

## Fire with Fire

The Jeep trundled down the flawed Arizona blacktop, the tires roaring on the uneven road surface as the Eagles *Hotel California* blared from the radio.

Angus MacGyver didn't notice. He was clutching the wheel so tightly his knuckles were white, and his fingers strained.

Every now and again, he'd glance into the rearview and see an unfamiliar face look back at him.

The hair was the same long blond mullet as ever, but it was more disheveled, as if he didn't care anymore. And long gone were the clean-shaven features of a Phoenix employee who actually gave a damn, replaced by a dark beard that changed his whole appearance.

But then, a different look, for a different, *changed* man.

That was the whole point.

The Jeep coughed as if to sense his unease, and after a second, the growling engine cut out leaving the 4x4 to roll to a halt at the side of the road.

MacGyver sighed and looked wearily around.

There was nothing here for miles, save for a long dirt track with tumbleweed spinning wildly down it. The trail obviously led to a home of some variety, but who would actually *choose* to live in this hellhole was beyond MacGyver.

Reluctantly, he climbed from the Jeep and popped the hood, fiddling aimlessly with the engine as if he cared whether he got it running or not. After a moment, he ambled to the passenger door and retrieved a half-drunken bottle of tequila.

Mac turned the bottle over in his hand and then let out a long breath.

Before he could take a swig, a Ford pickup emerged from the nearby track and paused at the blacktop.

The thing looked like it had done several tours in 'Nam, complete with bullet holes. The paint – or what was left of it, was faded and in places rusted through, but the driver didn't seem to care.

As MacGyver watched, the man jumped from the cab, and it was quickly apparent that he was as scruffy as the vehicle he rode in. A torn blue plaid shirt hung out of his faded, filthy jeans, and long greasy, brown hair poked from beneath an oil-covered baseball cap.

The driver nodded to Mac, rubbed at the stubble on his chin in thought, then reached back into the Ford and retrieved a rifle. But this was no ordinary weapon; it was a state-of-the art, sniper's tool.

*Kinda unusual to pull a gun out when you find a stranded motorist.* MacGyver kept the thought to himself as the man approached.

“Hey there, looks like you got yourself a touch of car trouble?” The guy bobbed his head towards the stricken Jeep. “My names Boden, Marcus Boden. Anything I can do to help?” He sniffed as he spoke, as if he was assessing the situation.

MacGyver shook his head. “Nah, I think I spotted the problem. Loose lead to the distributor,” he offered, not taking his eyes from the rifle in Boden's hands.

It was a Barret, known to the military as an M107 – not exactly the twelve gauge local yokels usually carried. “Nice piece of hardware you got there.” He stared at the gun with an expression that screamed admiration.

Boden seemed to notice and he apparently liked the flattery. “Oh I know my weapons,” he oozed. “Got me a whole lot more back at my place.” He gestured back towards the trail. “I guess you could call me a “collector” of sorts.”

Mac nodded and finally took a swig of the tequila before offering it up to the other man.

Boden accepted, drinking hard. When he'd finished, he wiped his mouth across his shirt sleeve, tossed the bottle in the air and fired, obliterating it into a myriad of glistening shards that showered them like rain. “I can have any gun, any time,” he boasted with a grin that suggested his teeth got way less care than his weapons.

Mac didn't doubt the claim. In fact, he had hoped that was what Boden was going to say.

Because there was something he wanted – *badly*.

“There's a certain weapon I wouldn't mind getting my hands on, but let's just say I wouldn't want the hassle of all the paperwork to register it...” He waited, watching Boden's reaction.

Marcus sniffed and walked to the edge of the highway, looking out into the distance as if he expected a police cruiser or worse to come screaming over the horizon.

There was a stony silence, only broken by the caw of a bird flying overhead as it hunted its prey.

Eventually, Boden turned back, but there was no mention of guns. “You passing through these parts, or sticking around?”

MacGyver closed his eyes as if an extremely painful memory had been awakened. He shivered, and then seemed to push away the emotion to look back at Boden. His voice

had turned cold, and his features looked haunted. "I'm just drifting right now," he muttered. "Maybe I'll stick around tonight, though, if you know a decent motel?"

Boden laughed dryly. "I know lots of motels, but not one of them is decent around these parts." He raised a brow and pointed back the way MacGyver had come. "Bubbly Betty's is back that way. It's about as good as you're gonna get."

Mac nodded his thanks and slammed down the Jeep's hood, climbing back behind the wheel to crank the engine.

Boden waited, watching until the Jeep was back on the road before clambering back into his own truck.

Instead of carrying on with a journey, however, he simply turned around and drove back up the dirt track, as if his sole purpose had been to toy with MacGyver.

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***Bubbly Betty's Diner & Motel***  
***Interstate 10***  
***Near Ehrenberg***

MacGyver sat on the edge of his bed with his head in his hands. There was too much information going through his brain to process, and none of it was pleasant.

He looked up at the beat up table that he was supposed to dine on, and his eyes locked with the brown paper bag that took center stage.

Huffing, he stood up and ambled over to it, pulling out a full bottle of bourbon. He sat the Jack Daniels down and stared at it.

Outside, he heard the scuffling of boots and guessed he had visitors. Two seconds later, there was a rough knocking on his door.

"It's open," he said just loud enough for his guests to hear.

Marcus Boden slid the door open and breezed in, followed by another, younger man who seemed just as scruffy as his fellow traveler.

"I hope you don't mind my bro and me searching you out?" He turned and jerked a thumb. "This is Mitchell, my baby brother."

Mac sniffed as if he didn't care one way or the other. "What can I do for you boys?" He pointed to the bourbon. "Want a drink?"

Marcus shook his head. "Nah, this is more of a business call..."

"Oh?"

Mitchell stepped forwards, overshadowing his elder. Despite his age, his face seemed more grizzled – more battle-scarred and his frame was taller and stockier. “Let’s cut to the chase? The weapon you wanted with no strings attached?”

MacGyver smiled ironically. “Smith and Wesson 500, complete with ammo.”

Marcus chuckled. “You like ‘em big, huh? But do you got the money to pay for the size?”

Mac slipped a hand into his jeans pocket and brought out a wad of cash. He tossed it down next to the Jack Daniels. “Good enough?”

Mitchell took the wad, slowly counted the money and then looked at his brother. There were unspoken words between them. Then he tucked the cash into the top pocket of his torn denim jacket and nodded. “Okay...if you’re so interested, c’mon outside and take a ride with us.”

MacGyver thought about it, then grabbed the bourbon, cracked off the top and took a long gulp. “Why not,” he eventually conceded, following them out to the same Ford he’d seen earlier.

\* \* \* \*

The Bodens remained silent on the drive out to some unknown desert spot, and Mac didn’t care to make conversation with them. He was here for one reason only, and that didn’t really include socializing.

The little trip took about twenty minutes down the highway, and another twenty bouncing around over rough sand and rocks until they came to a small impromptu range.

It was a crude affair, obviously used by the Bodens as their play ground. Empty broken bottles littered the desert, along with obliterated soda cans and all manner of homemade targets.

Here and there, a broken skeleton of a small animal suggested the Bodens liked to play at killing too, but then that didn’t surprise MacGyver.

Marcus rubbed at the stubble on his chin again in habit as he watched Mac examining their handiwork. Then he began to set up more bottles and even some paper targets that billowed in the evening breeze.

“Jeez, if I’d wanted to play *Dirty Harry*...” Mac started to joke, but Mitchell cut him off, and he didn’t sound amused.

“You’re not *here to play*,” he barked. “You’re here to prove to us you can handle a 50 cal before we let you loose with one, money or not.”

*They’re testing me? Why?*

Mac shrugged. Just because there had been a time when he'd abhorred guns, didn't mean he couldn't use one quite effectively – the army had taught him that.

Otherwise, there would be no point in him trying to buy one now.

Mitchell returned to the pickup and came back with a Desert Eagle in his hand. “Not the greatest, but good enough to see if you can shoot, or if you're all mouth.” He pushed the automatic into MacGyver's palm and simply waited, staring with deep eyes that bored into whatever he looked at like a mining drill bit.

Mac turned away from the searching gaze and instead focused on the targets that had been set up for him. He felt the weight of the Eagle and swallowed hard.

This was bringing back recollections he'd rather have stayed buried. Pointing a rifle at Murdoc when he'd lost his memory. Or an automatic at Pete after he'd again gotten amnesia and been convinced his best friend was a bad guy.

The images in his brain blurred and moved further back in his history. Having to prove himself on the rifle range in the army before he could progress to bomb disposal, and then, the real crux of it all...

MacGyver's father showing him a gun, and that experience ultimately costing Jesse his life.

Mac suppressed the thoughts as best he could.

What he needed to remember was why he was here now.

He checked his weapon's clip and flicked off the Eagle's safety.

Then he turned to the first row of bottles, aimed, and then fired off three shots in rapid succession until all the targets were no more than piles of shattered glass.

Without pausing, he spun around to the paper targets, putting a hole right in the heart of every silhouette.

When he'd finished, Mac thumbed the safety back on and passed the automatic back to Mitchell. “Good enough?”

The brothers eyed one another, and then Marcus spoke up. “You'll do.” He slapped Mac on the back a little too heartily. “I'll get you the Smith and Wesson by tomorrow morning.”

