

## **Supply and Demand**

Most of the Virtual Season stories we write can be read on their own, without having to read any of the others first. This one is a little different – it follows on from the events of the macgyver.tv Virtual Season 8 episode ‘War Stories’ and makes reference to the Season 1 television episode ‘Flames End’. If you’re not familiar with either of those, it might be worth checking them out on and then coming back

### **Part One**

“Am I late?” MacGyver slid into his seat at the back of the courtroom, nodding an apology to the stern faced woman sitting on his other side. Sergeant Cooper shook his head, moving up to make room.

“Not yet. Everyone’s here, though, so it won’t be long.” He smiled at MacGyver. “Always at the last minute, Mac – where were you?”

“Stuck in traffic.” MacGyver grimaced. His decision to bring the Jeep instead of the bike this morning had been a bad one, even if it had allowed him to arrive looking less rumpled than usual. He’d even worn a tie, much to Sam’s amusement.

“All rise, The Honourable Judge Davis presiding!” MacGyver turned as the court official announced the arrival of the judge, and stood with everyone else, looking over their heads for a familiar figure.

Hawkins had put on weight since Vietnam, his face round and pasty. With his badly dyed black hair slicked back and wearing a suit bought ten years and thirty pounds ago, he looked every inch the low-life black marketeer. He looked around the courtroom as everyone sat down, saw MacGyver and Cooper and his lip lifted in a sneer.

Cooper bristled. When MacGyver had heard him insist on coming to the trial, he’d understood, but he’d still thought it was a bad idea. Hawkins had been responsible for the deaths of Cooper’s wife and daughter in Vietnam and while Cooper had been getting help to deal with the tragedy, seeing Hawkins again was always going to be difficult for him.

“Easy, Cooper.” MacGyver murmured to his friend. Cooper took a deep breath and nodded, staring down at his shoes to avoid catching Hawkins’s eye again. MacGyver turned his attention to the judge.

“This trial has been convened to determine whether Alfred Wallace Hawkins is guilty of the following crimes: Illegal trading of weapons, components and restricted goods in the United States of America between the end of the Vietnam Conflict and the present day. Conspiring to steal uranium from Westpoint Plant in January 1986. He has previously been court marshalled and convicted of the trading of weapons and restricted goods during his military service in Vietnam and more recently at MCLB Barstow. Alfred Hawkins, how do you plead?” The judge looked at Hawkins, who shuffled his feet and stood at a nudge from his attorney.

“Not guilty, your Honour.” Hawkins’s expression was defiant, and MacGyver noticed his eyes slide away from Judge Davis’s gaze. Hawkins sat down again and his attorney nodded his approval. MacGyver rubbed a hand across his face and frowned, sure that Hawkins had lied.

“Very well.” The judge sat back and motioned to the prosecuting attorney. “Proceed.”

The prosecutor gathered her papers and stood.

“Good morning, my name is Fiona Nicholls, for the prosecution. It is my honour to represent the State of California in this case. Since returning from his military service in Vietnam, the defendant has engaged in the illegal trade of arms and restricted goods, specifically radioactive material and components which could be assembled to create a delivery system for a biological weapon.” There was a buzz of shocked conversation from the observer’s seats and Nicholls turned to address Hawkins directly. “The defendant has already been convicted of trading illegally in arms and restricted goods during the Vietnam Conflict, thus putting civilians in danger both here in the United States and abroad.

Beside MacGyver, Cooper shifted. He frowned and started to speak, but the stern woman on MacGyver’s other side leaned forward and shushed him. Cooper subsided, glaring across at Hawkins, but Hawkins was staring at the prosecutor.

“Ladies and gentlemen of the jury,” Nicholls continued, “This case is about a man whose greed got the better of him. A man who took it upon himself to break the laws of this country. The prosecution will call three witnesses to the stand: David Kyle, chief of security at Westpoint Beach Nuclear Processing Plant, Officer Paul Chen, who arrested the defendant on April 23<sup>rd</sup> of this year and discovered a quantity of restricted property at his home, and Dr Laura Allen, Federal expert in weapons delivery systems.” Nicholls picked up her papers and addressed the jury, making eye contact with each of them. “At the conclusion of this case we are certain that you will deliver the sentence warranted. Thank you.” At a nod from the judge, Nicholls returned to her seat. A low buzz of conversation grew and MacGyver turned to Cooper.

“Are you OK?” He watched Cooper release his grip on the paper he’d crumpled in his hands and take a deep breath.

“It’s wrong.” Cooper’s hands clenched on the paper again. “Weapons components and receiving stolen goods...” Scorn made his voice harsh. “Those aren’t his real crimes, are they?” He looked up at MacGyver, sweat glistening on his brow despite the air conditioning.

“No, Cooper.” MacGyver shook his head. “No, they’re not. But they’re the only crimes he’ll be tried for. We know what he did, I think there’s a good chance the judge knows what he did, but the army put a gag order on it and there’s nothing we can do.” MacGyver watched Cooper sigh and unclench his hands again. “I get the impression the judge will push for the maximum sentence for Hawkins – he was looking at him like something you’d scrape off your shoe!”

“I hope so.” Cooper looked across at the Judge Davis, who was motioning the defence attorney to start.

The defending attorney stood and unbuttoned his jacket. He walked to the centre of the room and took a moment to look at everyone before speaking. MacGyver frowned as the attorney’s gaze lingered on Cooper before continuing.

“Good morning, my name is Damian Swan for the defence, and it is my pleasure to represent Alfred Hawkins on this very important case. The defendant stands accused of trading weapons and restricted goods, and receiving stolen property, both serious crimes. Ladies and gentlemen, this case is about a man who, suffering from post traumatic stress disorder brought about during his heroic service to his country in Vietnam, became suggestible to the threats of others and was forced to act against his will. This is a case about a veteran who has been taken advantage of by unscrupulous persons. The prosecution will bring forwards their witnesses who will testify that my client acted of his own free will to break the laws of this fine country.” He paused and coughed, reaching for his water and allowing time for the jury to think about his words. Beside MacGyver, Cooper shook his head, muttering under his breath. MacGyver leaned towards him, hearing his whispering, ‘No, no, no...’ over and over.

