

Homecoming Part One

Chapter One

It is 1984. I am ten seconds from success when you destroy my life, a scruffy-looking guy in a junkyard who turned out to be so much more.

It is 1992. I would know your face a hundred years from now. I have not forgotten. And now I have found you.

“Okay, easy now...” MacGyver helped Sam carefully out of the cab and unloaded the bags while Sam stood, looking around at the neighborhood.

Sam turned as his father came up behind him, smiling at him and shaking his head. “I guess I’d forgotten what it’s like here.”

MacGyver nodded, amused. They’d spent a few weeks here before going on their road trip, waiting for his broken arm to heal enough to ride. Sam, citizen of the world and used to viewing all new places and people as potentially hostile, had been a bit taken aback by MacGyver’s neighborhood and the people in it.

MacGyver watched Sam scan the street, the brightly painted houses, the tie-dyed curtains in Kelly’s windows, Mel’s ancient car with its faded bumper stickers and Mama Lorraine’s multicolored washing flapping on a line in the sun. He smelled incense wafting on the breeze and saw Sam shake his head again as he struggled to find words. “You get used to it, son!”

“It’s like the sixties never left!” Sam turned and followed his father into the apartment.

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By the evening, Mel had noticed they were back, told everyone and arranged a ‘welcome home’ party. Sam and MacGyver were just settling down to Chinese takeaway and a hockey game on the TV when the door burst open and Mama Lorraine swept in with a big smile and an even bigger pie.

Half the neighborhood piled in behind her, with Mel grinning like an overage sprite at MacGyver’s expression from the safety of the doorway. MacGyver hugged everyone, gravely shook hands with Mel’s four year old nephew and pushed through the crush to clap Mel on the back, telling him how good it was to be home.

Kelly made a beeline for Sam, sitting far too close and fussing over him until he managed to escape into the kitchen. He filled a glass with ice water and took it outside to the relative quiet of the front step. Sitting down awkwardly, he sighed and took a long sip.

“Hi!”

Water splashed as Sam jumped violently, grabbed at his sore shoulder and swore.

“Oh, hey, I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to scare you like that.” A figure emerged from the shadows and picked up the fallen glass, handing it back to Sam. Sam pushed back his hair and looked up.

“Hi. Uh, no problem, I guess.” He brushed at the wet on his t-shirt briefly and then gave up. “Are you a friend of my Dad’s? I saw you earlier inside but I don’t think we’ve met.”

“I’m James.” The man hesitated until Sam gestured for him to sit down. “I haven’t lived here very long.”

“Sam.” He moved up, letting the middle-aged man sit down next to him on the step. “Dad and I just got back – we had some catching up to do and we’ve been away for a few months.”

James glanced sharply at Sam before returning his gaze to the street.

“That must have been some trip. How did you...?”

“I got shot. It’s a really long story.” Sam got to his feet, not wanting to explain all over again. “I’m going inside to get another drink. You want anything?”

James drew his knees up and locked his hands around them, staring away down the street.

“No, thank you.” He looked back at Sam and smiled. “I’ll come inside in a while – the crowd’s a bit much for me.”

“I know what you mean!” Sam watched him watching the street for a moment longer, then shrugged and headed inside.

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Late that evening, after the guests had gone and long after their hockey game had finished, Sam and MacGyver sat on the couch, surveying the post-party wreckage.

“Does this kind of thing happen often?” Sam put his feet up on the coffee table and leaned back, closing his eyes.

“Yeah.” MacGyver scrubbed his hands over his face and through his hair, wondering if he should go for a haircut before starting back at Phoenix. “If it isn’t someone’s birthday, it’s the anniversary of something else. Count on one neighborhood party a month, minimum. Like I said, you get...”

“Used to it, yeah.” Sam took a swallow from his glass and then frowned at it. “I went out front a while ago, and met this guy. I think he knew you, but he seemed, I dunno. Odd.”

“Tallish? Really pale? Haircut like Jay Leno?” MacGyver nodded. He really didn’t want a haircut. Maybe he had an elastic band or something lying around to tie it back for work. “He’s Mel’s latest project. He’s a hard luck case from back East, come to make a new start and he doesn’t really know anyone yet. Mel’s kind of taken him under his wing seeing as how he’s renting just across the street. I only met him tonight though. Odd how?”

“Nervy, I guess. Kind of shy. He seemed interested that you’re my Dad. I guess he does look a bit like Jay Leno!” Sam yawned. “I gotta get some sleep, Dad. See you in the morning.” Sam rose and picked his way through the party debris, leaving MacGyver alone on the couch.

