

Brothers in Arms

Part One

Camp Parks, Dublin, California

"That's not right." Sergeant First Class Steve Bolton frowned at his screen. He read through the conversion instructions again and unrolled the aircraft diagrams on his desk. "That's definitely not right!" He checked the sender of the email and picked up his phone, dialling the extension number from memory. "Command Sergeant Major, I've had a really odd request from D unit." He listened to the answer, nodding. "Yes Sir, I understand, but they want me to –" He stopped, holding the receiver away from his ear as his commanding officer's voice grew loud.

"ARE WE CLEAR, SOLDIER?!" The Sergeant Major finished, his breathing audible even over the phone.

"Yes, Sir. I understand." Bolton put down the phone, shaking his head. He studied the diagrams again switching between the papers and the information on the screen. He checked the list of components specified for converting the aircraft and his eyes grew wide as he realised what the aircraft was being rigged to carry. He picked up the phone to call his commander again, then frowned and put down the receiver. His commander had been very clear about the secrecy surrounding this project, and the need to complete the work exactly as specified. Bolton had never heard him that emphatic before. If it had been anyone else, Bolton would have said he sounded scared...

Reaching for the phone, he picked up the receiver and dialled a different number.

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"Hello?" Seeley clamped the phone between his ear and his shoulder as he scraped the last of the cat food out of the can, putting the plate down on the kitchen floor. A sleek, brown cat rubbed against his legs, then tucked into the food. "Steve? Hey buddy, how's tricks?" He stepped over the cat and put the can in the trash. "Yeah, sure I got a minute. What do you need?"

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Phoenix Foundation, Los Angeles, California

"Mac! Good to have you back!" Pete stood up, hearing MacGyver's sneakers cross the hall and enter his office.

"Pete, good to be back." MacGyver shook Pete's hand and sat down opposite him.

"Bad business with Davidson." Pete shook his head. "Still, we've a great team steering the good ship Phoenix now."

"Yeah, we do." MacGyver frowned. "How many projects will we need to shelve, Pete? I heard Davidson hit pretty hard with that, but I guess there was a grain of truth in what he said, right?"

“We’ll be fine.” Pete waved a hand. “What I really want to hear about is Atlas. I’m hearing a lot of stuff I don’t like, but if I’m going to take it further then I need the full story.”

“Wow.” MacGyver ran a hand through his hair, sitting back in his chair. “That could take a while...”

“Take all the time you need.” Pete beckoned to Helen, who came in and sat down, ready to take notes.

“Right.” MacGyver frowned, gathering his thoughts. “I guess I first heard about it from Gunther, when you asked me to take him home to Berlin. He told me about Project Atlas being a Nazi idea to uh... spray-bomb –“ He made quote marks with his fingers. “- unwanted populations into oblivion. Nasty stuff. But maybe the technology couldn’t be made to work. Anyway, Gunther was convinced someone was fixing to start the idea up again, here in the U.S.”

“And now we have the technology to make it work.” Pete frowned, taking a sip of coffee.

“Unfortunately, yes we do. And seeing as how Gunther was shot and killed for knowing about it, it seems likely that he was onto something.” MacGyver sighed, shaking his head.

“Maybe.” Pete rubbed his chin, thinking. “We were never able to narrow down the reason Gunther was shot. We’re talking here about a man with a lot of enemies. Enemies with very long memories.”

“That’s true.” MacGyver hooked a foot over his knee, picking at a loose thread on the hem of his jeans. “But when you add in Freddie Hawkins’ death shortly after it came out that he’d stolen spray delivery systems and passed them on to goodness knows who, it starts to look a little more likely.”

“Or it’s coincidence.” Pete held up a hand, as if he’d felt MacGyver’s stare. “I’m not discounting what you have to say, Mac. I know you too well to think you’re jumping at shadows. But your friend detective Murphy said there wasn’t enough to go on when you asked her, and my friend Judge Dickinson said the same at the concert we went to together last week.” He sighed. “Do we have anything else?”

“We have the Wellforce superbugs. And the fact that Cooper was...” MacGyver swallowed hard, unexpected tears pricking his eyes. “Cooper was killed because he was investigating what else Hawkins might have been stealing.” His voice was steady, but the calm tone sounded forced.

“Mac, I’m so sorry about your friend.” Pete shook his head, his expression sad. “That was a terrible thing to happen. Do the police have any leads on who was responsible?”

“No.” MacGyver pulled harder at the stray thread until it snapped. “There wasn’t enough of... of anything left to work with. Whoever it was, they were careful to leave no trace.”