“Hey,” MacGyver waited until Cooper looked up, watched him take a moment to focus on his friend. “It’s OK. We knew they were likely to try this – it’s the easy defence for anyone who’s served, right?”

“Right.” Cooper nodded, swallowing hard. “Doesn’t make it any easier to listen to, y’know?”

“I know.” MacGyver smiled at Cooper. “You’re doing great.”

The defence attorney set down his water and surveyed the room again. This time when he looked at Cooper, a faint smile crossed his face.

“Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, the defence will call two witnesses to the stand: Dr Ruth O’Dell, a general practitioner with extensive experience of treating veterans with PTSD, will confirm that the defendant does in fact suffer from PTSD and is subject to diminished responsibility as a result. Captain Peter Ramirez, who served with Mr Hawkins at Barstow, will testify that the defendant is a man of good character, having served alongside him, and that he had no financial motive to commit these crimes because he has been continually employed and not in debt since returning from Vietnam.” Swan walked across to the jury, also meeting each member’s eyes. “At the conclusion of this trial, I am certain that the evidence will prevail.” He stepped back and smiled, showing even white teeth, but the smile didn’t reach his eyes. MacGyver shivered, reminded of a shark he’d once seen while scuba diving. “Thank you. I know I can rely on you to see justice done.”

## **Part Two**

“Prosecutor Nicholls, you may begin.” Judge Davis beckoned to Nicholls, uncapped his fountain pen and pushed his glasses up his nose.

“Thank you, your Honour.” Nicholls walked to the centre of the room. “Prosecution calls David Kyle.” She waited until Kyle had been sworn in and taken his seat, then approached him and smiled. Mr Kyle, please could you explain how you know Mr Hawkins?”

“Yes.” Kyle leaned forwards, his size making the witness stand look small. He leaned his elbows on his knees and stooped to make sure the microphone picked up his quiet voice. “I worked with him at Westpoint Beach Nuclear Processing Plant. I’m a site supervisor there and Hawkins worked for me as a general labourer.”

“What were his duties, Mr Kyle?” Nicholls stepped forward and raised the microphone up for him.

“He cleaned up, made sure all the suits were sent for decontamination, checked inventory... He helped with stuff generally, anything I needed doing.” Kyle cleared his throat.

“Were you satisfied with his work?” Nicholls glanced across at Hawkins, who was glaring at Kyle. She stepped across, blocking Hawkins’s glare from reaching her witness.

“Not so much.” Kyle laced his fingers together. “He was often late, he never got the inventory right and he cut corners wherever he could.”

“How was the inventory wrong, Mr Kyle?” Nicholls held Kyle’s gaze and nodded to encourage him.

“It was always short, like there was stuff missing. I took him off doing it in the end.” Kyle shook his head. “No good.”

“Did you ever suspect him of stealing from Westpoint, perhaps when –” Nicholls broke off at the sound of a chair scraping.

“Objection – Calls for speculation!” Swan stood up, his voice loud.

“Sustained.” Judge Davis frowned at Nicholls. “Facts, not fiction, if you please.”

“Mr Kyle,” Nicholls smiled, “Given Mr Hawkins previous conviction, did you have reason to suspect him of stealing from Westpoint?”

“Objection - Leading question!” Swan’s voice echoed off the panelled walls.

“Withdrawn.” Nicholls turned to smile at the jury, turned the smile on Swan and then returned to Kyle as Judge Davis shrugged.

“Mr Kyle, please can you explain for the court what happened at Westpoint in January 1986?” Nicholls took a step back and folded her hands behind her.

Behind them, MacGyver sat up straight. Westpoint! Now he remembered...

#### Westpoint Beach Nuclear Processing Plant, January 1986

MacGyver closed his eyes, vertigo threatening to spin him off the ladder to tumble down the curved side of the reactor building. He took a deep breath, reassured Amy he was fine, and kept on climbing.

He wrestled with the pressure release valve, his wet gloves slipping on the wrench. He watched it tumble down, bounce off the edge of the grating and disappear down into the machinery below. Fear clenched in his stomach and his heavy visor fogged with condensation. He yelled to Amy to give him Train’s gun, took it apart and used the pieces to turn the valve.

He ducked under the plume of steam whistling out of the valve, and shuffled back around to the ladder. By the time he reached the ground, his knees were shaking and his head was spinning. Hands grabbed him and rushed him into a decontamination chamber. He was scrubbed and hosed down for what seemed like a very long time.

Cold, wet and wrapped in a scratchy blanket, he sat next to Amy. Teeth chattering, they tried to work out what Chief Train's plan had been, how he'd got involved in such a terrible scheme, and what he might have planned to do with the stolen uranium. They'd got onto how Train might have planned to get the uranium out of the building, decided that they'd probably never find out who his contacts had been, and let it drop, grateful simply to be alive and unharmed.

For a year afterwards, MacGyver had been convinced that every cold, every cough, every day of feeling not quite as well as usual heralded the beginnings of radiation sickness. It had taken him three months to sleep through the night without dreaming of the terrible consequences that would have occurred if he'd failed.

#### **Los Angeles Superior Court, October 1994**

"Mr Kyle, was Mr Hawkins responsible for the inventory on that date?" Nicholls asked.

"Yes, he was." Kyle nodded.

"If you had known that Mr Hawkins had previously been convicted for an offence involving the manipulation of inventory, would you have assigned him that role?" Nicholls glanced at Swan.

"No Ma'am, I would not." Kyle shook his head and frowned at Hawkins.

"No further questions" Nicholls sat down.

"Your witness, Mr Swan." Judge Davis rumbled.

"Thank you." Swan stood and walked forward. "Mr Kyle," Swan turned to face the jury, extending an open hand towards Hawkins, "Is there any proof that my client did anything wrong?"

"Well, no, but –"

"No further questions, your Honour." Swan interrupted, turning his back on Kyle.

"Call Officer Paul Chen." Nicholls smiled to him, and Chen smiled back, looking nervous. "Officer Chen, when you arrested Mr Hawkins did you find any property belonging to Western Precision Electricals in his apartment?"

"Objection – Incompetent!" Swan stepped towards the Judge's bench, giving Chen a glare on his way past.

