

Justitia Omnibus

Part 1

July 4, 1996

Everything was dark. An incessant ringing echoed distantly in his ears. Struggling to awaken, he shifted his body on the cold metal floor, immediately regretting the motion as a wave of nausea and pain forced him to grit his teeth.

He needed to get out of there, and fast. It was imperative that he escape. Someone's life depended on it.

But...whose? And why? And from what could he be escaping? And where was he?

His watery eyes were slowly adjusting to the darkness. His breath hitched as he realized he wasn't alone: another groggy figure was moving around in the darkness. His heart pounded.

“Who are you?” His voice sounded strange in his ears, dulled by the constant ringing. “Are you all right?”

“Fine,” came the ice-cold reply. “No broken bones, no torn muscles or ligaments... Though I suspect I've got a head injury.” The other man paused in his train of thought, as if suddenly realizing something. “Who are *you*? And what the bloody hell just happened?”

“Language,” he said reflexively before adding, “I don't know.”

“Of course you don't,” the other man muttered. “Well, at least introduce yourself, then.”

“That's what I'm saying,” he said. “*I don't know.*”

The other man froze again. “Are you serious?”

“I don't know why I wouldn't be at a time like this,” he answered honestly.

“Then I'm afraid we're both in trouble,” the other man said quietly. “You see, I have no idea who I am,

either. Can't remember a thing beyond waking up here."
"What are the odds of that happening?"

"I don't know, and it doesn't really matter, I suppose. Against the odds or not, we're both trapped here with no memory. Check your pockets, then, see if you can find anything useful."

He nodded. "Right." As he searched through his pockets, the other man continued to speak.

"You sound like you've got a concussion. I suspect we both do. That would explain what's causing the retrograde amnesia. Something must have happened. Something big."

"I think you're right," he said slowly, "and I think it might've been an explosion."

"Do you remember something, then?" the other man asked with genuine curiosity.

He shook his head, wincing slightly. "No. It's just...something I just *know*. Something in the air, maybe."

"Hmm.
"

Something about the other man's voice---slightly raspy and distinctly British---was almost unsettling...but also somehow very, very familiar.

"It's too dark to see," he said to the other man.

"I seem to be carrying a lighter." He scoffed. "Among other things. Found it hidden up my sleeve."

In the low light of the flickering, dim flame, he saw the other man's face for the first time that he could remember. Sharp, angular...and familiar.

"I'm certain that I know you," he said quietly. "We know each other somehow." The other man said

nothing, so he just continued to dig through his pockets, dumping the contents onto the steel floor. "Two paper clips, some gum wrappers, a little bit of twine... And this." He held up a folded slip of paper between two fingers.

"Go on and look at it," the other man urged, moving the lighter slightly. "See what it is."

"I think it's an old check stub. From something called a Phoenix Foundation. I guess that's where I work?"

In the light of the flame, the other man frowned. "Disappointing. I'd hoped for something more useful. Does it have a name on it?"

"MacGyver." He shrugged. "I don't know about a first name. I have an A. I guess that's my initial."

The other man shrugged. "I suppose it doesn't really matter anyway."

"Do *you* have an ID? Or a name?"

The other man shrugged again. "Not that I can find. But I think I must be some kind of doctor."

"How do you know?"

"I don't know what else I could be. I seem to have a good grasp on anatomy and I started diagnosing problems with both of us almost as soon as I came to consciousness. I suppose I've got to be in the medical field somehow, or at least in biology."

"That makes sense," MacGyver replied thoughtfully. "MacGyver. I guess that name *sounds* right, at least. Now we still need to figure out who you are and how we both got here."

"And where exactly *here* is."

"I think we're on a boat."

“Why? Do you feel that in the air, too?” the other man sneered.

“I can feel it moving,” MacGyver said simply.

The other man fell still and quiet. After a moment, he said, “You may be right. I feel it, too.”

“We should try to get to the upper decks. Maybe we'll get a look at where we are, or at least find a map.”

The other man nodded and rose to his feet unsteadily, passing the flame of the lighter along each wall in search of a door. At last, the flame flickered and revealed a sturdy hatch.

“This looks like our ticket out,” the other man said. MacGyver nodded, grabbing the big, solid handle and starting to push it upward. The other man quickly joined him, combining their strength, and together they were able to force the door outward.

As soon as the hatch opened, MacGyver's jaw dropped. The door had been blocked by debris and ash, and the scents of sulfur and smoke stung Mac's watery brown eyes. Coughing, he motioned to the other man and stumbled toward a sturdy metal ladder attached to a bulkhead at the end of the corridor. They were still belowdecks, sealed in, and they needed to work their way up---and fast.