MacGyver cocked a brow. “And just how do I know you won't take my money and run?”

More eye contact between the Bodens, and this time, it was Mitchell who finally broke the silence. “Because we have another little proposition for you, if you need work?”

“Who says I need work?”

Mitchell chuckled. “Well something has to pay for that drinking habit you seem to have.” He looked Mac up and down cheekily. “And you ain’t no lottery winner dressing and acting like that.”

MacGyver’s face screwed up as if he was getting angry, but just as quickly his features changed back into a smile. “Fair enough, you’re right, I’m...*between* jobs right now. If you have something, I might be interested. What’s it involve?” He rubbed at the back of his neck absently.

The Bodens wouldn’t be pushed.

Marcus headed back for their pickup without saying a word.

Mitchell stayed for just a second. “Stick around, we’ll be in touch,” was all he’d cryptically offer before joining his brother back at the Ford.

MacGyver watched them go, but even after they’d vanished over the horizon he couldn’t help but think about the sensation the Eagle had caused as it sat in his palm.

How the cold metal had felt against his skin, or how the recoil had made the muscles in his hand tense.

That, and the fact that he was now stranded forty minutes into the desert without a ride back to Bubbly Betty’s.

\* \* \* \*

### *Later that night...*

MacGyver had walked a couple of miles before he’d gotten back to the highway and been able to get a ride. Now, as he sat back at the table in his room, he was feeling tired and unsure of what he was getting himself into.

Part of his mind screamed to get in the Jeep and just leave, but the other half taunted him with what he needed to do, and why.

He stood up and walked into the tiny, slightly grimy bathroom to look in the mirror. It was crazy-cracked, but still good enough to see the stranger reflected back in it.

The person who had once been Angus MacGyver, hater of guns.

Mac stared into his own dark eyes, searching his soul, for what?

Forgiveness?

He rubbed at the beard that adorned his face, hiding the man, hiding the truth, perhaps?

Someone rapped at the door, breaking him from his thoughts, and he returned to the present.

“Come,” he simply invited.

Mitchell and Marcus breezed back in, and both pulled up chairs at his table, leaving MacGyver with no choice but to sit on the edge of his bed. He dropped down heavily and ran a hand through his unruly mullet.

“You look like a man who can’t sleep?” Marcus smirked as if he knew something, but then maybe he did. “Got a few skeletons in your closet, *Mac*?”

MacGyver looked up sharply. He’d never told either Boden his name. “And your point is?”

Mitchell stuck a hand under his jacket and came out with a large white envelope. He dropped it down onto the table. “We’ve been doing some digging. We like to know all about the people we offer jobs...”

Mac shrugged. “So, you got me. I’m a bad boy who got fired by his previous employer for misbehaving.”

“Oh, I think it was a little more than that.” Marcus emptied out the envelope and spread out several files, photos and newspaper clippings. He picked up the first. “Looks like one Angus MacGyver used to work for the Phoenix Foundation, and get this, he used to *hate* guns – wouldn’t even pick one up.” He paused, scrutinizing Mac for a reaction.

“That was...awhile ago. Another me.” MacGyver’s voice was low, and his eyes said they were reliving another painful memory.

Mitchell nodded. “You lost some girl on an assignment, what was her name again?” He picked up one of the files. “Oh yeah, one Dr Sharon Millward? That was the start of your little downward spiral out of control, wasn’t it?” He tossed the file down and picked up another, this one accompanied by a photo of Sam and Jack Dalton. “Of course, losing some stranger was nothing compared to losing your son and best friend because of your own mistake...”

MacGyver stood up and turned his back on both men. They were pushing too hard.

*Too damn hard...*

When he didn’t respond, Marcus joined in the tirade. “You could have saved them both if only you’d picked up a gun. But I guess you paid the price for that mistake. Your Phoenix file says you got a little psycho after that, even getting pulled off subsequent assignments for being fixated with the very things you used to hate. Eventually they fired you, didn’t they?”

Mac finally turned back to face Marcus, and there was moisture in his eyes. He clenched and unclenched his fists as if he had the uncontrollable desire to punch something – or someone.

But somehow, he kept his voice level, even if the guttural tone suggested anger. “So what’s the big deal? I learned the hard way that sometimes the only thing you can do is fight fire with fire. It was just a lesson I got taught too late to save my son...”

He moved to a cupboard, and pulled out another bottle of tequila. He shook it at the brothers.

“Guess the great Pete Thornton mentioned this in my Phoenix file too, huh?” Mac set in on the table in front of the Bodens. “The way I see it, you guys like guns, I like guns, what do you care how I got to be this way?”

“It might matter,” Marcus pushed. “We don’t want anyone working for us who’s...*emotions or morals* might let them down.”

MacGyver laughed suddenly. “Then you have nothing to worry about. I lost any sense of morality the day Sam and Jack died. The day I killed them by not acting...”

Mitchell picked up the tequila bottle and took a gulp. He savored the taste, licked his lips and then nodded to his sibling. “Fair enough,” he spoke to Mac. “You’ve got the job.”

“And that would be doing what?” Mac dropped back down on the bed, this time lying down with his hands clasped beneath his head on the pillow. He was staring at the ceiling, his mind racing again.

“You’re going into security for us. Specifically, the gateman at Fairmount Studios in L.A. The position is yours, no questions asked, no interview on site. All you have to do is turn up.”

MacGyver huffed. “*All* I have to do? C’mon guys, you don’t recruit someone from the side of the road to just baby sit a gate?”

Marcus’s pushed up from the table, looked down at the information spread out on it and then simply walked to the door. Mitchell followed like a sheep.

As they reached the opening, Marcus paused and turned. “Just be on time. You start Monday at 8a.m. Any further instructions you’ll get later, when *we’re* ready. Understood?”

MacGyver nodded silently, but made no move to get up from the bed as they exited.

He lay there until he heard the low grumble of the Boden’s’ Ford fade into the distance, and then clambered to his feet.

Mac checked the window, making sure both brothers had left.

Outside seemed quiet, but that didn't mean the Bodens didn't have someone watching him – they seemed the type.

He looked at his watch, waited a further five minutes, and then grabbed the Jeep's keys and his brown leather jacket.

The Jeep was close to the motel room door, and MacGyver scooted out to it as stealthily as was possible in broad daylight.

He glanced around, but apart from a few truckers daring to eat in the diner, the small lot was empty.

Mac cranked the 4x4's engine, gunned the gas and raced out onto the highway so fast he left a dark trail of rubber behind.

The Jeep groaned as he spun it too quickly out towards the desert and over the rutted, pothole-filled terrain, but he ignored its protests.

Every few seconds, MacGyver's dark eyes darted to the rearview, scouring the horizon for a tail.

So far he was in the clear.

He carried on for another mile anyway, being careful to put himself a good distance from Betty's without being out of range for his car phone to work.

Eventually, Mac pulled the dust covered Jeep to a halt and killed the engine. With one last look over his shoulder, he picked up the phone seated in the center of the car and dialed.

The number seemed to take an eternity to connect, and once it had, it rang in his ear even longer before the person the other end picked up.

Mac paused as he heard the voice on the line, the day's past events haunting him already.

Could he actually go through with this?

## ***Part Two***

“Pete Thornton.”

MacGyver swallowed hard. “Pete, it's Mac...”

There was obvious relief in Thornton's voice as he answered. “Thank heavens! I was getting worried something had gone wrong already.”

Mac thought about it.

For him, it was all very wrong – having to touch guns, let alone fire them was against every fiber of his being – and yet for Pete, to save lives, he had reluctantly agreed to do it.

His mind washed back to the events that had started it all, and he wished he could wipe them away like a sticky stain on a kitchen work surface.

*Four weeks earlier...*

MacGyver breezed into the Phoenix offices with a smile on his face and a twinkle in his eye. He'd spent the weekend at Sam's place messing with cameras and exposures, helping his son get a whole new outlook on what he could actually do with his talents as a photographer.

Not that Sam was any fool with a camera – he was more than good – but MacGyver always had a few tips and tricks to share when it came down to anything with chemicals involved.

The troubleshooter's grin broadened in pride as he thought about his son. *He's gonna win a prize some day.*

"Mr. MacGyver? Mr. Thornton will see you now."

Mac was broken from his reflection by an unfamiliar voice, and he looked up to see a stranger sitting in the seat of Pete's secretary. Nobody who knew Mac ever called him Mr. MacGyver.

The brunette appeared to sense part of what he was thinking and blushed. "I'm just covering for holidays," she seemed to apologize.

MacGyver smiled again and sauntered into Pete's office, only to find his old friend already had company.

Colonel Scott Woodward was taking up one of the huge leather seats in front of Pete's desk, and he wasn't looking very happy.

Not that he ever came across as that jovial a man at the best of times.

Mac had encountered him one before on an assignment to check out security at the Strategic Research and Development Administration, or STRADA, as they preferred to be called.

Woodward hadn't exactly been the greatest host on that occasion, but he had history with Pete, so Mac went along.

For the officer to be here now, something must be wrong he couldn't handle, and for Woodward to admit that, it had to be something bad.

“Mac, you made it.” Pete offered a thin smile and gestured for MacGyver to take the remaining empty seat, even though he couldn’t see him. “You remember Colonel Woodward?”