"Explain yourself, Mr Swan." Judge Davis leaned forwards, matching Swan's glare with one of his own.

"Chen is not in a position to know the correct owners of any property found in my client's apartment. He was sent in to arrest him, not to determine the true ownership of every item on the premises. He is an incompetent witness." Swan saw Chen flush red out of the corner of his eye.

"Did you determine whether the property belonged to Mr Hawkins?" Judge Davis turned to Chen.

“Yessir. Yes, your Honour, I mean. Sorry.” Chen stumbled to a halt, blushing even redder. “Yes, I did ask Mr Hawkins to prove that the property was his but he was unable to do so.”

“Thank you.” Judge Davis turned his glare back on Swan. “Sit down, Mr Swan.”

“No further questions, your Honour.” Nicholls turned and went back to her seat, shooting Swan a nasty look. Swan smiled at her, pleased with the effect he’d had on Chen.

“Your witness, Mr Swan.” Judge Davis sounded annoyed. Swan stood up and walked to the centre of the courtroom, staring at Chen all the way. Chen stared back, but still looked nervous. He really was very young, Swan thought. Very new. Very soft...

“When you entered my client’s house, what did you see?” Swan leaned on the edge of the stand, forcing Chen to look up at him from his seat.

“I saw Alfred Hawkins. He was in his kitchen, and there were boxes stacked all down the hallway.” Chen swallowed hard, but met Swan’s stare.

“Was there anything written on the boxes?” Swan stepped back, giving Chen a little more room.

“They were stamped ‘WPE - Western Precision Electricals, Los Angeles’ on the sides.” Chen glanced at Hawkins, who stared back.

“What was in the boxes?” Swan clasped his hands behind his back.

“Electrical components.” Chen held his hands about six inches apart. “Circuit boards about this size, and switches, and some other components I didn’t recognise.”

“Were any of them marked ‘WPE’ like the boxes?” Swan raised his eyebrows and waited.

“Well, no.” Chen shook his head. “Not the components themselves.”

“So, they could have been purchased quite legally by Mr Hawkins, who then used surplus boxes obtained legitimately from his place of work to store them in, yes?” Swan smiled his shark smile and put his hands in his pockets, turning away to pace the room.

“They were all still in the packaging and the boxes were sealed.” Chen leaned back in his chair as Swan swung round to face him.

“And if my client had carefully packed his surplus boxes with his own property and then sealed them for safety, they would have looked exactly like that, yes?” Swan took another step forwards, the front of his jacket brushing the edge of the stand in front of Chen.

“Well, I –”

“So we could simply be looking at the neat application of a few yards of packing tape, which you have mistaken as evidence of theft, yes?” Swan leaned forwards, staring down at Chen.

“I don’t –” Chen leaned back as far as he could go.

“Objection – badgering!” Nicholls stood up, her expression angry.

“Sustained. Moderate your tone, Mr Swan!” Judge Davis now sounded cross, and Chen jumped at the bass rumble of his voice.

“No further questions, your Honour. I think Officer Chen has told us everything he knows.” Swan smiled the shark smile at Chen and sat down, looking pleased with himself.

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“I’d like to call Dr Laura Allen” Nicholls rose, giving Swan another poisonous look in passing. Please take the stand.” Nicholls waited for the elegant woman to take her seat, and smiled at her.

“Please state for the court the nature of your expertise in this matter.” Nicholls took a step back.

“My name is Dr Laura Allen,” Allen leaned forward, “I have a doctorate in mechanical engineering and I am an expert in weapons delivery systems. I work for the Department of Defence.”

“Thank you, Dr Allen.” Nicholls folded her hands behind her back and walked across the courtroom.

“Did you examine the articles retrieved from the defendant’s place of residence?”

“I did.” Allen nodded.

“And what were your conclusions?” Nicholls reached the end of the room and turned to face Allen and, beyond her, Hawkins.

“The components I examined could have been assembled into a delivery device for a gas or a low-viscosity liquid.” Allen shrugged. “To do so would have been a skilled job requiring specialist tools, but it could be done.”

“Objection – Calls for a conclusion!” Swan was definitely getting louder, MacGvyer thought.

“Yes, it does.” Judge Davis sighed, looking angry. “But seeing as how Dr Allen has been asked here specifically to reach conclusions, I think we’ll let her expert conclusion stand.” He leaned forward, waiting until Swan sat down. “Proceed.”

“Thank you.” Nicholls glanced at the judge. “In your opinion, Dr Allen, would an artillery expert have the necessary knowledge and skill to assemble such a device?”

Swan started to stand up, but Judge Davis pinned him with a blistering glare, and he sat down again.

“They would have the prerequisite knowledge, yes.” Allen nodded and brushed a stray tendril of hair off her face. “If an artillery expert had kept up with the new technology involved, he would certainly have the right skill set to assemble one.”

Behind her, Hawkins had grown pale. Swan watched the exchange intently. His eyes narrowed as Allen continued answering questions. He shot a glance across to the jury, who were listening and nodding, hanging on the expert’s every word. He’d hoped that casting doubt on Hawkins’s ability to understand what he had in the jumble of weapons components he’d acquired would be enough to convince the jury, but the Doctor was proving a much more competent witness than he’d anticipated. He felt a touch on his sleeve and turned to see Hawkins staring at him, desperation in his eyes. Swan frowned and shook off Hawkins’s hand, needing time to think. He wrote a few words

in the margin of his notes and pushed the paper towards Hawkins, making him jump as the paper touched the edge of his hand. Hawkins looked at Swan, then at the paper, and took a deep breath.

MacGyver watched Dr Allen, nodding every now and again as she made a particularly good point. She would have made a good teacher, he thought, explaining her points clearly and without seeming nervous. He caught a movement out of the corner of his eye and looked across at Hawkins.

Hawkins was tapping his fingers on the table, and humming under his breath. He started breathing very fast and muttering. Beside him, Swan made no move to quieten him, instead watching him grow more and more agitated. Eventually the judge called a halt.

“Mr Swan, what exactly is the problem with your client?!” He glared at Hawkins and Swan over his glasses. Swan rose to his feet.