“Night, son.” MacGyver put ‘The Magnificent Seven’ into the video, turned the sound down low and pulled his feet up. Why would Mel’s new tenant think he knew him? MacGyver couldn’t even remember the guy’s name. John? Jack? Something... The room was warm, the couch comfortable and soon MacGyver drifted off to sleep.

Chapter Two

I see you. I know you but you do not know me. Did you ruin so many lives that the ruination of mine is not memorable to you? You will remember. You will know me. I swear it.

“Do I go with the tie? Maybe I shouldn’t bother.” MacGyver frowned at his reflection. He combed his hair back, tied it into a ponytail and then shook it out again. “I look like Dexter...”

Sam grinned at him around a mouthful of cereal. He shook his head and swallowed.

“Don’t sweat it, Dad. It’s not like Pete’s going to mind. Who’s Dexter, anyway?”

MacGyver glanced across at Sam and smiled.

“Dexter is... Never mind. I just feel like I should make a good impression on my first day back.” He sat down to lace his shoes. “I did kind of leave Pete in the lurch when we took off like that, even if he did encourage us to go.”

Sam followed his father into the garage, watched him shrug into his jacket and check over the bike. It seemed so empty without his own bike or his Dad’s Jeep. Raising the door revealed James putting out his rubbish bins across the street. He straightened up, waved and came over.

“Hi.” James stood at the edge of the pavement, hands in his pockets and looking awkward.

MacGyver smiled at him as he strapped on his helmet and walked the bike to the front of the garage.

“Morning. We kinda got introduced at the party, didn’t we? I didn’t get your name though...?” He held out his hand for James to shake. James hesitated, staring hard at MacGyver before abruptly stepping forward and taking his hand.

“James. You’re MacGyver. And you’re Sam. That’s a nice bike.” He stared intently at them both, his gaze straying back to MacGyver again. The silence stretched, and MacGyver glanced at his watch.

“I gotta go. Sam, let me know how you get on at the hospital, okay? James, nice to meet you again.” MacGyver nodded at them both, revved up the bike and turned out along the street.

James watched until the bike was out of sight and then turned back to Sam. “I could take you to the hospital if you want. Mel said I can borrow his car until I get one of my own. I’d really like to help.” He looked hopefully at Sam.

“Um, I can get a bus, I don’t want to trouble you...” Sam colored up, hating to be dependent on someone else.

James shook his head faintly, once again looking up the road after the bike. “No trouble.”

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Mel backed away from his car, lifted a boot and kicked the car hard just below the door handle. The old car rocked on its springs and the door lock popped up. Mel opened the door and grinned at Sam.

“Been meaning to get that fixed. Doors all jam up regularly but you just have to show them who’s boss. Trick is to hit it right below the mechanism.” He brushed a crisp packet and some unidentifiable bits and pieces off the seat into the footwell and waited while Sam got in. He tossed the keys across to James and squinted against the sun. “Don’t run any red lights, okay?” He waved as James put the car in gear and drove away, pleased to see that James seemed to have finally made a friend.

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Sam lifted his foot and tried to work out what he’d stepped on. Something shiny winked up at him out of the assorted rubbish. *Why would Mel have barbecue tongs in his car?* He toed the tongs to one side and set his foot down on a pencil, which broke. He sighed.

“Mel’s car is a tip. Not that I’m complaining, you understand, it beats getting lost on a bus.” He glanced across at James, hunched over the steering wheel. “This is really kind of you, thanks.”

James smiled without taking his eyes off the road. “No trouble. Have you and your Dad lived here long?”

Sam shook his head, popping the cassette from the player. “Dad’s been here for a while, but I’m only staying until I get a place of my own sorted out.” He looked down at the tape. *Jefferson Airplane. Why am I not surprised...* He cranked the window handle to let in some cool air but it spun uselessly and the window stayed closed. “The neighborhood’s growing on me though; I might stay round here too.”

James nodded, licking his lips. “What do you both do?”

“I’m a stringer, a photo-journalist. I’m kind of between jobs at the moment though, just until my shoulder heals. Dad works for the Phoenix Foundation, they do research and environmental stuff.”

James nodded again, concentrating on nursing the spluttering car through the morning traffic.

“And what does he do, at the Phoenix Foundation?”

Sam glanced across at James, something about his tone making Sam wary. “He’s kind of a troubleshooter; he does a lot of different things. How about you, James? Tell me about yourself.”