“That’s bad.” Pete folded his hands. “Mac, I know I don’t need to say it, but please be careful. If you’re right, if Atlas is assembling everything they need to resurrect their Nazi ideas, you could still be in danger.”

“I know.” MacGyver’s voice was quiet. “It’s why I’m glad that Sam’s in South America right now. As crazy as it sounds, he’s probably safer down there!” He glanced up, seeing Seeley talking to Helen. His face was worried and MacGyver frowned, wondering what could have upset his usually calm colleague.

“Well, keep me posted on anything else that might be Atlas-related, OK?” Pete pulled his keyboard towards him, pausing with his fingers on the keys. “Stay safe, Mac.”

“I will.” MacGyver got to his feet and left the office, following Seeley down the corridor.

He found Seeley looking through the filing cabinet. He glanced up, seeing MacGyver approach.

“Hey Mac. You still have the list of stuff your dodgy Vietnam guy stole?” Seeley looked harassed, and MacGyver felt apprehension stir.

“Uh... In my desk, I think. What’s this about?” MacGyver crossed to his desk, opening a drawer and rummaging in the folders there. “Here you go.” He handed Seeley a folder. “What do you want with Hawkins?”

“This morning I had a very odd phone call from a buddy of mine who works out of Camp Parks, up near San Fran.” Seeley scratched his head. “He’s been given a job to do which seems like it’s got Atlas written all over it.”

“Camp Parks? That’s the army base, right?” MacGyver sat down at his desk, pushing another chair towards Seeley.

“Right.” Seeley sat down, pulling Hawkins’ file towards him. “It’s normally used for training and a few other things, but Steve works for the Special Activities Division. It’s where they keep the projects that they want out of reach of prying eyes.”

“OK, so where does Atlas come into the picture?” MacGyver picked up a pencil and opened his notebook, putting it on the desk.

“Steve works in aircraft design. He specialises in converting aircraft when the army needs something strange, rare or peculiar. You get my drift?” Seeley ran his hand through his hair, unconsciously mirroring MacGyver.

“I get it. I don’t like it.” MacGyver noticed Seeley’s gesture and lowered his own hand, snagging a tangle in his unruly hair. “What exactly has he been asked to do?”

“Convert a crop sprayer to deliver a biologic payload.” Seeley watched the colour drain out of MacGyver’s face. “Yeah. That.” He lined up Hawkins’ file exactly with the edge of the desk, looking down while he gathered his thoughts. “He’s asked me to take a look at it, see if I can find anything in the computer records to indicate where the job has come from. He said his CO was acting very strange over it, but he can’t look into it himself without being found out.” Seeley looked up, meeting MacGyver’s incredulous stare. “I owe this guy my life, Mac. There’s no favour I wouldn’t do for him.”

“You’re talking about breaking into a military base.” MacGyver lowered his voice, glancing at the operatives working at the other end of the room.

“Yes.” Seeley nodded.

“Because it might be connected to Project Atlas.”

“Looks that way to me.” Seeley crossed his legs, waiting for MacGyver to think through the idea. MacGyver glanced at the door, wondering what Pete would make of it.

“OK, Seeley. Let’s go.”

Part Two

“No. There’s no way Phoenix can be involved in this.” Pete shook his head.

“C’mon Pete, Seeley’s right – this has Atlas written all over it!” MacGyver paced the office.

“I know.” Pete heard MacGyver pause, and the rustle of cloth as MacGyver turned to look at him. “It sounds like it to me too. But Phoenix doesn’t have any reason to be on that base, and if you’re right and Seeley’s friend’s CO is involved, or his hands have been tied by HIS seniors being involved, there’s no way Phoenix is going to be given a reason to be on that base.” Pete held up a hand as he heard MacGyver draw breath to reply. “And Mac, think about this: Atlas know who you are, which means they know you work for Phoenix. If Phoenix goes marching into that base, all kinds of alarm bells will start ringing at Atlas, and you’ll be back in their spotlight again.” Pete shook his head. “We can’t do it, Mac.”

“You mean we shouldn’t.” MacGyver sighed. “I guess you’re right.” He sat down, and Pete heard his chair squeak as he leaned back.

“Of course, what you do in your free time is up to you.” Pete’s expression was resigned. “I know you better than to expect you to leave this alone. Just be careful, OK?”

“OK Pete, I will.” MacGyver stood, laid a hand on his friend’s shoulder, and then left the room.

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MacGyver walked up Seeley’s path to his front door. The house and small garden looked immaculate, the grass mown short. Even the doorbell looked as though it had been polished. Seeley came to the door wearing neatly pressed jeans and a button-down shirt with the sleeves rolled up. MacGyver blinked, momentarily disorientated by the sight of Seeley in something other than a smart suit.