Mac dropped onto the chair and nodded to the officer. “I don’t think I’ll ever forget STRADA,” he admitted, thinking of the rogue computer that had tried to kill him. “Please don’t tell me they gave Sandy back any kind of control?”

Pete shook his head. “No...that’s not why Scott is here. I’m afraid we have an all-too human problem this time.”

Woodward set his cap on Pete’s desk and turned to MacGyver. He looked annoyed, but whether that was because of whatever situation was going down, or because he needed to ask for outside assistance was anyone’s guess.

“At the moment, I’m not part of the STRADA project anymore.” Woodward began to explain his position. “More pressing matters have come to my attention and they’re not something I can ignore. Over the last few months, several shipments of ordinance have gone missing. We’re talking about millions of dollars worth of rifles, ammunition and so on.”

MacGyver shifted uncomfortably on his seat. The mention of guns made him uneasy. Especially since Pete had called him in about this. “Isn’t that a job for the military police?” He asked, raising a brow.

The colonel sighed. “Normally, yes, but they’ve already supposed to have looked into this twice, and trust me, the investigation always seems to get squashed from high places.”

“We think there might be a corrupt officer involved,” Pete joined in. “From what Scott and I have already discovered, one General Brad Follett seems to be behind the cover ups. I’d say that probably puts him as our prime suspect for the actual robberies too.”

MacGyver sat forwards and eyed Woodward warily. For once, he couldn’t figure where the conversation was going, or why he might be needed. “Can’t you just take all this to someone *above* Follett?”

Woodward shook his head, rose from his chair and began pacing, hands behind his back. “If only it were that easy, but we have no hard evidence, and Follett is highly respected. Our only lead is a connection he has with two brothers – the Bodens. The Bodens are known gun traffickers and they’d have the right contacts to broker Follett a deal on such large shipments of arms. But again, we need proof its all happening.”

“And that’s where you come in, Mac,” Pete said, almost apologetically. “We need someone to infiltrate the Bodens and find out what they’re up to. Someone who can get us the evidence we need to convict them all, and find those weapons before they hit the streets.”

MacGyver scowled. Of all the assignments they could ask him to do, this was a real doozy.

“For those kinds of people to accept me into their circle and trust me, they’d expect me to carry a gun, be like them. You know how I feel about that, Pete.” Mac’s eyes narrowed and he bit his bottom lip.

“If you feel so strongly about guns getting into the wrong hands, then I would have thought this was right up your street,” Woodward was almost sarcastic. “I can’t trust any of my people, and Pete doesn’t have anyone else available he thinks is good enough. Are you saying you won’t do it?”

MacGyver was silent a moment. Any other assignment and he would have dived right in. But on this one, there was a good chance he’d have to not only handle guns, but use them. That thought wasn’t a pleasant one.

And yet, Woodward was right too – if Mac really believed guns were a bad idea, then shouldn’t he be part of the fight to stop hundreds of them getting into the wrong hands?

“Mac, these weapons could get to terrorist organizations, street gangs, organized crime syndicates. Can we really let that happen?” Pete was pleading, but his expression said he also understood his friend’s reluctance. “I understand, though, if you want to refuse...”

“Let’s say I’d consider it. What about my history? Everyone knows how I feel, and I doubt you’d get away with giving me a new identity.”

“We’ve thought about that,” Pete informed, handing over a pile of computer-printed files. “With one click of the keyboard, all of this information could be put out in cyberspace where it could easily be “discovered.” Basically, we’d be altering your files a little, but you’d still be Angus MacGyver – just with issues.”

Mac took a look at the printouts, flicking from page to page until he reached one certain section. “I’m turning loose cannon because I lost Sam and Jack Dalton?” He raised a brow, and a pained expression crossed his features as if the very suggestion was too much.

Woodward finally stopped his pacing and flopped back down. “How else could we sell it to the world that you went rogue, unless it was about your son?”

MacGyver had to admit, it made sense. But there were blank spots in the plan from where he was sitting. “So what if Sam or Jack actually get spotted in the mean time? I might be able to get Sam to lie low for a few weeks if his editor doesn’t have a job for him, but no one can control Jack Dalton, you know that!”

Pete let his fingers probe the desk until they found another file. He pushed it over. “Phoenix has a job for both Jack and Sam that will put them out of the country, and out of harm’s way. They’ll be totally incognito.”

MacGyver suddenly felt like he was being boxed into a corner. “What if they don’t accept?” He swallowed, half-hoping neither man would – then he wouldn’t have to face firing a gun again.

“They already have.” Woodward was smiling now, as if he’d won.

“Sam will only take the job if you agree,” Pete butted in quickly. “He says he’ll go with whatever you choose to do. And Jack, well, he’ll do anything if the price is right. You know that.”

Mac took down a long calming breath. Maybe if it meant saving lives, then he could also face his demons. “So, if I get the Bodens to trust me, what exactly am I looking for?”

Both Pete and Woodward seemed to relax.

“We know the Bodens have the ordinance,” Woodward intoned. “What we can’t discover is where they’re storing them. No evidence, no arrests. And of course, we can’t stop the guns getting into the wrong hands.”

MacGyver nodded. He could do this...

The memory from the office conversation began to fade in Mac’s mind as he heard Pete repeatedly ask him if he was okay.

“Yeah, Pete, I’m fine. Just worried about what I might have to do next. The Bodens have had me *prove myself* on a firing range already. I don’t like it. I have this feeling they’re going to put me in a very bad position. What if they ask me to actually hurt someone?” Mac’s voice gave away his fears as it cracked as he spoke.

“I know this is hard,” Pete soothed. “I wouldn’t have brought you in on it if there was anyone else. Just hang tight. I know you, and I know you’ll always do the right thing, guns or no guns.”

“Just firing at paper targets was bad enough. Accidents, deaths can happen so easily,” Mac sighed. “Let’s just get this over with, okay?”

“So what do they want from you?”

Mac glanced around outside the Jeep before answering. “That’s the weird thing. They’ve signed me up as the gate man at Fairmount Studios.”

Pete’s tone said he was incredulous. “They *what?*”

“Exactly!” Mac nodded to no one in particular. “There’s been no mention of weapons, at least not yet. But they’re up to something. Can you check out the studios for me and any staff that might be working with the Bodens?”

“Will do,” Pete affirmed. “And MacGyver? Hang in there, and be careful.”

MacGyver's lips creased into a wan smile. "Trust me, I intend to."

\* \* \* \*

*Fairmount Studios  
Hollywood  
California*

MacGyver had turned up at the studios exactly as he'd been told, and had quickly been directed to the head of security's office. The man, named Paul Gilmore, was short and plump with rosy cheeks that made him look like a gnome from a rather unpleasant fairy tale.

Mac chose to keep that fact to himself as he sat in front of Gilmore waiting for instructions.

Gilmore eyed him with disdain. "You ever heard of a haircut and a shave, boy?"

Mac thought about how to reply. He had no clue if Gilmore was a cohort of the Bodens, or just an *unwilling* accomplice. Either way, he couldn't afford to get fired at this point, but he needed to know how far he could push. "Yes sir," he replied without shying away from the question. "I just choose not to do either of them."

"Maybe not while you were unemployed, but while you work for me you'll be presentable. Make sure you get your act cleaned up." Gilmore sniffed, and then added. "If I didn't owe the Bodens a favor, you wouldn't be here at all..."

*So that answers my first question!*

MacGyver nodded as if he understood perfectly and suddenly found a uniform dropping into his lap. How Gilmore knew his size was a mystery, but he took it.

"This is a list of today's appointments and deliveries through the gate. If it ain't on the list, it don't get in, understood?"

Mac read through the paperwork. It was mostly writers coming in to pitch their creations, would-be actors auditioning for the latest shows, or simply trucks bringing essential goods.

One thing did stick out, however – two armored trucks from a local security firm. He tapped the sheet questioningly.

"Armored security trucks?" Mac raised a brow.

Gilmore didn't look amused at being grilled over his orders. "They're for set dressing on a new heist movie they're filming next month. Not that it has anything to do with hired goons like you!" He stood up from his desk, adjusted his belt and headed for the door. "Now will you just get into uniform and make it snappy? Oh, and send those

two trucks over to Lot B, that's where the rest of the stuff for that movie is being stored until they start shooting, okay?"

"Yes sir!" MacGyver tried his best to sound condescending, and snapped Gilmore a small salute. The move earned him a scowl before the elder man vanished out of the room.

*So, the Bodens have enough on this guy to make him put up with my sarcasm and not fire me...*

MacGyver pondered the thought while he got into uniform in the staff locker room. Bizarrely, the uniform was a perfect fit, but after donning the cap he decided the look was most definitely not one he wanted to keep.

Mac slid the cap back off again and hoped he didn't bump into Gilmore for the rest of the day.

After three hours of complete boredom in the gate room, ushering traffic through at regular intervals, it was finally time for a lunch break. Not that he intended dining.

The armored trucks on the list had arrived around 11a.m. and MacGyver's interest had been instantly peaked. They were large vehicles made for heavy loads, not the usual trucks that collected cash from banks and shopping malls.

These puppies would have fit right on in at Fort Knox.

He'd directed them exactly as he'd been instructed, but now Mac was wondering if he should have de-toured them elsewhere so he could take a closer look for himself.