James hunched a little closer over the steering wheel and thought a long time before replying.

“I’m from Nowheresville, West Virginia, I had some bad luck and I’m making a fresh start out here. I’m going to make sure everything’s right this time.” James’s hands clenched and Sam, watching his knuckles whiten, wondered if he should have taken the bus after all.

“Troubleshooter...” James’s voice sounded far away. “What kind of trouble does he shoot at?”

Sam shifted in his seat “It’s not like that. He’s really good at thinking on his feet, so he gets called in to sort out projects that have gone wrong and deal with situations that have got difficult. No shooting.”

“And has he always done that?”

“No.” Now Sam was getting annoyed. “He used to work for the government. Look, this is our turn. Here.” He pointed and James obediently steered the car to the curb.

“I’ll wait for you in the car.” James placed a hand carefully on Sam’s arm. Sam shook him off, got out and slammed the door.

“I can get a cab, James. Thanks for the lift but I can find my own way back.”

James continued to stare at him.

“It’s no trouble.” James watched Sam walk up the steps into the hospital and settled back in his seat to wait. His gaze strayed across the street to a low-loader carrying fork-lift trucks. He watched it turn towards the docks and his hands clenched in his lap. “Troubleshooter...”

Homecoming Part Two

Chapter Three

Your pretence of normality is convincing, but I am not fooled. You talk of your son, and your job, and your friends as if you were not a monster. You taunt me with the things that you took from me all those years ago and you are too stupid to realize that your perfect life is over whenever I choose. But I have been patient. Until now...

James blew quietly on his coffee and took a sip. He settled his headphones more snugly and sat back, his gaze focused on the warmly-lit window opposite. His headphones picked up the sounds of cutlery and plates, the rustle of clothing and he watched as MacGyver crossed the room to the table.

“So then he waited for a whole hour while I was in physio and when I came out the damn car had locked itself again, James had got panicky because he was trapped inside it and I had to explain to a passing police officer why I was kicking seven kinds of whatever out of someone else’s car door. We gotta do something about that car for Mel, Dad, it’s beyond busted!” Sam shook his head and took a bite of chili-no-carne. “This is good!” He swallowed, waving his fork for emphasis. “James is kind enough, Dad, but he’s definitely an odd one. And he’s *really* interested in you. Where did you say Mel dragged him up from?”

MacGyver helped himself to more salad, thinking hard.

“Mel did some work for the probation service recently. I think he met James there and sort of adopted him. Why would he be interested in me? I’m pretty sure I don’t know him...” MacGyver ate some chili and considered. “What did he want to know, anyway?”

Sam shrugged, taking a swig of water.

“How long you’d lived here, what your job is, that kind of stuff. I dunno, he just put me on edge a bit, that’s all.”

“Hmm.” MacGyver collected the empty plates and headed for the kitchen. Over the running tap he called, “What did you tell him?” but before Sam could answer, the phone rang.

“Hello?” MacGyver tucked the phone between his ear and his shoulder, stowing the plate on its rack and reaching across to snag the dishcloth with his other hand. “Yeah. okay. How did it look? Uh-huh. And you’re planning to... Are you going on your own? Right... You sure? Okay, let me know. Bye.” He replaced the receiver and stood frowning at it.

Sam came into the kitchen, rubbing his shoulder.

“Problem?”

MacGyver nodded, then shook his head and ran a hand through his unruly hair. “Yeah. No. Well, maybe.”

Sam grinned and put the kettle on for coffee. “Well, that covers all the options. What’s going on?” He watched his father pace the length of the room, shove his hands in his pockets and stare out of the window. The street was dark, and the slight movement of James’s curtain went unnoticed.

“That was Willis. We’re doing some pollution testing on the Los Angeles River and we’ve got some pretty unsavory results. But he thinks he’s identified where the source of the problem is,” MacGyver turned back to Sam and absently picked up a hockey puck lying on the shelf, “And he wants to go and take water samples to prove it.”

“That doesn’t sound so bad.” Sam poured himself some coffee, brought it through and handed MacGyver a herbal tea.

“It wouldn’t be, except that he wants to take samples down at the Port of Long Beach docks. At night so that the company he thinks is responsible don’t cotton on to what he’s up to.” MacGyver blew on his tea and then set it down on top of the puck. “I know the company he’s talking about. They’re bad news, Sam. They’ve been implicated in a lot of nasty ‘accidents’ but so far no-one can pin anything on them and that makes them very hostile to, oh, I don’t know, random strangers taking water samples.”