“Mac, come on in.” Seeley stepped to the side and MacGyver entered Seeley’s tidy house, toeing off his battered high-tops when he saw the shoe-rack by the wall. One of his socks had a hole he hadn’t previously noticed.

“You want a beer? Juice?” Seeley’s voice floated out of the kitchen.

“Juice, please.” MacGyver looked at the photos on the wall as he walked down Seeley’s hallway. A shot of Seeley in Vietnam, standing next to a helicopter with his arms around two other young men, grinning for the camera. A toddler holding up paint-smearred hands and laughing. A movie set, focussing on a tiny figure jumping off a tall building, an airbag visible in the corner. An older couple sitting on a porch swing, the woman smiling and the man looking as though he wished the photographer would hurry up.

“Here.” Seeley handed MacGyver a glass of juice and MacGyver followed him into a tidy living room. The contrast with MacGyver’s apartment was striking. At MacGyver’s place, hockey gear and half-finished projects lined the walls, Western videos were piled up next to the television and the couch was bright with cushions given to him by Mama Lorraine. Here the floor was clear all the way to the walls. A new computer, cables neatly bundled, sat on a table in the corner. The couch MacGyver sat on was black, the carpet and curtains beige. The only colour in the room came from some large, framed movie posters on the wall.

Seeley crossed to the computer, tapped a few keys and the printer hummed into life.

“So, you’ve done stuff like this before, right?” MacGyver watched Seeley spread out the papers on a low table.

“Once or twice.” Seeley sat back, looking at the aerial photographs. “While I was with the bureau. You?”

“A few times.” MacGyver picked up one of the photos for a closer look. “Not so much in this country, though.” He looked up to find Seeley staring at him. “I was DXS.”

“So you were.” Seeley nodded, stroking the slim, brown cat who came padding into the room.

“Do we try to sneak in, or shall we hide in plain sight?” MacGyver put the photo down and sat back, the cat jumping up onto his knee and kneading his leg with its front paws.

“You are honoured – Mozart doesn’t usually like anyone!” Seeley shook his head at the cat, who blinked blue eyes at him and purred as MacGyver scratched the back of its head. “Bit of both, maybe.” Seeley marked Steve Bolton’s office and the door that Steve had suggested they use on the photo. “You still got your uniform?”

“Wouldn’t do us any good.” MacGyver moved the cat off his knee and turned the marked photo towards him. “They changed from plain green to camouflage pattern some time ago. I got a couple of spares we can use, though.”

“OK.” Seeley took a swig of coffee and set the mug down carefully on a coaster. “Here’s how I reckon we get in and out again.”

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“is it secured?” The man leaned forwards out of the shadows, the low light catching the side of his nose and the edge of his hair.

“Yessir.” The second man nodded, wishing his collar wasn’t so tight.

“And where is it now?” The first man picked up a cigarette smouldering in the ashtray and took a drag, the end glowing red.

“In the sealed box, in the safe, at the right temperature.” The second man relaxed slightly as the shadowy figure nodded.

“And the Phoenix operative, MacGyver? Has he been dealt with too?” The man tapped ash off his cigarette, the smoke curling around his hand.

“N-No Sir. Not yet.” The second man blinked as the first man exhaled smoke in an angry hiss.

“Why not?” The shadowy figure took another drag, adding to the pall of smoke in the silent room.

“He disappeared for a while, but we picked him up again at Phoenix this week.” The second man felt sweat prickle under his shirt.

The shadowy figure sat back in his chair, disappearing into the gloom. “Don’t lose him again.”

“No Sir.” The second man shook his head.

“You have a plane to oversee.” The shadowy figure made a languid wave, then stubbed out his cigarette. “Do you not?”

“Yes Sir.” The second man backed out of the room, closing the door behind him. In the darkness, the first man lit another cigarette, the lighter flame edging his aristocratic profile in gold light. He snapped the lighter shut, placed it on the table and sat back again. MacGyver was becoming a significant thorn in his side. Perhaps it was time to call in more professional assistance in getting rid of him. Those two from Berlin, perhaps – the knife expert and Olga... something, the sniper. They deserved a chance to redeem themselves for missing him in Germany.

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“This is too tight!” Seeley tugged at his borrowed uniform. “Maybe you shrank it when you washed it.”

Washed it?” MacGyver grinned as Seeley pulled a face. “It was clean enough. You’re just... stockier than me.” Ignoring Seeley’s outraged glare, he turned to the base’s perimeter fence. “The main problem I here’s the guard patrol. If we can avoid them or convince them we’re supposed to be here, we’re home free.”