Alex Morrell, another guard at the studio who was currently watching over the set of a Stallone movie waved to MacGyver as he came off his own shift to eat. "Hey Mac, are you coming over to the catering truck to grab a bite?"

MacGyver shook his head and started out for Lot B, when a thought hit him and he turned back.

Jogging over to Morrell he smiled amiably. "I wasn't going to bother eating, but I guess I can grab a cup of tea. I take it they actually have tea..?"

Alex grinned, and Mac guessed the idea of him being a tea drinker was the source of amusement, although the tall, graying guard at his side didn't actually pass verbal judgment.

"So, how's your first day? No big shot stars come through yet barking orders and showing just how rich and spoiled they are?" Morrell paused as they reached the catering wagon and eyed what was on offer.

"Nope, no stars, just boredom," MacGyver offered truthfully. "A couple of armored trucks came in for that new heist movie they're shooting, though. Word has it, it's

gonna to be a real blockbuster...” He let the sentence hang, waiting for Alex’s reaction.

Morrell pushed his wire-framed glasses up his nose and both his brows rose questioningly. “Huh? I didn’t even know there was a heist movie, let alone anything big budget. Are you sure you heard right?”

Mac shrugged. “What else would a movie studio want two huge security trucks for? It sure isn’t for our wages.”

Alex relaxed a little and chuckled as he finally decided on a hamburger.

Mac winced at the greasy, very unhealthy-looking food on offer and quickly made his excuses to leave, deciding that maybe the tea could wait until he got home.

Right now, he had two trucks to investigate, because he was pretty sure they were more to do with the Bodens gun operation than they were any Hollywood offering.

\* \* \* \*

MacGyver found both trucks exactly where he’d expected on Lot B. They were also locked, and the keys stored away in the nearby security booth.

Luckily, this area wasn’t used all that much, and the booth wasn’t manned most of the time. To add to his good fortune, Mac had also been given a key that would open it, and several other secured areas on accepting the job of gate guard.

*Another reason why the Bodens got me in here?*

He ambled over to the office and let his eyes wander around the disused sound stage. He couldn’t see any visible cameras, but it would be foolish to assume they didn’t exist.

That being said, he was employed as security, so entering the booth shouldn’t raise too many brows if someone was watching.

Mac slid the key into the door lock and moved quickly inside, closing the door behind him.

Keys to any vehicles on the lot were stowed in a metal cabinet on the wall. There seemingly wasn’t any need for any more security, given the studio was out of bounds to most, so MacGyver was able to slide a hand inside and pull out the right set in just a couple of seconds.

He rolled them over in the palm of his hand, wondering what he was about to discover. Had the Bodens hid some of the missing guns in these trucks?

Mac moved back outside, taking in every item he passed, every box, and every crate until he reached the first security vehicle. It was painted in white – the color of innocence, but would what it carried be the taker of lives he suspected?

MacGyver opened up the rear of the truck and clambered in, closing the heavy metal door behind him to hide what he was up to.

Inside was cold, and very full, but not of what he'd expected.

Instead of crates full of ordinance, the truck was filled to its weight allowance and beyond, with gold bars.

Mac whistled and quickly pulled out his pocket knife.

*Fake movie gold or..?*

He half-expected to be able to scrape off gold paint to reveal lead or some similar metal, but the more he tried to dig down with the blade, the more he realized the bars were real.

MacGyver sat back and had to do a double-take. There was millions of dollars worth of bullion here, and it had to be connected to the stolen weapons. He licked his lips, and stowed his knife back in his pocket.

He needed to talk to Pete, and maybe there was a phone back at the security booth. Whether it was a secure line or not was another matter, but he'd have to risk it.

Jumping out of the truck, he jogged back to the office and quickly found a phone hanging on the far wall. He breathed a sigh of relief when he realized he could reach an outside line, and dialed Phoenix's headquarters with a lump in his throat.

The whole involvement of so many guns was making him edgy, and he didn't like it.

After two rings, Pete Thornton answered, and MacGyver didn't give him chance to open the conversation.

"Pete, its Mac. I don't have much time, but I think something big is gonna go down at the studios, *and soon*. I just found two armored trucks full of gold on the back lot, and I don't mean the fake movie stuff."

"You think maybe it's a payoff for the weapons?" Pete appeared to theorize, and he didn't sound happy.

"That's my guess. The question is, how are they gonna make the exchange?" MacGyver began rifling through paperwork in the office files as he spoke, making good use of the time he had.

"Well, it's probably no help, but I checked out the studio and it appears to be squeaky clean. Whatever is happening is probably down to a few rogue employees using the place as a cover." Pete's voice dropped an octave as worry tinged his timbre.

“MacGyver, be careful – the guard you replaced was killed two weeks ago. It was made to look like a mugging, but I’m betting the Bodens were behind it because maybe he found something out or tried to double cross them.”

Mac nodded to no one. “So he was their first patsy, and it didn’t work out, so they recruited me?” He wedged the phone between his shoulder and his ear and started to read through several recent inventories. “Don’t worry, Pete, I don’t plan on leaving Sam on his own anytime soon.” He paused looking more closely at the file in his hand. “Look, I think I’ve found something. I’m gonna go check it out and I’ll let you know if it leads to anything.”

“Okay, but just don’t risk anything without backup.”

Mac smiled. “I wouldn’t dream of it. Although in this place I wouldn’t know a real cop from an extra...” He sensed Pete’s mouth open the other end of the line, but didn’t give him chance to complain.

Hanging up, MacGyver once again jogged back out into the cavernous sound stage and started to search for the crates he’d just spotted on one of the inventories.

According to studio records, they’d come in right about when the stolen gun shipments had vanished, and what made them even more suspicious was that they were listed as containing “prop weapons” for another none-existent war movie.

After about ten minutes, Mac found one of the boxes listed on the paper in his hand. He reached back into his pocket, and flicking open his knife blade began to gently pry at the lid on the container. Technically, the blade wasn’t big enough for the task at hand, but the troubleshooter took his time, easing at the timber until it finally came free with a creak of dry wood.

MacGyver brushed away packing material until a rifle became visible, but it wasn’t the M1 carbine on the record he held for some World War Two epic, it was an M4 – a new weapon he knew wasn’t even going into active service with the U.S. for a few more months.

*This has to be part of the missing shipments!*

And as much as he hated to admit it, Mac had to acknowledge that it was a pretty smart move to hide so many weapons on a movie back lot. Who would ever think to question them?

He took a deep breath and pushed the crate lid back down, hammering it home with the butt of a flashlight his security utility belt thankfully carried.

*Great, so now what? The Bodens must be thinking of making the exchange for the guns real soon for the gold to have arrived already...and like Pete says, I’m patsy number two.*

MacGyver looked around the prop items stockpiled on the lot, but he didn’t need costumes, Ming vases or a talking super car.

What he did need was definitely available without leaving Fairmount; he just needed to visit a couple of other “departments” to find them.

Locking the security truck back up, he checked his watch and realized he only had ten minutes of his lunch break left.

With a sigh he launched back into a jog – where he needed to go was on the south side of the lot, and getting there and then back to the gate room was going to be tricky.

But then, if the stakes were as high as he suspected, it would definitely be worth the effort.

\* \* \* \*

***Fairmount Studios Gate  
Twenty minutes later...***

MacGyver was still trying to catch his breath as he made it back to the gate room. Finding what he needed had been easy enough, but getting the person overseeing that particular area of the studios to relinquish the item had been tough.

Some fast talking had ensued along with a few white lies Mac had hated telling.

“Hey, MacGyver, telephone call for you!” Alex Morrell was hanging out of the gatehouse window, and had apparently taken over Mac’s position when he hadn’t returned on time.

*Probably a chewing out for this one later...*

Mac pushed an image of an angry and red-faced Gilmore out of his mind and stepped inside the gate room, taking the phone from Alex’s outstretched hand. “MacGyver,” he answered carefully, unsure whether he was speaking to the good guys, or the bad.

“You’re late back on your first shift...”

MacGyver instantly recognized the drawling voice of Marcus Boden, and the arms dealer didn’t sound happy.

“I’m here now. What’s the problem?” Mac snapped the response back with just as annoyed a tone as Boden. It was the only way to deal with these people.

Marcus chuckled, as if Mac’s defensive attitude amused him. Then his voice deepened into a low whisper. “Me and my bro will be coming on over in five minutes with a couple of friends of ours. You just make sure you’re the one on the gate then, and that we’re all on the list to get in. *Understand?*”

“Understood.”

Mac put the phone back in its cradle on the wall without further conversation.

This was it, the trade was going down, and he was required to get the four “dealers” inside. It was all making sense now.

He wanted desperately to call Pete and get the cavalry involved before any shooting started, but there just wasn’t time.

MacGyver had to handle this one on his own, and if he had learned anything about the Bodens in the short time he’d known them, it was that they weren’t the types to play fair.

There was a good chance this deal wouldn’t be clean, and bullets would fly.

But then, who would think anything of a little stray gunfire on a movie studio back lot?

Alex seemed to have noticed his unease. “Something wrong?” He asked, raising his right brow in apparent concern.

“Nah, nothing important.” Mac brushed off the call as best he could. He didn’t want any innocent people like Morrell getting hurt or worse.