“Right.” Sam rubbed at his shoulder again absently. “How about if we went with him?”

MacGyver turned to his son and smiled. *Pete was right, he thought, he really is a chip off the old block!*

“I’ll talk to him tomorrow about it. He might be okay with me going along, but I don’t want you anywhere near it, Sam.” He shook his head as Sam opened his mouth to protest. “It might be dangerous and you’re still not 100%, are you? Besides, if anything does happen, we might need someone to call for backup. That’d be you.”

Sam considered arguing, but another twinge from his shoulder made him catch his breath and, reluctantly, he nodded. He went back to the couch and turned on the TV. Neither of them noticed something small and silver fall from Sam’s sleeve into the stack of videos underneath.

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James took off his headphones and smiled to himself in the darkness.

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Chapter Four

Oh, sweet and joyous day. Today the circle of my bad luck will be complete and I will start afresh in this land of sunshine and opportunity. For today, today the dawning of this new reality is going to hit you right in the face... MacGyver

MacGyver climbed stiffly off his bike and stowed his helmet on the shelf. He stretched his back and rolled his shoulders, reflecting ruefully that the first practice after some time off was always the worst. He trailed his bag, skates and stick through to the apartment and dumped them just inside the door. He crossed to the fridge, pulled out a carton of juice and read the note taped to the front.

Dad,

Gone out to photograph urban sunset. Back soon.

Sam.

MacGyver smiled. Being called 'Dad' still made him smile every time. He finished the juice and headed for the shower.

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James waited until the tinny sound of running water filtered through to his headphones. Without knowing where his bug had landed, it was hard to be sure, but it sounded like the shower. He'd seen Sam go out a little earlier carrying his camera bag, which meant MacGyver was home alone. He laid the headphones down on the table and quietly left the house.

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MacGyver shut off the water and stepped out, scrubbing at his hair with a towel. He heard a creak and called, "Sam?" but there was no reply. He wrapped the towel around his waist and padded into the living room. No Sam. Another creak came from the garage and MacGyver walked through, the concrete cool under his bare feet. *I left it open?! Must have been more tired than I thought!* He shook his head and walked past his bike to close the half open door. *Good job this neighborhood's as safe as it is!* A loud wolf whistle sounded from across the street and Kelly waved at him. MacGyver blushed hotly, waved back and fled inside, this time shutting the door firmly behind him.

He made it back to the kitchen just as Sam was coming in the front door. He looked at his father and the death grip he had on the towel and grinned.

"Kelly saw you, right?" He laughed, shaking his head. "Woman's a menace!" He stashed his camera bag behind the couch. "Did you talk to Willis today? I took a bus down to Port of Long Beach earlier on and you're right – it's not the most welcoming place I've ever been."

"Yeah." MacGyver headed back into his bedroom for clothes. "He said he wanted to go alone because one person looks less suspicious than two, which I'm not sure I agree with, but I did get him to promise he'd call if he got into trouble." He emerged wearing jeans and pulling on a t-shirt.

“Problem is, he’s great in the lab but he’s a disaster in the field and he might not realize he’s in trouble until it’s too late to call.”

“I guess we wait and see if he calls.” Sam looked up as a cab honked its horn just outside. He heard someone get in and the cab pull away. “How did practice go, anyway?”

“Great.” MacGyver sat down, trying to ignore the aches in his back, his knees and the arm he’d broken earlier that year. “Just great.”

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James got out of the cab, paid the driver the exact money and zipped up his jacket. A cool breeze was coming in off the water and he shivered, partly with cold and partly with anticipation. His hands bunched in his pockets and he took a deep, shaky breath. He turned towards the docks with all the trepidation of a first-time diver stepping out onto the high board. No turning back now.

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MacGyver was snoozing on the couch and Sam was drafting an article to go with his sunset photos when the phone rang. Sam reached out to answer it, most of his attention still on his article.

“Yeah, hello?” MacGyver stirred on the couch but didn’t wake up. Sam listened to the panicked voice on the other end of the line, his work forgotten. MacGyver stirred again, perhaps picking up on the tension in the room as Sam nodded, gripping the phone hard.

“I’ll tell him.” He turned just as MacGyver’s tousled head rose above the back of the couch.

“Dad, it’s Willis. He’s in trouble. He’s calling from a payphone on Channel Three, near the river and he sounds really scared.” A yell erupted from the receiver and MacGyver vaulted over the couch to grab it.