“Right.” Seeley frowned as a group of soldiers walked past the nearest building. “Avoid all contact with the enemy.”

“Something like that.” MacGyver eased himself under the wire fence, then crouched and held the wire for Seeley to do the same. They waited until the soldiers disappeared around the corner, then ran across the grass. At the edge of the concrete they slowed to a walk, trying to look as though they belonged on the base. MacGyver, his long hair hidden under a cap, picked up a cardboard box from next to the kitchen dumpster, pretending he was taking it somewhere important.

“Really? A box?” Seeley shook his head. “You going to hide under it?”

“Hey, don’t knock it. I once got most of the way across an East German base by pretending I was running an errand for the Oberst.” MacGyver hitched up the box, which was heavier than it looked. “Look like you’re in a hurry, OK? Makes it less likely we’ll be commandeered for a real errand.” MacGyver nodded approval as Seeley shrugged and picked up a box too, then led the way between two concrete buildings, heading for Bolton’s office.

“Soldier!” A loud voice made MacGyver and Seeley jump. They turned around to see an officer striding towards them.

“Yes, First Sergeant Brown?” Seeley read the officer’s name tag, standing to attention.

“Oh, never mind.” The officer turned away, hailing another soldier passing by empty-handed. MacGyver and Seeley watched him go.

“I take it back – never underestimate the power of the box!” Seeley grinned and followed MacGyver along the path.

They dodged patrols twice, once by hiding behind a truck and once by hurrying along and looking busy. Arriving at Bolton's offices, MacGyver handed his box to Seeley and tried the door, finding it open. They went inside, nodding to the soldier on desk duty behind the door.

"Can I help you?" The soldier laid down his pen, frowning. "You guys new?"

"Yeah." MacGyver took his box back off Seeley. "First Sergeant Brown told us to bring these here and set up the new drives on Sergeant Bolton's computer."

"Nobody tells me nothing." The soldier shook his head. "Office at the end, on the right."

"Thanks." MacGyver grinned and set off down the corridor, followed by Seeley.

"How do you get away with that stuff?!" Seeley closed Bolton's office door behind them and set down his box. "That doesn't even work in movies!"

"I'm just glad it worked today!" MacGyver looked around the office, seeing a locked filing cabinet as well as the computer on the desk. "You get the computer, I'll do the files."

"Right Steve." Seeley sat down at the computer, cracking his knuckles. "Let's see what you've gotten into..."

Part Three

"Problem?" MacGyver looked at Seeley from his position next to the filing cabinet.

"Firewall. Just give me a..." Seeley typed fast and the computer beeped.

"You'll get it." MacGyver fished a paperclip out of his pocket and set to work on the filing cabinet lock. "When you get in, just copy everything, OK? We may not have time to sort through it all here."

"Have you any idea how long that would take?" Seeley worked his way into the computer files and skimmed through the directory. He ducked under the desk and waved a hand in the air. "Mac, borrow your flashlight? I know you've got one."

"Swap you for a pin or something I can use on this lock. Paperclip alone just isn't cutting it." MacGyver handed Seeley his penlight, receiving a badge with a long pin in return.

"Don't break it, OK?" Seeley used the penlight to look at the back of the computer. He pulled a portable drive out of a large pocket on the leg of his fatigues and plugged it into the computer.

"What is that?" MacGyver looked up from the lock, wiggling the paperclip and badge pin carefully.

"Universal Serial Bus – USB. They're new." Seeley pressed keys and the screen lit up. The computer whirred and a download bar appeared on the screen. MacGyver returned his attention to the lock, undoing Seeley's badge and turning it over.

"First Cavalry? You just happened to have this with you?" MacGyver poked the pin into the lock, feeling it out.

"Yes, and yes. It was in my pocket, OK? Didn't feel right being in uniform without it." Seeley shrugged.

"You're really proud of your regiment, aren't you?" MacGyver felt the lock start to give.

“Damn straight.” Seeley glanced at the door, but the desk soldier seemed content to leave them alone for the moment. “Hurry up, will you?”

“Almost there.” The lock clicked open and MacGyver opened a drawer, leafing through the files. “Thanks.” He handed the badge back to Seeley. “There’s nothing obvious in here.” He closed the drawer and opened the next one. Finding nothing, he crossed back to the door and glanced out into the corridor. “How long?”

“Depends if it crashes.” Seeley folded his arms, frowning at the screen.

MacGyver watched the soldiers in the outer office. They were glancing at their watches more often than seemed normal to him. What could they be waiting for?