And yet his gut still lurched every time he thought about the crates of guns, and where they might go if he was unable to stop the deal.

A horn blasted from behind the barrier outside, and he realized the vehicle waiting was the beat up Ford truck belonging to the Bodens. They’d made good time.

MacGyver picked up the list Gilmore had given him earlier and walked outside pretending to check it, even though he knew the pickup wasn’t on it.

After a moment, he pushed the button to raise the barrier and waved the truck inside.

Marcus pulled up outside the gatehouse and stuck his head out the side window. “Get in. I want you with us when this goes down.”

Mac’s eyes fleetingly glanced to the gatehouse. He couldn’t just leave his post without arousing Alex’s suspicions that something was indeed wrong after all. “Gimme a second, I gotta make an excuse...”

Boden waited silently as Mac jogged back to the gatehouse window. “Alex, can you cover me for a few minutes? I need to show these people where to go.”

The other guard’s expression said he didn’t believe MacGyver, but he nodded anyway.

*But will he try and follow, or call the police?*

Mac hoped Alex chose neither option, or things could get bloody. He remembered the sniper rifle Marcus had been carrying back out in Arizona. Was it still in the truck?

Or worse?

He hopped onto the tailgate of the Ford and banged on the side, indicating he was ready, and the truck shot off in the direction of Lot B.

Marcus had most definitely been here before with his little gun smuggling operation. He knew the lay of the land too well.

\* \* \* \*

The pickup slid in next to both armored trucks and Marcus killed the ignition. He hopped from behind the wheel, to be followed by his brother and two strangers.

MacGyver dropped down from the rear bed and eyed them carefully.

They were much better dressed than the Bodens, both in their mid-forties, and both packing shoulder holsters from the bulges under their leather jackets.

The apparent “boss” of the two had a graying beard and piercing blue eyes that made him almost as chilling as Marcus – *almost*.

“I want to examine the goods before we discuss terms...”

“Of course you do.” Marcus smirked and held out a hand to a nearby crate. “And you won’t be disappointed.” He plucked a tire iron from under his jacket and began to pry at the wooden lip until the lid tore free.

The bearded man stepped forward and rummaged inside until his fingers met one of the rifles. He pulled it out and began to scrutinize it, stripping the weapon to check its authenticity. His companion moved to do the same with a second rifle.

MacGyver watched with morbid fascination. How could he stop four men with an arsenal at their disposal?

Mitch Boden moved furtively to Mac’s side and gestured with his head that they should step behind one of the larger crates while the other men carried on their appraisal.

It was an unexpected move, but MacGyver followed the instruction, waiting until they were hidden from view before speaking. “*Exactly what* did you need me here for?” He asked, a hint of derision in his voice. “I got you in, what more do you want?”

*A lot more, I think*, he worried internally.

Mitch put a finger to his mouth and his lips curled into a mock smile. He was apparently enjoying toying with MacGyver. “Those trucks over there that you let in? They’re full of gold as payment for the guns you see those guys playing with. Thing is, we ain’t about to let those dudes take *any* weapons. Why should we, when we can keep both and do this all over again?”

Mac let his face melt into a smile, even though inside his stomach was doing cartwheels at the implications. “A double cross. Why am I not surprised?”

Mitch bobbed his head and looked over his shoulder suggestively, even though the other men weren't visible from where they stood. “Yeah, and now it's time for you to play your starring role.” He pulled a Beretta from under his jacket and offered it up. “We want them both disposing off.”

MacGyver backed up until he could feel another crate digging into the back of his legs. There was nowhere to run in this confined spot, and if he refused to kill the buyers, it was obvious what the next option would be.

He shook his head. “I never signed up to kill anyone....”

Mitch spun the automatic around in his hand until it was pointing at Mac. “You must have known there was a good chance after that little shooting match we put you through? After your track record, why chicken out now?”

MacGyver swallowed hard, his hands raised slightly in submission. “Because all I am to you is a patsy – someone to blame when this thing goes sour and they find the bodies. Otherwise, you'd be disposing of them yourself.”

“True, but seeing as I'm the one with the gun, do you have a choice? Kill or be killed, MacGyver.” Mitch flicked the safety off the gun and waved it. “What's it to be?”

Mac drew in a long breath. Even if he *could* kill the buyers, the Bodens next move would be to kill him. No way would they leave anyone alive who could tell tales.

No, whichever way it played, he was a dead man.

Just standing and taking a bullet without even putting up a fight wasn't an option he cared for either.

“I think I'll take the third choice!” Mac made a dive to his left, barging into a row of cardboard boxes piled at least three high.

The boxes caved under his weight, and MacGyver hoped their sudden movement would give the buyers enough warning that something was “off” so that they too could make a run for it.

Mitch responded by tugging back on the Beretta's trigger several times, his well practiced aim giving him a better than average chance of hitting a moving target.

MacGyver felt several slugs tear into the cardboard he was now entangled in and he tried desperately to get to his feet and run.

The roman costumes stored in the boxes were long and silky, making his exit all the more difficult.

He eventually tore free and rolled, hoping Mitch would give up on him as he heard the buyers begin to yelp in alarm.

But Mitch was nothing if not efficient when it came to a hunt.

MacGyver heard the rapport of another two shots, and this time, he felt them hit home in his back as he tried to flee.

The force of the slugs sent him tumbling forwards and he hit the concrete of the sound stage floor hard, his limbs splaying out like a plush toy. He tried to move, but found the pain in his spine was too much – the only thing left was to succumb to it.

Mitch Boden looked down as Mac's head slumped to one side and he smirked. If he'd had the time, he'd probably have put an extra slug in the flunky's skull for good measure, but MacGyver's little stunt had forewarned the buyers of the Bodens intentions, and Marcus was now in need of his brother's help to silence them.

Mitch kicked MacGyver's lifeless body with the toe of his boot and then turned to join Marcus in the fight. There would be time later to either strategically place, or dispose of the body.

### ***Part Three***

On hearing the ruckus MacGyver had created, the two buyers had instantly become defensive.

The elder man had pulled a .38 revolver from his holster and ducked behind a pallet containing a huge smoke machine. His partner had made a dive to the left, fired off two shots from his own weapon, and then darted for the sound stage's open door.

Mitchell attempted to follow him, using the Beretta he'd shot MacGyver with to empty a clip at the man. Despite his usually accurate marksmanship, he managed to miss his target, the slugs slamming into set dressing harmlessly.

At the door, the buyer turned and returned several shots of his own, giving his boss enough cover to join him.

For once, the Bodens were being outsmarted, and outgunned by the people they'd planned to dupe.

Marcus jumped into the cab of the Ford and pulled out the powerful sniper rifle he kept stowed behind his seat, but before he could get a shot off, the two buyers had vanished out into the open back lot of Fairmont.

If they followed, they risked being exposed.

"Let them go," Marcus finally barked. "We still have the guns and their gold, and we'll be long gone from here before they can do squat about it."

Mitchell seemed to growl under his breath at having to give in to anyone, but he flicked on his safety and tucked the automatic in his belt.

“Just what the hell happened anyway?” Marcus was scowling as he looked at the mayhem around him, including MacGyver’s bloodied body. “You were supposed to get him *to kill them*, not you kill him.” Boden nudged Mac’s outstretched hand with the toe of his boot.

“He wasn’t buying it,” Mitchell huffed. “I tried to take him out before he spooked those guys.”

Marcus wasn’t convinced. “Well you failed, *miserably*.” He sounded annoyed, but then his face cracked into a grin and he patted one of the security trucks. “Still, General Follett will be more than happy to know we have the goods *and* the gold.”

“And what about him?” Mitchell pointed to where Mac still lay. “We can’t just leave his body here, can we?”

Marcus thought about it a moment and then jerked a thumb to one of the boxes that had been busted open during the firefight. It contained large Hessian sacks. “Put his body in one of those things and stow it in the truck you take. Once we get on Follett’s boat and are out to sea, we can dump it overboard.”

Mitchell looked uneasy about the idea. His gaze scoured the floor as if he wanted to say something, but couldn’t look his brother in the eye to do it.

Marcus noted his brother’s nervous manner and shook his head. “Now *what?*”

“So we’re just supposed to take the gold to Follett, get on his boat and sale away, happy ever after? I don’t like it, Marcus...it feels wrong...” Mitchell finally looked at his brother.

“Stop thinking so much and just get MacGyver’s body put away, will you?” Marcus cut off any further thought of conversation by simply walking away to collect the keys to both trucks.

Mitchell watched him go, his face a mask of apprehension. When Marcus vanished into the security booth, he finally moved and grabbed one of the rough sacks littering the ground.

Walking over to Mac’s body, he stared a moment, pondering how to lift the dead weight into the bag. Eventually, he grabbed MacGyver’s boots, stuffed them in the opening to the sack, and then forcibly rammed the remainder of the lifeless corpse inside.

By the time he’d finished, Mitch was sweating hard. He moped at his brow with his sleeve, tied the top of the sack, and then brusquely dragged his kill into the nearest truck.

As he reached the rear door, he heard a whistle, and looked up to see Marcus dangling keys in his hand.

Marcus tossed them, and it was all his little brother could do to catch them as they bounced off the rear of the truck.

Mitchell cursed, dragged the body inside, and then clambered behind the wheel, glad to have finally finished his task.