“Your honour, my client is finding this trial very distressing, and it is causing him to have flashbacks to the terrible things he has experienced as a serving soldier.” He placed a protective hand on Hawkins’s shoulder. “Our apologies, your honour. My client is very unwell and we beg this court’s indulgence for him.” He glanced down, and Hawkins buried his head in his hands and sobbed.

“We’ll take a recess for lunch after this witness.” The judge didn’t look pleased, but Hawkins sobs were getting louder. “Mr Hawkins, you have to pull yourself together and allow the prosecution to question the witnesses – this trial will continue whether you are distressed by it or not. Do you understand?” Hawkins nodded and snuffled, and stopped sobbing. Judge Davis continued to stare at him until he was satisfied that Hawkins wasn’t going to start sobbing again, then nodded. “Mrs Nicholls, are you finished with this witness?”

“No further questions, your Honour.” Nicholls smiled at Dr Allen, who smiled back.

“Very well. Your witness, Mr Swan.” Judge Davis sat back, folding his hands across his stomach and frowning.

“Dr Allen, does your current job involve the design or assembly of –” Swan glanced down, referring to his notes, “- delivery devices for gases or liquids?”

“More the design than the assembly.” Dr Allen smiled. “The department I run does the actual assembly.”

“Quite. Do all the devices you assemble end up in weapons?” Swan put his hands in his pockets and stared at Allen.

“I’m afraid I’m not at liberty to discuss the destination of the devices my department assemble.” Dr Allen’s voice was pleasant, but firm. Beside her, MacGyver saw the judge nod approval.

“But those devices could, theoretically, have uses other than those of interest to the military?” Swan raised his eyebrows.

“Theoretically, yes.” Dr Allen nodded.

“So even if my client had intended to assemble such a device, and even if he possessed the skills to do so, he might well have ended up with something that had no military application whatsoever. Is that correct?” Swan took his hands out of his pockets, holding them up as he shrugged.

“Objection – calls for speculation!” Nicholls turned to face the judge.

“Sustained. Mr Swan, are you done?” Judge Davis frowned at Hawkins, who was whimpering quietly. “Your client is about two shakes away from disturbing this court, and I have no desire to have to start this whole thing again!” his jaw jutted and he glared at Swan. Swan opened his mouth to object again, caught the judge’s eye, and changed his mind.

“No further questions.”

“Good. This court is in recess for one hour.” Judge Davis stood and strode out of the room, conversation rising in his wake. MacGyver stood to allow his stern faced neighbour to get out, and looked across the room to find Swan looking back at him. Swan got up, straightened his jacket and followed his client out.

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MacGyver and Cooper filed outside, finding a clear area on the fresh cut grass to sit on in the autumn sunshine. Cooper looked better once they were outside, colour returning to his face. He took a few deep breaths and then coughed.

“Damn, Mac – how do you live here? Smog gets me every time I come here, and you live with it all the time!”

“You get used to it! Actually, it’s not so bad today.” MacGyver looked around him, the brown in the air blurring the distant hills. “Seems to me that Hawkins has got himself a pretty fancy attorney, don’t you think? Guys like him don’t work for peanuts, and Hawkins sure doesn’t dress like he can pay that guy’s wages...”

“I guess...” Cooper shrugged. “Probably one of his lowlife buddies sprang for it, it’d be just Hawkins’s style.”

“Pretty expensive for a lowlife...” Mac looked down, tugging at the short grass. “More like friends in high places, if you ask me. But how does a guy like Hawkins get friends in high places? He’s the lowest kind of bottom feeder, or he was last time I checked.”

“Well,” Cooper sat up straight, giving the problem his full attention, “Maybe by doing the dirty work for someone really important, or by knowing something that important people don’t want to become public knowledge?”

“Knowledge isn’t really Hawkins’s style, but dirty work?” MacGyver nodded, “Yeah, he wouldn’t mind how dirty it was, as long as there was a steady paycheck in it.” He got up, brushing grass off his trousers. “I’m going to make a phone call, see if I can’t find out who Damian Swan is, and what he might be doing defending a two bit smuggler like Hawkins.”

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Damian Swan sipped his coffee and read through his notes, scribbling reminders in the margin. Hawkins really was a disgusting parasite, he thought, grubbing around at the lowest levels of criminal activity and leaving the legal equivalent of big, muddy footprints wherever he went. No finesse. No style. No ambition. He screwed the cap on his gold fountain pen and finished his coffee, setting the cup down on the exact centre of the coaster. But then, defending people who really didn't deserve to be defended was what he was paid to do. His superiors had been very clear – Hawkins could be convicted of crimes at Westpoint, but he must not be convicted of anything he'd been accused of doing here in California.

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“Nikki?” MacGyver turned to the wall and put a finger in his other ear to block out the sounds of the noisy street. “You there?”

“Yeah, Mac. Your scumbag sure has got himself a fancy lawyer!” MacGyver could hear Nikki turning pages in the background. “Way out of his league!”

“Can you find out who's picking up the tab?” MacGyver switched the phone to his other ear and fished a pen and a scrap of paper out of his pocket.

“Probably not...” Nikki paused and MacGyver listened to the static on the line. “Swan works for Scott and Westfield up in Brentwood and they're very discreet about their clients. I can tell you they've a reputation for taking on hopeless cases though – they've got a number of people off the hook for some very unsavoury crimes and there's been a suspicion of jury-rigging on more than a few cases. A few attorneys have come to grief after opposing them on prominent cases, and there have been a couple of cases of clients disappearing after their trials too, so there's definitely something going on behind the thousand dollar suits and flashy smiles!”

“Nasty.” MacGyver made a note of the name. “When you say ‘come to grief’, you mean...?”

“Gone to the big courtroom in the sky!” Nikki's voice was grim. “Watch your back, Mac.”

“Understood. Thanks, Nikki.” MacGyver put down the phone, staring at his scribbled note. Who could be paying for a top-flight lawyer for Hawkins? What had he done that made him so important? He shoved the note into his trouser pocket and returned to the courtroom.

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“Hurry up!” Cooper beckoned to MacGyver, as he jogged back across the grass from the phone box with his tie flapping over his shoulder. “They're starting again!”

“Done.” MacGyver slowed to a walk, following Cooper back into the courthouse. “Nikki's going to look into Swan for me, find out what's going on here.” He put a hand on Cooper's shoulder. “You going to be OK?”

