. "Show her," she said to the fellow.

"Here," he stated, as he showed me some kind of computer printout. "She agreed to the *Terms of Service*, as you can see here. Google's *Terms of Service* include harvesting her *AdWord* impression count before she dies. Please stand aside."

Well this didn't make any sense to me, and the muscular man was right in my face with the printout, and the gal was talking to herself about something – it was very disturbing.

"Please stand aside, ma'am. We'll only be a couple of minutes."

"Go away!"

"No, ma'am, as you can see, your mother agreed to the Google *Terms of Service*. Look right here, where she pressed the Agree button."

"I don't care what she pressed, she's dying."

"Yes, ma'am, she's almost dead, and we need to harvest her *AdWord* impression count very soon."

"I'm calling the police!"

The gal stated "I've already done that, now please let us in."

I blocked the door until the sheriff rolled up. While I was waiting, I looked at their space-age glasses. The gal said "Yes, ma'am, they're Google Glasses, the Explorer Edition, with certain Version 3 enhancements."

I didn't have a clue what she was referring to. Then I realized that I hadn't asked her any question.

"That's right, ma'am, the enhancements are there so that we can harvest *AdWord* impression counts, but they also let us read minds of active, living persons."

My blood pressure shot up, and she said "Mrs. Wingate, you should sit down, as your blood pressure is putting unusual stress on your body. Please, ma'am, we're just here to do our job. Won't you let us in?"

The sheriff walked up and asked "What is the problem here?"

I told him that my mother was dying inside and that these strange people showed up, and that they wanted to do something to her. "They're not welcome here, officer. Please have them leave."

The guy turned to the sheriff and showed him the paper. "It's all legal and all right here. Mrs. Johnston agreed on the Web, on February 12, 2016, to the Google *Terms of Service*. She agreed that we could enforce our *Terms of Service*, which includes scanning her brain, and harvesting her *AdWord* impression count. The Ninth Federal Court has upheld our right to enforce our *Terms of Service*. We are Gargoyle Team # 12-A-381. Please assist us in doing our job."

"Okay, okay, just back off. I'm going to have to call this one in. Please wait while I call my sergeant."

A few minutes passed while he used his radio, and then he came back up the sidewalk, shaking his head.

"Ma'am, I'm sorry, but you'll have to let them in. There is a Federal court somewhere in California that decided in their favor last year. A couple of years ago, a San Francisco woman was attacked in a bar, and she filmed it with these things – these Google Glasses. She took the attackers to court, and won a judgment against them. They appealed, but the Appellate court ruled that she was within her rights to use the visual data from her Google Glasses as evidence. Part of that trial involved the Google *Terms of Service*, and the judge upheld Google's right to enforce their Terms. I'm afraid that's a lot of legal mumbo-jumbo that means that I have to ask you to let these people do their job."

I shouted "So men called Gargoyles, wearing Google Glasses show up at my house, and want to drain my dying mother's brain, so that they get some counters from her? *That doesn't make any sense!*"

The gal said "Yes ma'am, the Google *Terms of Service* that the sheriff referred to allow us to scan her brain with our Google Glasses and harvest the AdWord impression counts. No harm will come to her – we're just doing what she agreed to."

"She's 88 years old – she doesn't know what she agreed to," I argued in vain.

The sheriff kind of brushed me aside and the Gargoyles were at my mother's side in a moment. The guy got very close to mom's face, and she smiled and nodded her head – apparently they were talking by mental link of some kind.

The gal said. "Yes, Mrs. Wingate, Version 3 Explorers are capable of direct mind link. They upload the requested data to our constellation of 82 Google Satellites."

I was in total panic mode. I screamed "*Leave now, or I'll do something violent!*"

The sheriff said "Please ma'am, don't make it worse. What they're doing is perfectly legal, and your mother has obviously agreed to it."

Two men at the door announced "Ambulance!"

"Okay, get my mom out of here right now. She's dying. Doctor Tamadan is waiting for her at Huntsville Hospital."

They returned in a moment with a Gurney. The Google guy and my mom's eyes were locked.

"*Get her out of here!*"

The burly E.M.S. guys brushed the Gargoyles aside and lifted my mom onto the stretcher. She held out her hand to the Gargoyle guy, and he waved. I heard her last gasp, and one of the ambulance attendants checked her pulse, and then covered her head.

As the Gargoyles left, the gal said "This is quite common, Mrs. Johnston. Loved ones tend to get distraught when we come to enforce Google's *Terms of Service*, but we're used to it."

"*I hope you rot in Hell,*" I shot back.

"Yes, ma'am, we get a lot of that."

And then the brightly-colored Google van drove off to their next assignment.

NOTE: This story is in the format of "flash fiction," which allows a maximum of 1,000 words.