“Willis? WILLIS!” He listened to the sounds of wind and water coming faintly over the line. Could he hear running footsteps? He wasn’t sure. The mournful wail of a ship’s horn sounded and MacGyver slammed the receiver down. “I’m going after him, Sam. Call Pete and let him know what’s happened, then stay by the phone in case he calls back, okay?” He dragged on his boots, snatched up his jacket and motorbike keys and ran for the garage, Sam following.

MacGyver hopped astride his bike, turned the key and... nothing. He tried the kickstart again, but to no avail. Using a word Sam hadn’t thought his Dad knew, MacGyver crouched down beside his bike, swore again and then stood up in disgust.

“Fuel line’s cut. Brakes are glued up. How...?”

“Also your back tire’s flat. Someone’s done a number on it for sure. Who would...?” Sam shook his head in confusion. “Even you can’t fix this, Dad, not fast enough. Is Mel in? Maybe you could borrow his junk-heap car...” MacGyver suppressed a shudder.

“Gonna have to.” MacGyver held Sam’s gaze for a moment. “Stay by the phone. Page me if Willis calls back, OK? Damn, I knew this was a bad idea.” Ducking under the door, MacGyver disappeared off into the night.

Homecoming Part Three

Chapter Five

I am waiting for you. I feel you getting nearer to me, bringing with you the promise of a brighter future. Once you are dead, I can start again. My traitorous, deal-making partner is dead, dead as soon as I had my freedom to visit upon him the fate he abandoned me to when he avoided going to prison and left me hanging, hanging as surely as when we were in that sun baked junkyard all those years ago. Not long now.

MacGyver's hands tightened on the wheel as he coaxed more speed out of the ancient car. Sam hadn't been kidding when he described it as a junk heap and, although Mel had been happy to lend it, he had run through a list of worrying sounding cautions as MacGyver started the car and backed it out of the garage.

The doors lock themselves at random. The windows don't work. Avoid using the horn because you'll get an electric shock off it. Go gently with the brakes because it pulls to the left. The list had been long and MacGyver hadn't stayed to listen to the end of it. Now he was gunning the battered machine through the night-time streets of Los Angeles, hurling it around corners and over bumps with the accumulated rubbish of twenty years bouncing and rolling in the footwells and cubbyholes.

Man, I will be so glad to get my Jeep back...

He frowned to himself as he wrestled the car around a sharp bend, veering onto the wrong side of the road and nearly sideswiping a lumbering bus. The driver honked and yelled but MacGyver had already swerved away and gone.

Who would have vandalized my bike like that? Was that the noise I'd heard when I found the garage door open? Why would anyone do that? I don't remember making any enemies lately...

He swung onto the docks and cruised slowly along until he found Channel Three. Sure enough, the payphone receiver dangled forlornly in the cold breeze. He crunched to a halt alongside the water, got out of the car and looked along the length of the deserted dock.

Hang on Willis, I'm coming.

Keeping to the shadows, MacGyver jogged along the dock, every sense alert for a sign that Willis was there. The wind rippled the surface of the puddles and made the reflected lights dance. MacGyver held up a hand to shield his eyes from the glare of an incoming ship's lights. He turned sharply at the sound of a single slurred footstep echoing out from between two huge containers and then his world exploded as a fist slammed into his temple. MacGyver felt himself spin and fall, but consciousness fled before his head could tell him how hard the concrete was.

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"Come on Pete, pick up..." Sam leaned against the kitchen counter, drumming the fingers of his free hand. The receiver burred in his ear again and again until the tone cut off. Sam redialed and listened impatiently to the ring tone on the other end. He was just about to hang up again when Pete's formidable secretary answered.

"Yes! Hi, this is Sam Molloy, I need to speak to Mr. Thornton urgently. Is he there?" He listened to the reply. "Yes, I know what time it is but this is an emergency." He frowned. "How did I get this number? Um... MacGyver is my Dad. Willis is in trouble and Dad's gone after him." He gestured helplessly and ran a hand through his hair. "You are? *Thank you!*" Sam waited while Pete came on the line.

Pete picked up the receiver. Helen shrugged and turned to leave, but Pete held up a hand and she waited.

“Sam? Is that you? What’s happened?” Pete listened to Sam’s reply, nodding. “Uh huh. Well, that can’t be right, Sam – Willis is still here, he brought me his pollution report only five minutes ago.” He listened some more. “Are you sure it was Willis you spoke to? You’d recognize his voice?” There was a silence on the other end of the line. “Sam?”