"I'll be fine, Corporal!" Cooper squared his shoulders and MacGyver followed him in, standing aside to let his sour faced neighbour go first, and getting a disapproving glare for his trouble.

### **Part Three**

They slipped back in just as the first of the defence witnesses took the stand. Hawkins looked composed, all traces of his 'distress' gone. The courtroom was quieter in the afternoon, and MacGyver and Cooper had a corner of the room to themselves.

"I just want this to be over, y'know?" Cooper sighed and shifted in his seat. "Just convict the scumbag already, then we can all go home and try to forget about him!"

"Oh yeah." The courtroom had grown warm and MacGyver loosened his tie, tugging at his tight collar. He glanced at Swan, following the attorney's gaze to a bored-looking man sitting in the opposite corner of the observer's area. Another man sitting next to him was engrossed in picking dirt out of the treads on his boots. MacGyver frowned, trying to remember if they'd been in the courtroom during the morning.

"How many more witnesses?" Cooper pulled out a handkerchief and mopped his brow.

"Couple more, closing statements and then the jury have to decide on a verdict." MacGyver shrugged. "Though given how bad he's making himself look, it shouldn't be too hard for them to reach a decision!" He turned to listen to the witness.

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"My name is Dr Ruth O'Dell. I'm a General Practitioner with a particular interest in Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder." Dr O'Dell glanced at the judge, then decided to concentrate on Swan instead.

"Thank you." Swan smiled at her, his eyes crinkling in a friendly way. O'Dell smiled back. "When you examined Mr Hawkins, what did you conclude about his health?"

"Mr Hawkins has a number of minor health concerns which I am bound by my oath not to discuss." O'Dell smiled again. She turned to Judge Davis, but he didn't return her smile.

"Did you conclude that Mr Hawkins was suffering from PTSD?" Swan turned his back on Nicholls, ignoring her as she stood up.

"Objection – leading question!" Nicholls stepped around Swan. The judge looked at her over his glasses.

"Sustained." He glared at Swan. "Well?"

"Withdrawn." Swan looked annoyed. "Dr O'Dell, were all Mr Hawkins's health problems physical in nature, or did you conclude that he was suffering from mental health problems too?"

"Yes." Dr O'Dell watched Swan gesture for her to elaborate. "Oh. Yes. Mental health problems too - Mr Hawkins was suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder."

“No further questions.” Swan smiled at Dr O’Dell again, and stood aside, indicating to Nicholls that she was free to begin.

“Dr O’Dell, what experience do you have in diagnosing and treating PTSD?” Nicholls folded her arms, leaning her weight on one hip.

“It’s my special interest.” Now O’Dell looked less comfortable.

“But what qualifications and experience do you have?” Nicholls would not be dissuaded.

“Oh yes, lots of experience.” O’Dell nodded.

“And how did you gain this experience?” Nicholls sounded patient. To MacGyver, her tone was that of someone being patient with a small child.

“Objection – asked and answered!” Swan jumped to his feet again, earning a grateful look from Dr O’Dell.

“But not answered very well!” Judge Davis glared down at Swan. “Proceed, Mrs Nicholls.”

“Thank you.” Nicholls turned back to Dr O’Dell, raising her eyebrows.

“I... Um... Experience from my general practice...” Dr O’Dell tailed off, uncertain.

“No further questions.” Nicholls sat down.

MacGyver glanced at Hawkins, who was looking worried, and then at Swan. Swan was making a gesture towards the two men at the back of the courtroom. MacGyver turned around, concentrating on them. They exchanged a glance, then one dropped his hands, fingers open, swept them towards the left and then held up his hand with the thumb tucked against the palm. Swan watched, then dipped his head in a small nod. MacGyver’s hands moved, mimicking the gestures, and then he drew a sharp breath.

“What is it?” Cooper’s whisper was quiet.

“That guy just signed ‘we lose, plan B’ and Swan agreed.” He turned in time to see the two men nod, then get up to leave.

“Where are you going?!” Cooper hissed. MacGyver pointed at the men and then followed them out.

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MacGyver flattened himself against the wall and peered around the corner, seeing the main door swinging shut. He jogged through the hall and opened the door, seeing one of the man cross the street. He hurried down the steps, ducking behind a tree as the man glanced back over his shoulder, and then followed him along the busy sidewalk. The man stopped at a phone box, checking around him once more before lifting the phone and dialling. MacGyver stopped behind a market stall, but couldn’t see the number the man dialled. The man spoke for a minute, nodded his head and listened to the reply. The reply didn’t seem to please him, and MacGyver watched him frown, argue, run a hand through his greasy hair and lean his hand against the side of the booth. The man slammed the

phone down and came out of the booth, looking around him and MacGyver ducked down behind a display of sketchbooks as the man's gaze swept past him.

"Can I help you?" The stall holder peered down at him.

"Um..." MacGyver scanned the stall, seeing pencils, sketchbooks, paints and... "A packet of chalk, please. And some Scotch tape." He took a stick of chalk out and scraped at it with the small blade of his Swiss Army Knife, catching the resulting dust on a scrap of paper from his pocket.

"What are you doing?" The stallholder watched him, confusion creasing her forehead.

"Fingerprints!" He smiled at the stallholder and walked across the street, leaving her shaking her head at his back.

MacGyver stepped into the phone booth and held his paper full of chalk dust up to the Perspex side of the booth. He blew gently, seeing the dust stick to a set of greasy fingerprints. He smiled, unrolled some scotch tape and carefully lifted the fingerprints off the side of the booth. He stuck the end of the tape to the Perspex, peeled off another length and used it to sandwich the fingerprints between two layers. Rolling up the tape, he stowed it in his pocket and picked up the phone receiver.

"Hey Mac, what's up?" Nikki sounded busy and MacGyver could hear her tapping at the computer keyboard in the background.

"Can you look something up for me, please?" He heard the typing stop.

"I'm not a public information service, you know! I do have actual work to do here..." There was a pause and then MacGyver heard Nikki sigh. "What do you need?"

"Thanks, Nikki, I owe you." MacGyver looked up and down the empty corridor. "Can you find out anything about a company called Western Precision Electricals?"