It was one thing to kill someone, but he really, really hated the follow up work.

\* \* \* \*

An hour after leaving Fairmount, Mitch Boden finally pulled his security truck up at the quayside where they were supposed to meet Follett. Behind, he heard the engine of the second security vehicle and knew his brother had also arrived.

He waited, knowing Marcus would be the one to do the talking with Follett. Marcus was always in charge when it came down to big money.

A metal door slammed, and two seconds later Marcus sauntered past and headed towards a schooner that was the nearest moored vessel.

Mitch exited his cab and followed closely behind, examining the ship they were supposed to escape on as he walked.

If what he'd been told was true, General Follett had hired the schooner and they'd all be leaving the country on it. That was the part Mitchell had trouble swallowing.

Follett wasn't their kind – not at all. He wouldn't want to be at sea with what he considered low life, would he? Not even if said low lives were making him rich.

But every time Mitch broached the subject with his brother, Marcus got all defensive.

“Where have you been? You're late!”

Mitchell looked up to see a middle-aged man in civilian clothes grouching at Marcus. It was Follett, and he was already out of uniform and apparently enjoying the good life at their expense.

Marcus ignored the General's griping and spat chewing tobacco on the floor in front of Follett's designer shoes. “We're here now, and we have the gold. You better get your people stowing it on board real fast, though. Things didn't go down quite the way we planned.”

Follett peered down at his shoes and looked relieved when he realized Marcus had missed them with his little projectile. He sniffed haughtily and then gestured to several men standing nearby to begin moving the trucks' payloads.

“Should I expect trouble?” Follett eventually grumbled, as if he were drilling a platoon.

Marcus shrugged and peered back at the truck Mitch had driven. “Things got messy at the studios. We had to kill our inside man.”

Follett groaned. “We were supposed to keep him alive until the guns were moved out to open the damn studio gates. This will complicate things.” He watched as his people moved trolleys with their loot on towards the schooner. One trolley held a large canvas sack. “And *what* is that?” He demanded.

Marcus chuckled. “Why, that’s the inside man. Or what’s left of him after my bro filled him full of lead.”

“You’re taking a body, on my schooner?” The general sounded incredulous.

Marcus apparently found the situation more and more amusing. “No sir, I’m tossing a body *off your* schooner. Or at least I will be, when we get out to sea.”

The news seemed to placate Follett somewhat and he returned to watching the men moving the gold into the hold of the ship. His eyes remained glued to each small trolley as they were rolled back and forth, his brain seemingly counting how rich he was becoming.

After an hour or so, the work was complete, and Follett paid off his small workforce with a wad of cash for each – all in hundred dollar bills.

Mitch observed the deal from the bow of the schooner, wishing Follett had had the sense to “remove” the workers afterwards rather than pay them. Dead they could do no harm, but simply paid off, they could do real damage.

Follett seemed oblivious and began casting off from the quay as if he were simply going on vacation.

Mitch stared back at the coast as the schooner got under way suddenly wishing he wasn’t leaving the country of his birth forever. Money was one thing, but was it worth losing everything else for?

The sound of the boat’s engines drowned out any further thoughts as Follett increased power now that they were out of the harbor. It was much simpler than trying to sail the schooner with only one man on board that had any experience.

Mitch grunted and headed below deck in search of anything he could find alcoholic. After the day’s events, he needed a drink badly.

\* \* \* \*

The schooner had been heading out to sea for what Mitch Boden guessed was about an hour when the engines abruptly stopped. He let his eyes lock with his brother’s and they both hastily climbed the wooden steps up to the main deck.

Follett was dropping anchor as they emerged, and nodded to them his face almost unreadable.

“Something wrong?” Marcus raised a brow and was already scanning the open ocean as he spoke.

Follett shook his head and pointed to the canvas bag that sat innocently next to the wheel. “I thought it was time our passenger disembarked. You two care to do the honors?”

Marcus wavered, the scotch he’d been downing going to his head in the cool sea breeze. He grabbed at the rail to his left, steadied himself and then swallowed. “I guess we can do that...”

“I’ll take care of it.” Mitch carefully pushed past his teetering sibling, and rolled his eyes skywards in mock disdain. “You’re in no fit state...”

Marcus hiccupped and raised a hand to argue, but then almost lost his balance. He reaffirmed his grip on the railing until his knuckles lost all color, and decided to watch his brother do all the work.

Mitch grabbed the sack containing MacGyver and huffed when he remembered how heavy a dead body really was. With a groan, he yanked the bag to the edge of the deck, and then used his boot to push it over.

The sack splashed into the rolling waves and instantly began to sink.

Mitch turned to grin at Marcus, but his smile dissolved instantly as he found himself staring down the barrel of an automatic.

Follett kept enough distance between himself and both the Bodens – he was no fool – he was trained to kill, after all. “You know, you were really never part of my retirement plan.”

“Stop fooling around and put that thing away!” Marcus somehow seemed to think the threat was a joke in his stupefied state.

Follett showed him otherwise.

With one jerk of the trigger, Follett sent the drunken gun runner flailing into the ocean with a huge hole in his chest. He turned, almost robotically and fired again at Mitchell.

Boden dived for the deck, using the split second of warning he’d had to try and miss a slug.

The move only half-worked and a bullet slammed into his left ankle, obliterating the bone there.

He screamed in agony and reflexively clutched at the wound instead of trying to get away. The mistake earned him another bullet, this time to the skull.

Mitch slumped backwards, his ankle forgotten as his brain was turned to pulp.

Follett remained emotionless as he slipped the gun into an ankle holster and then hoisted the body overboard.

There had never been any question that he would share his good fortune, and now he didn't have to.

Mitch began to sink the moment his lifeless form hit the water. His arms and legs floated outwards and tiny bubbles of air ebbed from the corner of his mouth as he sank deeper.

Just below him, the Hessian sank was sinking too, but it was far from lifeless.

Something inside wriggled, and at the corner of the bag, the blade of a pocket knife worked frantically to free its owner.

Seconds ticked by, and the bag finally succumbed to strength and willpower as well as the cutting edge that tore at it.

MacGyver broke free from his watery tomb and kicked hard for the surface before the air in his lungs gave out.

He could see the underside of the schooner looming through the gloom of the ocean and headed for its mass, swimming hard until he finally broke through the waves and gulped down air until it burned.

The schooner was still anchored, and after regaining his breath, and his composure, he headed for it, careful that no one on deck could see or hear his approach. He'd spotted the Bodens sinking bodies on his way to the surface, so he knew that probably only left Follett onboard.

That had evened up the odds in his favor.

A small rope ladder hung from the aft of the boat, and Mac dared to use it to clamber back on deck. He slid behind the edge of the rear cabin and ran a hand through his soaked hair in thought.

The motion caused the muscles in his back to spasm and pain spiked down his spine.

Mac grimaced, remembering all-too well the slugs that had slammed into him earlier.

Tugging off his waterlogged security jacket, he smiled at what lay beneath.

The Kevlar vest he'd "borrowed" from the studio armory had undoubtedly saved his life, but now it was wet, cumbersome and extremely uncomfortable. He quickly

removed it, marveling at the squashed bullets that were still wedged in it beneath the fake blood he'd gotten from the makeup department.

*Thank heavens it wasn't just a prop too, his mind gratefully offered as he dropped the vest to the deck. Now I just have to stop Follett before he gets any ideas about putting any more holes in me...*

Mac licked his lips and moved forwards until he was peeping around the edge of the cabin, his back forced firmly against the varnished wood.

Follett was right where he'd shot Mitch Boden, cleaning the deck planks furiously as if he didn't want blood staining his precious boat.

MacGyver winced at the man's tactless, unfeeling attitude. But then, a man who could sell guns to anyone with the right cash had no conscience anyway.

Follett suddenly stood up from his work as if he'd heard or sensed MacGyver's thoughts, and spun around so fast he caught Mac completely off guard.

The general's eyes widened as he spotted the interloper on his deck, and he immediately retrieved his gun from its holster.

Mac looked longingly at the cabin door that lay ajar right next to him, but there was no way he'd make it below now without taking a bullet.

He raised his hands slowly, his pupils expanding just a touch at the sight of the barrel now aimed at his chest.

*Why the heck did I take that vest off?* He mentally chided.

Follett moved forwards, tossing down the brush he'd been scrubbing at the wood with in favor of his new target. "You're the guard from Fairmount right? The Bodens told me all about you, right down to your scruffy hair and beard."

Mac shrugged. "You mean this isn't all the rage?" He quipped, rubbing at his beard with his right hand. "And here I was thinking I was making a fashion statement..."

Anger filled Follett's beady eyes, but he didn't waver. "The story you told Marcus and Mitchell, that was just a cover wasn't it? Who do you really work for?"

"I didn't tell the Bodens a story at all. They came up with that all on their own." Mac edged backwards just a touch, but it didn't go unnoticed.

Follett took a step forwards to compensate. "You know what I think, MacGyver?" He drawled. "I think you really don't like guns, just as your Phoenix profile suggested. I've served my country long enough to know a coward when I see one."

Follett pulled an extra weapon from his waistband, and Mac guessed it was one the Bodens had dropped during the fight earlier.

The general tossed the weapon onto the deck and then kicked it the extra distance until it stopped in front of MacGyver. “Pick it up.”