They shuffled up the ladder and pulled themselves to the top deck almost on autopilot, just struggling to get to some breathable air untainted by fumes.

When the both of them had emerged onto the top deck into the open air, the other man closed the hatch behind them.

In the fresh air abovedecks, MacGyver, smiling as a cold breeze ruffled the edges of his long hair, looked out at their surroundings. “We're on a river?”

“But *which* river?” the other man said, crossing the deck.

“The Potomac,” MacGyver said breathlessly.

The other man whirled, black clothes fluttering. “You actually recognize this?”

“I’ve been here before,” MacGyver confirmed. “Not on a boat, but I still know this place somehow. Look!”

He pointed out a pink-hued granite statue of a human figure with outstretched arms, stone face gazing unseeing at the rest of the blue river winding behind them and at the bustle of activity on the nearby wharf. “That’s the *Titanic* Memorial. So I guess technically, this is just the Washington Channel instead of the main river.”

“Who cares? At least we know where we are.”

“And there!” MacGyver blurted, cutting his companion off in delight. “Those two bridges in the distance. They take you to Arlington, Virginia. From the direction, we’re in Washington DC right now.”

The other man nodded. “So we know where we are and we know who *you* are. That’s two mysteries down, which leaves two more to go: who I am, and how we both got here.”

MacGyver frowned. “What are the odds that this is our boat?”

“Not very good, I’m afraid. I can already tell you that I don’t care for boats at all. There’s no way to escape, is there? We’re trapped floating on a bobbing tin can.”

“Then let’s look around and see who it belongs to,” MacGyver replied. “And maybe we can steer this close enough to the marina to get out. I think I can figure out how to drive this.” “If you can’t, then I can,” the other man said. “I’ll start searching for any kind of documents or identification.”

“Can we give you a name?” MacGyver said suddenly. The other man froze in his tracks, staring stupefied at Mac, as if the thought had never crossed his mind. “*What?*”

At that reaction, Mac shifted slightly, uncomfortable beneath that harsh gaze. “You know... A nickname or something. So that I can call you something other than ‘hey you.’ It’s not really fair that I have a name and you don’t.”

Incredulous, the other man shook his head, brushing a spray of brackish water out of his face as the wind

carried the droplets into the air. "I hardly think I need a nickname. You're the only one who needs to know me, and that's only because apparently I'm stuck with you. For all I know, I may not even *have* a real name."

"I need to call you *something*," MacGyver argued.

The other man rolled his eyes and resumed searching for any kind of useful papers. "Well, what do you suggest?" he drawled without bothering to disguise his disdain.

"Clark Kent?" Mac suggested.

He snorted. "A superhero alias? Spare me."

"John Smith?"

"Pass."

"John Wayne?"

That one gave the other man pause, and when his eyes lit up, Mac thought for a second that he'd found a winner. But then the nameless man shook his head. "No."

"...James Bond?"

"I've just found a very heavy wrench that I have no qualms about throwing at you, thank you very much."

"Okay, okay! Um..." MacGyver frantically searched his brain for inspiration. "...Joe Elliott?"

"Finally, something that's actually tolerable!" Then the other man laughed. A long, low, almost deranged sound.

It was just an ordinary laugh---almost---but the sound of it set MacGyver's nerves on edge, and a prickling sensation covered his entire body. That was when he realized that his every hair, from the tops of his arms

all the way up to the nape of his neck, was standing on end.

The other man stopped laughing and tilted his head in curiosity. "Now what's the matter with you, hm? You look as if you've seen a ghost."

"Maybe I have," MacGyver muttered, rubbing his arms self-consciously. "I don't know what came over me."

"Hm. Maybe we should just keep it simple then," the other man suggested. "Something easy. Like Eddy."

Mac wrinkled his nose, the creepy sensation forgotten. "Eddy? But it's so..."

"Forgettable?" 'Eddy' chuckled in his throat. "Exactly. Though I would still say it's a step above MacGyver."

"Yeah, right," Mac said with a shake of his head. "Found anything yet?"

"Nothing, so you'd better get us close enough to bail out. I don't want to be on this tin can for a moment longer than I have to."

"I think it's mostly fiberglass," Mac mused as he started to steer the boat along the channel. "I think I know a lot about boats. Maybe I fish."

"Goody for you," Eddy said with an eyeroll. "Just drive the boat, will you? We only need to get close enough to shore to jump out."

"Jump?" MacGyver said, feeling just a hint of apprehension. "Won't that be a pretty long way down?"

"Hardly. It may not be a pretty landing, but it won't be nearly enough to injure."

MacGyver sighed. "If you say so. If you say so..."

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