"Sure." MacGyver heard the scratch of Nikki's pen on her notebook. "You gonna tell me what this is about?"

"Riding a hunch." MacGyver ran a hand through his hair. "I think Hawkins may have stolen from the wrong people this time and got in over his head... and I think his sleazy attorney might be out to get him" He turned, seeing the second of the men walking along the street. "Thanks, Nikki. Gotta go." He put down the phone, ran back across the street and hurried back into the courtroom. He paused in the shadows behind the door, but the man didn't follow him in. He slipped back into the courtroom and sat down.

"I followed that guy." MacGyver leaned towards Cooper and whispered. He rummaged in his pocket and pulled out the tape. "I took his fingerprints off a phone booth. He made a call and then disappeared off into the crowd." Cooper took the tape and unrolled it, keeping it out of sight of the rest of the court. He glanced down at it, then stared at MacGyver.

"You took these off a... phone booth?!" He watched MacGyver nod and raised his eyebrows. "Mac, this guy made a call. Using a downtown public phone may be risking mugging or worse, I'll grant you,

but it's not actually illegal!" He looked up, but no-one had heard them. "Where are you going with this?"

"I'm not sure." MacGyver rolled up his tape and put it back in his pocket. "There's something going on here that's a little... off."

"Yes." Cooper ran a hand over his face and sighed. "What's going on here is that a killer is about to get hit with way less justice than he deserves, and I agree – it's more than a little 'off'. But it's the best we're going to get, and I plan to sit here and watch it happen." He caught the court reporter's glare and continued in a quieter whisper. "Mac, just sit here and watch it with me, OK? This is important to me."

"Sure, Cooper." MacGyver nodded, chastened. "Of course." He tried to concentrate on the trial, on Captain Ramirez's fervent account of Hawkins as a fine and upstanding citizen, a good soldier and a staunch friend, but his mind wandered back to Swan's mystery guy and his angry phone call.

Who could he have been calling?

Did it have anything to do with the trial, or was he just being paranoid?

And if he wasn't being paranoid, what might happen next?

#### **Part Four**

"Prosecutor Nicholls, you may begin." The judge beckoned to Hawkins, indicating that he should take the stand.

"Thank you, your Honour." Fiona Nicholls crossed to the witness stand, looking at Hawkins. "Please state your name for the record."

"Alfred Wallace Hawkins." Hawkins no longer looked confident, as he had done at the beginning of the trial.

"Where were you employed during 1985 and 1986, Mr Hawkins?" Nicholls stood in front of him, waiting as Hawkins thought about the question. "Were you employed at all?"

"Yes!" Hawkins nodded. "I was working security at Westpoint Beach Plant."

"And were you also living near Westpoint?" Nicholls watched Hawkins nod again. "Please speak aloud, Mr Hawkins – the reporter can't record gestures."

"Yes, I was living in Westpoint." Hawkins frowned, waiting to see what Nicholls would ask next. At the back of the courtroom, MacGyver frowned too. Why did Westpoint Beach sound so familiar?

"When did you stop working at Westpoint Beach Nuclear Processing Plant?" Nicholls glanced across to Swan, who was watching her with a flat, unfriendly stare.

"Uh... February." Hawkins blinked and licked his lips.

“And did your leaving have anything to do with the attempted uranium theft in January of that year?” Nicholls ignored Swan’s glare, concentrating on Hawkins.

“Objection – Leading question!” Swan was on his feet, “The prosecution is asking my client to incriminate himself!” He waited, but Judge Davis gestured for him to continue. “Mr Hawkins lived at Westpoint Beach, yes, but there is no evidence to link him to the attempted theft of uranium.”

“Well?” Judge Davis frowned at Nicholls.

“Your honour, the accused has been suspected of association with theft and left or been dismissed from nine separate jobs. He has admitted that he spent his time in Vietnam passing on stolen property and supplying restricted items to those willing to pay for them. He chose to leave Westpoint right after the planned theft of uranium was discovered. I would like the opportunity to ask Mr Hawkins why he left Westpoint in such a hurry.” Nicholls waited as the judge stared first at her, then at Hawkins, then finally at Swan.

“Overruled. Answer the question, Mr Hawkins.” The judge turned away from Swan

“I... Uh...” Hawkins faltered, running a hand over his slicked back hair. “I left because the reactor almost had a leak. Place wasn’t safe, to my mind, so I left.” He glanced across to Swan, and MacGyver saw the attorney nod back.

“Was your job secure at the point at which you left?” Nicholls looked down and pulled a paper out of her stack.

“Yes.” Hawkins’s eyes slid away from the prosecutor’s direct gaze.

“So you hadn’t received any warnings for tardiness, failure to carry out your duties in a satisfactory manner or loss of stock?” Nicholls looked pleased, watching Hawkins flush and stammer.

“Well, that’s... You don’t have... I CHOSE TO LEAVE, I WASN’T FIRED!” Hawkins was bright red and sweating, and stared at Swan, panic-stricken. Swan got to his feet.

“I request a short recess to allow my client to regain his composure, your Honour. This trial is proving very difficult for him. After all, he is not a well man.” He folded his hands, waiting for the judge to decide. Hawkins, as if on cue, buried his head in his hands and started sobbing.

“Denied.” Judge Davis folded his arms and glowered at Swan. “We’re nearly done here. Your client will just have to manage. Carry on, Mrs Nicholls.”

“I’d like to move on to your more recent activities, Mr Hawkins.” Nicholls tucked her hair behind her ear and faced the stand. “You moved to Los Angeles after you left Westpoint, and you’ve lived here ever since, yes?”

“Yes.” Hawkins sat back in his chair.

“And you’ve been employed all that time?” Nicholls drew out another sheet of paper, laying it on the table in front of her.

“Mostly.” Hawkins eyed the paper with suspicion. “What’s that?”

"I'll come to that in a minute. What is your most recent employment, Mr Hawkins?" Nicholls moved the paper slightly, lining it up with the table edge.

"Western Precision Electricals. I work deliveries." Hawkins looked uncomfortable.

"Work? Or worked?" Nicholls smiled as Hawkins flushed red. "Isn't it right that you've been dismissed from Western, Mr Hawkins?" She nodded as he mumbled assent. "Why were you dismissed?"