Mac swallowed hard, but didn’t move. This was one of the kill or be killed moments he’d suspected might happen if he took this assignment, and unlike back at the sound stage, he couldn’t see a way out. There were no boxes to dive into here.

Follett’s expression warped into a sneer. “I said *pick it up!*” His long fingers grasped the automatic’s grip just that bit tighter as he anticipated what would, or rather wouldn’t come next. “If you don’t defend yourself, I’ll shoot you dead where you stand.”

“And get more blood on that nice shiny deck?” MacGyver couldn’t help the sarcasm. It was a mechanism he often used to chide his enemies and knock them off kilter why he came up with a plan.

But that wasn’t why he’d said it to Follett. No, Follett was one of the few people he truly despised. A man who wore a uniform suggesting he would defend his country and its people – would die for them if it was asked of him – and yet Follett was the opposite of everything he was supposed to uphold.

“You’re a coward,” Follett continued his tirade as if he’d never heard the derisory comment. “I hate men like you, who think you can win without using the right tools.” He nodded towards the gun on the deck, and his finger tickled the trigger of his own weapon, eager to pull back just that little bit further.

MacGyver watched Follett’s nervous finger move and knew time was running out. The general meant every word he was saying, and any second now, he would fire his gun if Mac didn’t take a dive for the one on the floor.

There was no way out.

MacGyver could stand and do nothing and die, or he could try and retrieve the other gun, and most probably die.

If he actually got the gun off the deck without taking a bullet first, then what?

Could he really shoot Follett to save his own life?

Mac closed his eyes, took a long calming breath and then finally made his choice.

#### ***Part Four***

As Follett finally pulled back on the trigger, MacGyver dived forwards and slightly to the left, hoping the minor deviation would cause his opponent to miss.

As he rolled, Mac reached out and grabbed the gun where it had been tossed. The metal was cold and uninviting in his hand, and he instantly wanted rid of the thing.

Follett would have no such feelings, though, and the troubleshooter knew it.

Reluctantly, Mac took aim and let off one single shot – not at the general, but at the rope holding a block and tackle over Follett’s head.

The line snapped as the slug tore into it at close range, and the block tumbled down, cracking the officer on the left of his temple. The blow jarred the gun in his hand, and his second shot went wide. He pulled back again reflexively on the trigger without aiming as he sprawled forwards onto the deck, momentarily stunned.

Mac took the reprieve as a sign to retreat and ducked into the cabin, taking the stairs two at a time down into the galley.

But on a schooner this size, was there really anywhere to hide?

He looked down at the gun in his hand and knew there was no way he would use it again, not even to fire at an inanimate object. He had to find another way.

\* \* \* \*

Follett stumbled to his feet, his body swaying from the blow he’d taken to the head. He realized he probably had a slight concussion, but he would push through the throbbing and nausea until he had taken MacGyver. That was all he cared about now.

The general had done some big game hunting in his time, but somehow the chase was so much more thrilling when the target was a man.

He moved cautiously forwards and peered down below. From here he couldn’t see much, but could he really have missed MacGyver with all three of his shots?

Follett was an accomplished marksman out on the range, and he doubted that all three bullets would have gone astray. But then, hadn’t the Bodens already shot this man once and he’d lived?

Follett took a look around before daring to go below deck, looking for any information that would improve his chances “in the hunt”. Behind the cabin, he found what he was looking for – a bulletproof vest with two holes in the back.

So, MacGyver no longer had any protection.

The general sneered and tentatively took a few steps onto the ladder that lead to the galley. He was still wobbly, but at least his eyes were focusing better now.

He let his gaze wash over the cabin floor, looking for signs of blood or anything to indicate he’d hit his quarry.

In the galley, he paused and smirked.

There was a small puddle of crimson by the varnished louver door that led further aft, and on the wall, there was half a handprint in blood. Underneath the print, on the work surface, was the gun MacGyver had used on the block and tackle.

Follett picked up the weapon, noting that it had been stripped and rendered useless. He shrugged. If MacGyver wanted to have even less of an edge, then that would be his funeral.

The general moved on, following a blood spatter here and there that was obviously leading to the engine room. He felt his senses tingle in anticipation, almost wishing the other man hadn't been injured.

It wasn't exactly a fair fight now, but then, did he really have time for all this nonsense anyway, with all the gold on board?

The thought of how rich he now was excited him more, and he suddenly wanted Mac dead and overboard, so he could relish his newfound wealth that little bit faster.

As he approached the door to the engines, he slowed. It was ajar and he could see more blood drops leading behind one of the motors.

Follett cocked his head, listening, taking in his surroundings, weighing up the situation. He licked his lips and stepped behind the 240hp MAN diesel and stopped, his face ticking into a satisfied sneer.

MacGyver was slumped against the stopped engine, his right side covered by a dark and sickly red stain that had ebbed out onto the floor and pooled there. He was motionless, his head lolled against the motor like a marionette that had had its strings cut.

The idea of such an easy victory made Follett's heart pound in his chest, and he ambled over, leaning to feel for a pulse, just to make sure.

Before his hand was able to touch flesh, however, he felt something curl around his ankle and yank him upwards.

Follett managed to get a shot off, but then the automatic tumbled uselessly from his hand with the help of gravity as he became airborne. From the angle he'd been hoisted up, he was forced to look at the floor, only to realize his idiotic mistake.

MacGyver had left a small noose ready for the general to step into, and "dead Mac" had been the bait. Once Follett's foot had been inside the curl of rope, Mac had made a dive, pulling on the other end of the line, which he'd attached to a smaller block and tackle on a ceiling beam.

The end result was Follett dangling upside down in midair, totally disarmed and at Mac's mercy.

MacGyver kicked away Follett's fallen weapon and then quickly searched for more rope. Once he'd found something suitable, he tied the general's hands and carefully let him down onto the floor.

Follett struggled against his bonds, not trying to hide his frustration and anger. His face clouded over a shade of scarlet as his blood pressure skyrocketed at being caught. "You were bleeding," he protested.

MacGyver shrugged. "Oops," he smiled. "That wasn't exactly blood." He pulled at his shirt, showing the other man just how tacky it was. "Amazing what you can find in a ship's galley. A little syrup for thickness, a little ketchup for color and just a touch of cocoa powder to get that brownish tinge that makes it all seem real."

Follett was incredulous. It was inconceivable that he'd missed with all three shots. He trembled in nervous agitation, not believing what his eyes were telling him. "I shot you, I must have..."

Mac shook his head. "Sorry, no extra holes in me, and trust me, I'd know..." He paused, mid-sentence and winced. Something was apparently bothering him. He ran a hand through his disheveled hair. "Do you smell something?"

Follett sniffed obediently, and found himself answering, even though he had no desire to aid the other man. "I smell diesel."

MacGyver nodded and took two strides over to the motors. After a quick inspection, he discovered the main fuel line to both engines had been severed by the stray bullet Follett had gotten off when he'd been caught. He turned back to the other man. "Stick around. I think we might have to improvise."

\* \* \* \*

MacGyver jogged back into the galley and then up to the main bridge area, then began to look around for the radio. While he was okay with rowing boats, and even small sailing boats, Mac was well aware that he wasn't a good enough sailor to get the schooner back home without engines.

It was simply too big for him to handle on his own.

Spotting what he was looking for in the top part of the cabin, Mac retrieved the mike and clicked it, noting at the same time the ship's name on a small brass bell to his left. "This is schooner... *Little Rebecca* requesting Coast Guard assistance."

There was a hiss and a pop, and then a disembodied and very welcome voice answered. "This is ISC Alameda; please state the nature of your problem?"

MacGyver paused. He didn't really need to go through the whole story – he could do that once he was on dry land. For now, he just needed help getting there. "The ship's engines are out and I can't sail her on my own. Do you have a cutter in the area that could tow me in?"

There was a pause and a slightly curt response. “Sir, can I ask why you took a schooner out without any crew members, save for yourself when you don’t appear to have the skills to sail her?” The man the other end obviously thought MacGyver had more money than sense and was wasting government cash needing to be saved.

*I guess I owe them some kind of explanation after all...*

Mac clicked the mike again. “I didn’t,” he confessed. “I work for the Phoenix Foundation and am on an assignment for them that shall we say, got a little messy. If you speak to Pete Thornton he’ll give you more details, but right now I’m kinda stranded...”

The pause was even longer this time, and MacGyver guessed the radio operator was conferring with a superior, or maybe even calling Phoenix.

Eventually, another man came on the line. “I’m Captain Markham. Can I ask who I’m speaking with?”

Mac smiled to himself. “Name’s MacGyver, but most people call me Mac.”

“I wish I had better news, Mr. MacGyver, but there’s a storm heading your way, and even if you knew how to sail the schooner without the engines, you wouldn’t be able to. The squall would probably tear your sails to pieces if you deployed them.”

Mac bit his bottom lip, and then ran a hand reflexively through his hair out of habit. “And you don’t have a ship near enough to help out?” he guessed.

“No sir, not at the speed the storm is coming in. You need to get out of there and fast.” Markham wasn’t hiding any of the concern he had. “Is there no way you can rectify the engine problem?”

Mac puffed out a breath, thinking of what might be on board. So far, the galley had been a great source of things to work with. He clicked the mike one last time. “Stand by ISC Alameda. I’m gonna try something...”