Sam gripped the receiver hard, dread washing over him. No, he hadn’t recognized Willis’s voice because he’d never actually *met* Willis. He’d been expecting him to call and so when someone did, and had said he was Willis, Sam had just believed him! What kind of danger was his Dad walking into? And it was all Sam’s fault! He heard someone say his name and realized Pete was still on the phone.

“Mr. Thornton! I think Dad’s walking into a trap! The guy on the phone said he was Willis and that he was in trouble and Dad went racing off to help him.” He drew a deep breath, listening to Pete. “No, he didn’t take the bike, someone’s trashed it. Yeah, I know.” He listened again. “He borrowed a neighbor’s car. Really old, blue Plymouth. He’s going down to Port of Long Beach, Channel Three. What’s that?” He waited as Pete patiently repeated what he’d said. “You are? Could she pick me up on the way? This is kind of my fault... *Thank you!*” He grabbed his jacket and went to wait out front.

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MacGyver’s world came back into focus a piece at a time.

Where...? How did I...? The black rolled in and MacGyver slumped again.

Ow. Ow... Not again! He opened his eyes and immediately screwed them shut again against a bright light. He went to put a hand to his aching head and discovered that he couldn’t move.

Gah! What?! I'm tied up. I'm tied up and I'm in trouble... A swift internal inventory told him that aside from a thumping headache and, he thought, a cut on his eyebrow, he was unhurt. He was, however securely tied up with tape.

At least he wasn't gagged.

I'm in the Jeep. Why am I tied up in the Jeep? ...This isn't the Jeep, there's way too much junk in here for it to be the Jeep. He moved slightly to ease the handbrake digging painfully into his hip. *This is Mel's car. This is Mel's car and I'm at the docks and I'm looking for... WILLIS!*

The sound of revving filtered into his hazy awareness. Also shouting. *Willis? Is that you shouting at me? I'm coming, Willis!* MacGyver lurched into a sitting position, blinking blood out of his eye and squinting against the glare from the spotlight of a fork lift, parked right alongside. The world tipped and echoed as he fought against passing out again. He couldn't see the owner of the voice, and he concentrated hard, listening.

"...AND THEN YOU LEFT ME HANGING THERE! ME! AND YOU WENT OFF AND WISECRACKED ON THE PHONE AND THEY CAME AND TOOK ME AWAY AND I WENT TO JAIL FOR THE ONLY MISTAKE I EVER MADE! THIS COUNTRY IS ROTTEN! ROTTEN TO THE CORE! I WAS ONLY TRYING TO GET MY PIECE OF THE AMERICAN DREAM AND YOU RUINED IT! YOU RUINED ME!"

MacGyver shook his head to try and clear it and immediately wished he hadn't. *Who is this guy? I know the voice but... he's lost it but good, that's for sure!* He wriggled, trying to get his hands free but the tape held firm. *If I can just get to my knife...* He wriggled again and managed to get two fingers into his back pocket.

"YOU RUINED ME MACGYVER! DO YOU HEAR ME? WELL NOW YOUR SINS HAVE CAUGHT UP WITH YOU! I WILL VISIT UPON YOU THE SAME FATE AS I HAVE SUFFERED AND THEN YOU WILL BE DEAD AND I WILL BE FREE!"

MacGyver slit the last of the tape binding his wrists and stretched his arms gratefully. He pulled his feet onto the seat and started on his ankles.

Tied up with my own duct tape! Who IS this guy? What does he think I've done to him?

MacGyver stared through the window, but the glare of the lights and his own dizziness reduced his assailant to a haloed silhouette in the driving seat of the fork lift.

Can't tell who it is. Outline is familiar... Hair... Jay Leno is driving a fork lift? He scrambled back as the fork lift revved again and lurched forward to crash its fork through the side of Mel's car.

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"Get in!" Nikki screeched to a halt outside MacGyver's apartment and Sam leapt into the car. She spared him a single glance as they raced through the streets, his profile illuminated in green neon as they streaked past a row of shops.

"You really look like him, you know?" She swung the car into a savage turn, Sam clinging onto the seatbelt.

"Yeah I know. Took me by surprise too. Make a left here." He leaned into the turn and the car fishtailed on the wet road. Nikki wrestled it back under control, ran a red light and they roared off into the dark.

Hang on Mac, cavalry's coming...