"Objection - relevance!" Swan jumped up, glaring at Nicholls. "My client's employment status is of no relevance to this case!"

"Overruled!" Now the judge was annoyed. "I will not have you bouncing up and down every time anyone has to answer a question!" He glared at Swan, who closed his mouth and sat down, shooting a venomous glare at Nicholls. Nicholls ignored him and motioned to Hawkins to answer.

"They said I stole stuff." Hawkins looked sullen. "But they ain't got no proof."

"Nevertheless, you were dismissed for gross misconduct." Nicholls held up the paper, reading the reason for dismissal out loud. She glanced at Hawkins but didn't wait for him to answer. "And there were no other employees who could have perpetrated the theft, were there?" She watched Hawkins hesitate. "I remind you that you are under oath..."

"There could have been other people there. I don't know who was in, do I? It's a big place!" Hawkins frowned, sounding angry. "They got it in for me, they ain't got no proof!"

"So how did you come to have several large boxes of Western Precision Electricals products in your apartment hallway, Mr Hawkins?" Nicholls put down the paper and folded her arms.

"I..." Hawkins opened his mouth, but no words came out.

"No further questions." Nicholls collected her papers, smiled at the jury and returned to her seat.

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"Wow, he's missed his calling alright – he should have been on the stage!" MacGyver turned to Cooper, hiding his whisper under the murmur of discontent in the courtroom.

"Unbelievable. Cooper leaned back in his seat and folded his arms. "There's nothing wrong with him that a good kicking wouldn't cure. Look at him! Second rate theatrics is all that is. PTSD..." He shook his head in disgust.

"Pathetic Thief Scumbag Disorder, maybe?" MacGyver watched Cooper grin.

"Yeah, that's more like it!" Cooper laughed quietly, shooting MacGyver a grateful glance.

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Swan stood and walked over to the witness stand.

"Are you OK, Mr Hawkins? Do you need a break?" His voice was quiet, solicitous. "I know this is difficult for a man who's suffered as you have."

"I'm OK." Hawkins looked unsure, as though he might have given Swan the wrong answer, but Swan just nodded.

"Very well. You're a veteran, aren't you?" Swan nodded as Hawkins agreed. "You served your country with distinction. You were in Vietnam, and you continued to serve after you returned, at a supply base here in California, right?"

"Barstow." Hawkins nodded, confidence creeping back into his tone.

"And you've lived and worked all around California, haven't you? You've gone where the work is, to keep yourself fed and clothed, working whatever job you can get, yes?"

"That's right. I never claimed a cent in Social Security." Hawkins straightened in his chair, looking pleased with himself.

"But you've sometimes had trouble keeping a job, haven't you?" Swan stared hard at Hawkins, who'd begun to look confused. Then Hawkins's face cleared.

"Uh, yeah. That's right." He nodded.

"Because you haven't always been well, have you? Your service to this country has left its mark on you and you've suffered from...?" Swan raised his eyebrows.

"P.T.S.D." Hawkins said slowly, making sure he got the letters in the right order.

"And what effects does your PTSD have on you?" Swan took a step back, giving the jury an uninterrupted view of Hawkins. Hawkins turned his head, keeping eye contact with Swan.

"I sometimes forget stuff. I remember terrible things that happened when I was in Vietnam and it makes me lose where I am and what I'm doing. I get scared. I go with people who are tough and make me feel safe. I do what they say. Sometimes I do things I shouldn't do." Hawkins's words were stilted, sounding to MacGyver as though he was reading from a list. He turned to say as much to Cooper, but the words died on his lips.

"Cooper?" He ignored the stern woman's scowl, touching Cooper's shoulder to try and attract his attention. "Cooper? You OK, man?" He watched Cooper shake his head, felt the man trembling through his jacket. "You need to leave?" He watched Cooper take a ragged breath and nod.

Squeezing past his grumpy neighbour and apologising to the people they squeezed past, MacGyver steered Cooper to the back door of the courtroom and out into the hall. He sat him down in a chair and fetched him some water from the cooler.

"Sorry, Mac." Cooper took the water with a shaking hand. "He's just... He's making a mockery of what I've been through for the past twenty years, and..." He took a sip of water. "Sorry."

"No problem." MacGyver sat beside him and slouched down in his seat. "Hawkins and Swan were beginning to grind my gears too."

"What got you going, anyway?" Cooper set the water down, looking steadier. "You jumped like you'd been shot back there."

“Yeah...” MacGyver stuffed his hands in his jacket pockets. “I think I may have crossed paths with Hawkins a few years back, over the Westpoint Beach thing.” He shivered. “When I think of what nearly happened there, I could just...” He made a fist and shook it in the air.

“Now you’re getting it.” Cooper picked up his glass and drained it. “I think I’m OK to go back in now.”

“Sure.” MacGyver still looked angry as he rose and followed Cooper back into the courtroom.

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Nicholls and Swan summed up their cases, finishing by asking the jury to return a just verdict. To MacGyver, it sounded as though Nicholls had made a far stronger case and that the jury should have no difficulty in returning a verdict of guilty on all counts. For a man whose case seemed so weak, Swan looked confident. Too confident, MacGyver thought.

The jury retired to deliberate and Swan returned to sit with his client. MacGyver watched Hawkins try to talk to Swan, but Swan waved him off and didn’t reply. MacGyver’s eyes narrowed as he thought. From what he remembered of doing jury service and from attending other court cases, attorneys were usually keen to talk to the people they represented, advising, reassuring or commiserating, but never ignoring them. Hawkins made a last attempt to talk to Swan, then sat back. He looked frightened, MacGyver thought.

MacGyver pulled at his tie again, wishing he hadn’t worn it. The autumn sun streamed in through the windows and MacGyver found himself drifting into a doze in the warm room.

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MacGyver came to with a start as the jury filed back in. He watched them carefully, remembering from ‘To Kill a Mockingbird’ that a jury never looks at a defendant they’ve convicted. The last juror sat down without making eye contact, and the judge spoke.

“Have you reached a decision?” he waited for the jury foreman to stand up.