Mac hung the mike back in its cradle and took a peek out of the window. The sky was already filling with dark clouds that raced across the heavens, billowing and growing as he watched.

The normally blue and placid sea was beginning to change, too. The waves were no longer calm and inviting, but choppy and rough, making the schooner bob up and down like it was sitting on a giant spring.

MacGyver didn’t wait any longer. He took the steps back down into the galley and let his eyes roam around the kitchen.

Follett’s bullet had torn through the diesel line to the engines from the tank and the precious fuel was now dripping out onto the compartment floor. If he cranked the engines, it would pump everywhere, except where it was actually needed.

*Okay, so I need the right diameter pipe or tubing...*

There didn't seem to be anything immediately on offer, but then it hit Mac – what about the gas line to the cooker? Sometimes they were solid pipes, but others, they were rubber.

MacGyver grabbed the cooker and began to yank it forwards, tearing it away from the wall mounts that held it in place, and leaving four holes in the wood behind.

Once it was far enough forwards, he leaned over it, and let out a long breath when he saw a significant length of rubber hose.

This just might work.

He wedged the cooker back into place and began rummaging underneath, looking for the emergency cut off valve before he severed the tubing. He didn't want gas escaping all over the schooner, after all.

Flicking the valve to “off” he pulled out his pocket knife and cut the hose at both ends, making sure he had enough length to fix the fuel line. Fuel lines tended to be made of special material to stop the hose perishing due to chemicals in the diesel, but the gas hose would hold until the *Little Rebecca* got home.

Racing back to the engine room, Mac made a beeline for the damaged pipe and measured the impromptu one at its side. He grimaced as he realized it wasn't going to be a good fit on the tank outlet hose.

*Think MacGyver, how do I reduce the diameter this end?*

What Mac needed was something that narrowed and could be inserted into both pipes. He chewed on his bottom lip until it came to him. Some ball point pen tops were the right shape, and they usually had a hole in the top too, to stop kids choking on them if inadvertently swallowed.

He dived back into the galley, checking all the drawers, but the general was nothing if not neat. Only cooking utensils adorned this kitchen.

So where *would* Follett keep a pen?

MacGyver made his way up the stairs and back onto the bridge area. Everyone kept a pen near a radio, right?

Except the work surface was perfectly empty.

He yanked out the drawer beneath it, and sighed with relief when he spotted a note pad with a pen neatly tucked down the ring binding.

Mac slid out the pen and took a look at the top. It was a Bic, with just the right shape for his fuel line “reducer”. But shape wasn't everything, would the diameters work? He clenched the top in his palm and once again returned to the engine room.

As he approached the line, Follett watched him, apparently curious as to what all the fuss was about.

“Why don’t you just cut me loose, and I can make a few calls. We could both be rescued and be rich men if you’d just trust me?” His beady blue eyes searched Mac’s expression, possibly for a glimmer of greed.

There was none.

“Like the Bodens trusted you?” MacGyver offered as he took off the pipe to the fuel pump and tried the pen’s wider end.

Follett shrugged. “They were fools.”

MacGyver shook his head. He didn’t even want to have a conversation with Follett. Half the time his attitude and morals seemed to make him seem something other than human.

Instead, the troubleshooter focused on his task. The wide end of the top fit the line. It was tight, but with a little brute force and a jubilee clip, it was on.

Next he came to the all important part, would the narrow end fit into the different diameter line he had from the tank?

The first attempt was a failure. The tapered end of the top was actually too slim, and wouldn’t hold once he tried tightening another clip around it.

MacGyver puffed out a breath and pulled his knife from his pocket. Being careful not to shave off too much, he began slicing at the very end of the top like he was whittling down a piece of wood – just like a true sailor.

He tried the joint again, and this time, the clip stayed fast.

But would the line hold once he started up the engines and the pump kicked in, adding extra pressure?

Mac stole a glance at Follett, and then hit the scarlet red start button that fired up both Mann’s.

The two diesel motors roared into life and idled normally, with just the odd hiccup and cough caused by a slight air leak on the line Mac had jury rigged.

MacGyver felt like he could finally relax. The assignment was over, and he thankfully hadn’t had to shoot anyone.

Follett was less than pleased about the very same thing. “I shot you!” He complained. “Why couldn’t you just stay dead the second time?”

Mac shrugged, a cheeky smile starting at the corner of his mouth and creeping over his features until it was a full-on beam. “Hey, don’t feel so bad. The Bodens shot me too, and that didn’t work, either. I guess guns are overrated after all, huh?”

Follett looked away in disgust, his brow creasing in temper.

MacGyver watched him for a second, wondering how such a man was going to cope with life in jail for a very, very long time.

The thought passed quickly as he remembered the storm, and that the schooner needed turning back to the U.S. coast. Now that he had engines to work with, he should easily get the *Little Rebecca* home without the squall hitting them.

Mac headed back topside with a spring in his step and a smile on his face – knowing that after this assignment if he never touched a gun again, it would be too soon.

\* \* \* \*

***Phoenix Headquarters***  
***L.A. Division***  
***Some time later...***

MacGyver sat on the couch in Pete Thornton’s office; his sneakers firmly perched on the edge of the nearby table. After the whole affair with Follett and the Bodens, it was good to relax in a place that tended to be his second home.

He fiddled with a pencil in one hand, his fingers always eager to be on the move, doing something, making things...

It was a nervous energy he always seemed full of, and maybe that’s why he’d found he couldn’t leave Phoenix for long even when he’d tried. Heaven only knew how he was going to cope when he got older and *had* to slow down.

The door swung open, and Mac looked up to see Pete enter with his cane. The older man nodded, knowing his friend was in the room and somehow sensing where he was seated.

“Sorry I’m a little late,” he apologized. “The meeting with Colonel Woodward took longer than I expected.”

Mac took his feet down, allowing Pete to pass and take a seat next to him.

“No problem,” MacGyver countered with a small smile. “You know I hate meetings. I’d rather be here.” He sighed. “So how’d it go?”

It was Pete’s turn to smile. “It went well, thanks to you. According to Scott, the weapons shipments have all been accounted for and are now back with their respective departments within the military. None of them got onto the streets or worse...”

“And Follett?” MacGyver asked, finally popping the pencil down on the table to concentrate on the conversation.

“He’s up for a court marshal and several murder, and attempted murder charges,” Pete replied. “It looks like the army and the state will be fighting to see who gets to try him first.”

Mac shook his head and his eyes met with the new carpet Pete had recently had fitted. “Things could have gotten outta hand pretty quickly out there, ya know?” It was obvious he meant the guns, even though he didn’t directly say it.

Pete put a hand on his friend’s arm. “I’m sorry I had to ask you, of all people to do this one, Mac.” It was Pete’s turn drop his head in regret. “Your feelings about guns, and why...”

The elder man’s voice trailed and MacGyver realized he’d been rendered speechless. How did you say you were sorry for something, when in the end you were right?

Mac decided it was time to put Pete out of his misery. “It’s okay, Pete, I know you had to ask.” He picked the pencil back up, suddenly feeling tense as some not-so-pleasant memories from his childhood assaulted his senses. “It was hard, but better that I faced my own demons and stop Follett, rather than all that ordinance ending up in the wrong hands. So many people could have been hurt or worse by them...”

Mac’s eyes grew glassy as in some portion of his mind he saw Jesse lying bleeding.

“Well, it’s over now, and I promise I’ll never ask you to do anything like this again.” Pete sounded sincere, but MacGyver knew it wasn’t a promise his friend could keep if the right circumstance arose again.

Mac smiled anyway. “Don’t make promises you can’t keep, Pete!” He teased.

Pete squirmed a little, and then changed the subject. “So now what are you going to be up to? Some downtime with Sam?”

Mac shook his head. “Nope, he’s off working on a story. The first thing I’m gonna do is go home, get a drink, a haircut,” he paused rubbing at his beard. “And a much needed shave!”

Pete’s face screwed into an incredulous frown. But then he couldn’t see the unruly appearance of his friend. “Drink? Haircut? *Shave?*” He questioned.

“Milk, Pete – *just milk.*” It was MacGyver’s turn to grimace. “I had enough alcohol on this assignment to prove to me just why I don’t drink the stuff. Why the heck do you like bourbon anyway? And tequila?” He gagged at the memory of the taste in the back of his throat.

Pete shrugged. He really didn’t seem to have an answer.

“And as for the shave,” Mac continued to gripe, now finding himself on a roll. “Right now I feel like I’ve got your old carpet stuck on my face...”

Pete finally realized his old friend was joking and chuckled. “Are you sure you haven’t? You are the one who tends to *recycle* stuff around here!”

MacGyver let out a sigh and smiled. “C’mon, Pete, let’s get outta the office for awhile. I know a great little coffee shop. I might even buy ya a milk.” He held out a hand to help his friend up.

Pete took it, his well-honed ears knowing exactly every move Mac made. “Sounds good,” he said with an expression that said otherwise. And then he playfully added. “Do you think they’d add a tot of whiskey for an old guy? Especially an old guy that has to put up with this young upstart who gets in all kinds of trouble...”

Mac grimaced but couldn’t resist laughing as they both headed for the door.

“Um...*Not really!*” He tried to keep a straight face and failed as he answered.

The End