Homecoming Part Four

Chapter Six

"LOOK AT ME! LOOK AT ME MACGYVER AND KNOW YOUR DOOM! I HAVE WAITED EIGHT LONG YEARS FOR THIS MOMENT!"

The fork lift tore through the side of the car, tipping it up and hoisting it high in the air. MacGyver tumbled sideways in a shower of rubbish, something hard bouncing painfully off his head. He pulled

his legs up frantically, trying to avoid being impaled on the rusty spikes and made a dive for the far door.

How high am I? If I can get the door open I'll risk the drop. Who IS this guy?

He yanked at the door handle but the door didn't budge.

It locks itself NOW?!

He heard mad laughter spiraling up at him and glared through the glass at the shadowy figure below, light flaring on the edge of a familiar bouffant hairdo. *Jay Leno is driving a fork lift... Jay Leno is driv...* The figure stepped out of the shadows and MacGyver's eyes grew wide. *JAMES!*

"What are you doing?! Why are you doing this? James?!" The man on the ground nodded sagely, calmer now that his quarry recognized him.

He walked around the fork lift to admire his handiwork while MacGyver watched him, all the time scrabbling at the door. He turned himself round and aimed a hefty kick at it. The car shuddered, but the door stayed locked.

"So. Now you know how it feels. You know me now, don't you, MacGyver? You remember when you did this to me, don't you, MacGyver?"

Aloft in the car, MacGyver stilled. *I did this to him? I don't remember...* He looked down again, and vertigo overwhelmed him, fear clenching in his guts. *God, I hate heights...*

James, angered by MacGyver's silence, took a deep breath.

"ONLY I WASN'T CALLED JAMES THEN. I WASN'T A HARD LUCK CASE THEN. NO, I WAS A RESPECTED AGENT WITH A TICKET TO THE GOOD LIFE AND YOU HUNG ME OUT TO DRY, JUST LIKE I'M DOING TO YOU NOW! HOW ABOUT THAT, MACGYVER? I CALL AND PRETEND TO BE WILLIS, OH SO HELPLESS, AND YOU FALL FOR IT. NOT SO CLEVER NOW, ARE YOU? DXS WOULDN'T BE SO PROUD OF YOU NOW, WOULD THEY? AND HERE I AM AGAIN, HITTING YOU RIGHT IN THE FACE!" He paused for breath, spit gathering at the corners of his mouth.

MacGyver's eyes narrowed. His hand rose to his head. *Of course. I caught him selling missile codes, him and another agent. He hit me right in the face, locked me in the trunk of the car and put me in the junkyard crusher, but I got out and this is what I did next... Guy's clearly lost it now though. Bet he isn't going to stop at picking me up like this...*

He realized that James had stopped shouting and had disappeared from view. MacGyver cast about frantically for him, then froze as he heard the fork lift rev up once again...

* * * *

Nikki slewed to a screeching halt in front of the service road gates. She briefly considered charging the gates with the car, but they looked solid and she doubted they could break through. She unbuckled her seatbelt and turned to face Sam.

“Right, kiddo, we’re on foot from here. You stay behind me and out of the firing line, okay?” Without waiting for an answer she stepped out of the car and set her boot toe into the heavy mesh of the gate. As she climbed, her jacket swung aside just enough for Sam to see the gun holstered under her left arm.

“OK. I can do this.” Sam took a deep breath and began to climb, pain flaring through his shoulder.

* * * *

The world through the car window swung crazily underneath MacGyver, the concrete of the dock giving way to dark, oily water. MacGyver was aware that James was still shouting, screaming at him over the rumble of the engine, but he couldn’t make out the words.

James drove the fork lift right to the edge of the dock, leaving MacGyver suspended over the edge. He climbed out and, to MacGyver’s astonishment, walked calmly underneath the car to look right up at him. There were tears running down his face and he continued to shout and gesture, his words now all but unintelligible.

This guy’s so far out into left field, he isn’t coming back! MacGyver watched James return to the fork lift, lean in and throw a lever. The fork lift lurched forward again, skidded as the wheels lost their grip on the dock edge and then, ever so slowly, tumbled into the water.

James stood on the dock, watching the air boil out of the stricken car. An oil slick bloomed on the roiling surface, dark and thick. He imagined the water rising, MacGyver taking his first, panicked mouthful as he desperately fought for air, pictured him gasp as his lungs filled and saw the light go out of those lively, dark eyes forever.

* * * *

Nikki ran along the dockside, gun cocked and held aloft in both hands, scanning for any movement or sound. Behind her, Sam labored along, hand clamped to his bad shoulder, his breath coming in gasps.