“Yes, your honour.” The foreman swallowed, glanced at Hawkins and then away again. “To the charge of receiving stolen goods: Guilty. To the charge of involvement in the theft of radioactive materials: not guilty. To the charge of possessing apparatus capable of disseminating a biological agent, toxin or vector, under the Biological Weapons Anti-Terrorism Act of 1989: Guilty.” The foreman’s gaze slid across to Swan, who sniffed and looked away.

“Thank you.” The judge nodded to the jury foreman and then his gaze swept the room.

“This court finds Alfred Wallace Hawkins guilty of crimes which threaten the safety and security of United States citizens.” He leaned forward and stared at Hawkins. “While I do not believe you possess the capability to build a delivery system for such a weapon yourself, it is clear that you planned to pass this equipment on to person or persons capable of doing so.” The judge took off his glasses and placed them upside down on the desk. “You are hereby sentenced to fifteen years imprisonment, with no opportunity for parole.” He watched as Hawkins rose unsteadily to his feet.

“You will be taken from here to a place of holding, and from there to California State Prison.” He looked around the room, making eye contact with the jury, Hawkins, Nicholls and Swan. “Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to thank you for your service at this trial. I appreciate your attention, your dedication and your hard work. You will recall that I told you that you were not to discuss this case with anyone. That prohibition no longer applies. There is no law that requires you to discuss this case, nor is there any law that prohibits you from doing so. This is left to your own discretion. Again, thank you, and you are now excused.” Judge Davis nodded to the jury and stood, walked through the courtroom without looking at Hawkins and let the door swing shut behind him.

“Are you OK?” MacGyver turned to Cooper as the judge left the room.

“Yeah. I guess that was about the best we could expect. I really thought they’d got him for the uranium theft though, that would have seen them lock him up and throw away the key!” Cooper shrugged. “Good enough for me. I hope California State is plenty rough, and I wish him a long and terrible stay there.” He picked up his jacket, draping it over his arm. “If we’re really lucky, he’ll have a 300 pound cellmate called ‘Bubba’ who thinks he’s just divine, darling!” Cooper fluttered his eyelashes and MacGyver grinned.

“You never know!” MacGyver pulled his tie off and stuffed it in his pocket.” Come on, let’s get out of here!”

They walked down the courthouse steps, squinting in the sunlight. The square was quiet, just a few people walking home or out for the evening. A prison van slowed in front of the courthouse and turned down the alley alongside it.

“I see Hawkins’s limousine has arrived!” Cooper’s grin was fierce. “Rot in hell, you bastard!”

“Right...” MacGyver gazed around the square, looking for a familiar face. Shrugging, he dismissed the idea, telling himself that he was just paranoid, that he wasn’t going to see the man from the phone booth because he was, after all, only a guy making a call. He checked for traffic, then he and Cooper crossed the street. At the alley behind the courthouse, Cooper paused.

“I want to see that he’s really gone, OK?” Cooper continued walking, and MacGyver followed him.

A car screamed around the corner, running the red light and slewing to a halt at the end of the alley. The barrel of a machine gun poked out of the back window of the car, sending a hail of bullets towards the prison van. Cooper and MacGyver made an instinctive dive for the people standing by the van, MacGyver tackling the prison guards and Cooper shoving Hawkins to the ground. From the safety of a shop doorway, MacGyver heard bullets ricochet and whine, and a man screamed. The car spun its tyres and pulled away. He peered around the door, just in time to see a familiar face behind the wheel of the car.

“That’s him!” he lunged forward as if to chase the car, but Cooper pulled him back.

“Are you nuts?! You’re gonna chase a drive-by with a machine gun? On foot?” he shook his head.

“I didn’t get the license plate, did you?”

“No.” MacGyver frowned, then he spun round as another scream and a groan echoed around the alley. He got to his feet, helping one of the prison guards up. The guard glanced down at Hawkins, lying on the floor and covered in blood.

“I’ll call 911 – he looks bad!” He ducked into the van and rummaged in the glove box for his cellphone, leaving MacGyver and Cooper to go to Hawkins. MacGyver knelt down, seeing blood pulse from a wound in Hawkins’s thigh. The second guard was leaning hard on the wound, but blood welled up from around her gloved hands.

“They hit the artery.” She leaned harder and Hawkins screamed again.

“OK, that’s bad.” MacGyver looked around, spotting something sticking out of a dumpster. “Cooper, go get me that umbrella, would you?” He reached out a hand, pulling his tie out of his pocket with the other. “Thanks.” He tucked the tie under Hawkins’s leg and knotted it. “OK, Cooper, I need you to pull me some spokes off that thing.”

“What?!” Cooper shook his head in confusion, but yanked off a handful of battered spokes and passed them across. “Here.”

“Thanks.” MacGyver twisted the spokes under the knotted tie and twisted it round and round. The makeshift tourniquet tightened and Cooper saw the blood slow. In the distance he heard the wail of the approaching ambulance’s sirens.

“Good job!” The prison guard grinned at MacGyver. Below them, Hawkins groaned again and passed out.

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The paramedics arrived, loaded Hawkins into the ambulance and left, sirens wailing.

“Thanks. You may just have saved that guy’s life.” The prison guard got to her feet, wiping at the blood on her shirt and then giving up. She nodded to MacGyver and Cooper, got into her van and backed out of the alley.

I can’t believe I just helped to save that scumbag!” Cooper watched the prison van drive away, shoving his hands into his pockets and shaking his head.

“Yeah, well.” MacGyver stood up, dusting alley dirt off his trousers. “Think of it as saving him for Bubba!”

“Hah! Yes, we did, didn’t we!” Cooper grinned. “I think I’m OK with that!” He turned back to look at MacGyver. “And trust you to find a way to get rid of that tie!” He smiled again, expecting MacGyver to grin back. But MacGyver was frowning, staring down the alley. “What is it, Mac?”

“That was the guy.” He took a few steps up the alley and then stopped. “The driver. He was the phone call guy...” He took the rolled-up tape out of his pocket and looked at the chalk fingerprints. “Who was Hawkins mixed up with, to make him worth killing?”

“No clue.” Cooper shrugged. “But since he’s not dead, I guess someone can go ask him.”

“Yeah...” MacGyver turned to follow Cooper, his face serious. “Providing no-one else gets to him first...”

TO BE CONTINUED...

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