He caught up to Nikki as she flattened herself against a container, ducking quickly around it and back to see what was on the other side. She glanced across, shocked to see how white he was in the glow of the security lighting.

“What’s wrong with you?”

“I’m okay.” Sam nodded to try and reassure her.

Unconvinced, she turned and risked another peep past the container. One man standing looking into the water, no sign of MacGyver.

Sam came up behind her, peering over her shoulder. She felt him stiffen and pushed him back, flattening both of them against the metal. She glared at him and mouthed, *‘What?’*

“I know that guy! That’s James! It can’t be a coincidence; it’s got to be him behind all this. Dad’s got to be nearby.” Sam made to move out from behind the container.

Nikki grabbed the front of his jacket hard, shaking her head and pulling him back into cover.

“I don’t see him. Stay behind me, we’ll move closer.”

* * * *

Inside the car, MacGyver grew frantic. Water poured in as the weight of the fork lift forced the car under. The faulty electrics in the dash hissed and sparked.

I gotta get out! I gotta get out now!

MacGyver dived into the back seat, hoping to crawl out through the boot as he had done before, but Mel’s seats held firm no matter how much MacGyver pulled, kicked and tore at them.

Great! The one part of this car that isn’t falling apart! Think!

MacGyver weighed up his options as he rifled through the mess of floating rubbish in the half submerged car.

Can’t open the doors. Can’t get through the boot. Windows won’t roll down. Windows... His hand closed on something slim and cold. Barbecue tongs? That must be what hit me earlier. Why would Mel keep...? Never mind.

He wedged the tongs into the gap between the window and the door panel, leaning back and heaving until the panel popped loose. The window handle popped loose too, disappearing with a splash into the back seat.

MacGyver scrabbled at the wet window glass, but couldn’t make it move. Feeling under the water, his fingers found the small nub of the window handle.

If I only had a spanner...

He looked around himself. The car lurched and settled, tipping towards the back. The front of the car reared up and water cascaded out of the cassette player. MacGyver lunged across and stabbed at the eject button. He grabbed the tape, snared a pencil stub as it floated past and jammed it into one reel of the cassette.

Taking a deep breath, he ducked under the oily surface and fitted the other reel over the window handle nub.

Here goes nothing!

Putting pressure carefully on the cassette, he started to turn the window mechanism. After a nasty moment when he felt the plastic give, the mechanism turned and the window shuddered its way down. Water rushed in and MacGyver had only a moment to snatch another breath before the car groaned and sank. Feeling his way in the disgusting murk, MacGyver pulled himself through the window and swam away.

Chapter Seven

Nikki and Sam eased slowly around the end of the container and made a brief, silent sprint to the next pool of shadows. Now that they were closer to James, they could hear him ranting at the water. The words 'destiny', 'karma' and 'payback' echoed triumphantly across the space between them, followed by 'MacGyver!' They exchanged a grim glance and readied themselves to run again.

* * * *

MacGyver swam underwater as far as he could and then surfaced quietly. He was some distance away, but James's unhinged monologue floated clearly across the water. MacGyver slipped around the pointed end of the dock and swam along the far side, looking for a ladder.

* * * *

Nikki ghosted along the side of the last container. James was only a few yards away from her now. She could smell the sharp tang of his sweat and, as he was still cursing MacGyver at full volume, he was completely unaware of her presence.

She steadied her grip on her gun and was opening her mouth to shout when a soggy, bloodied figure barreled across the dock in front of her. James heard the running footsteps and turned, just in time to receive a high speed punch square in the mouth. Both men sprawled on the ground and when James looked up, he found the barrel of Nikki's gun leveled straight between his eyes.

Sam stooped down to hug his father, too relieved for words. MacGyver smiled, hugged him back and got unsteadily to his feet. He shook his punching hand ruefully and accepted a handkerchief to press against his bleeding temple.

Both looked up as the whoop of a siren announced the arrival of the police and Sam went to explain.

James was handcuffed and led away, still shouting, struggling and cursing at the top of his voice. Sam watched him go, shaking his head and marveling that someone who'd lost it so completely could still have appeared so normal at first.

He returned with a blanket, which Nikki took from him and draped around MacGyver's dripping shoulders. She held the blanket by the 'lapels' and grinned up at him.

"Only been back here five minutes and already you need rescuing!" She stepped back and released his blanket. "Mac, it's good to have you back. Welcome home!"