After fifteen minutes, most of the soldiers MacGyver could see started finishing off their work, in the manner of high school kids packing away their books before the bell.

“How much longer?” MacGyver glanced back at Seeley, who held up a finger.

Patience, Grasshopper. I just need another minute.” Seeley didn’t take his eyes off the screen.

“You might want to hurry it up, Caine, something’s peaking out here!” MacGyver watched Seeley nod, still concentrating on the screen. He looked out again, seeing the soldiers had stopped what they were doing, and seemed to be waiting for something.

A loud alarm sounded, making MacGyver jump. The soldiers all stood and started making their way to the door. He looked back at Seeley, who was talking to the computer.

“Come on! Ninety eight percent my... YES!” Seeley ducked under the table and pulled his cable out of the computer, stuffing the portable drive into his pocket. Seeing the sergeant approach, MacGyver stepped back from the door.

“Are you two still here? This is a fire drill! Move it!” the sergeant waited, scowling at MacGyver and Seeley.

“Yes Sir. Sorry Sir.” They hurried out, the Sergeant close behind. As they were leaving, MacGyver glanced up, his eyes widening as he noticed a small camera mounted high on the wall.

“Don’t call me Sir, I work for a living!” the sergeant locked the door behind them. “Report to your fire point.” He watched Seeley and MacGyver go, shaking his head.

“Now what?” Seeley muttered as they joined the back of a file of soldiers jogging to their fire meeting point.

“Now we split!” MacGyver dropped out of the line, jogging between two buildings and ignoring the shout that followed. Seeley jogged along behind him, cursing under his breath. They turned the corner of the kitchen building and crouched down behind the dumpster.

“Now what?!” Seeley glanced around the dumpster, seeing soldiers lined up for roll call between them and the hole in the fence. He turned to see MacGyver fiddling with the lock on the kitchen door. “What are you doing?”

“We need a distraction.” MacGyver held out his hand and Seeley passed him his regiment badge. Pushing the pin into the lock, and carefully poking in the tweezers from his Swiss Army Knife, MacGyver set to work.

The lock clicked open and MacGyver slipped inside. The kitchen was empty and he crossed to the janitor’s closet, coming out with an armful of bottles and a bucket.

“Open some windows, would you?” MacGyver poured and mixed, creating a cloud of smoke and a terrible smell. “And see if you can find some sugar!”

“Why do you want sugar?” Seeley passed him a bag. “Oh, right!” he put his arm across his face and coughed as MacGyver added the sugar to his bucket and the smoke turned black.

They ducked back behind the dumpster and waited while smoke billowed out of the kitchen windows. The soldiers were moved out of the growing pall of smoke and MacGyver and Seeley heard the fire alarm start up again.

“Now?” Seeley looked around the dumpster again, seeing their way to the fence clear.

“Now.” MacGyver nodded and they ran through the smoke and across the grass, sliding to a halt and rolling under the fence. Seeley crawled back up the slope and watched the base through the long grass.

“Man, you sure know how to cause a distraction!” he rolled over, grinning at MacGyver. But his grin faded at MacGyver’s expression. “What is it?”

“We have a bigger problem.” MacGyver sighed and ran a hand through his hair. “When we were being hustled out, I happened to look up. There was a camera in that office, Seeley! They’ve got our faces on camera!” He shook his head at Seeley’s confused frown. “Seeley, the army can prove we were there!”

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MacGyver followed Seeley into his house, taking off his boots. Seeley disappeared into his bedroom, emerging some minutes later back to his usual immaculate self. Feeling scruffy by comparison, MacGyver combed his hair with his fingers, snagging on a twig caught in the back. Seeley watched, shaking his head.

“Shower’s in there.” He hooked a thumb over his shoulder. “Take your time. I’ll brew some coffee and set this up.” He held up the portable stove and MacGyver nodded. He reached into his pocket, pulling out Seeley’s regiment badge and placing it in his hand before heading for the shower.

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MacGyver came out of the shower feeling cleaner, but no less worried. Seeley had brewed coffee, the rich smell filling his house. Seeley’s cat trotted out of the kitchen and wound around MacGyver’s ankles, almost tripping him up.

“Mozart, leave the human alone.” Seeley glanced across at MacGyver and took a sip of coffee. “This looks pretty good, Mac. Help yourself to coffee or whatever and come take a look.”

MacGyver made peppermint tea and sat on the arm of the couch, looking over Seeley’s shoulder at the screen. Mozart hopped up onto the couch, padding along the back. MacGyver stroked him absently, trying to make sense of the jumble on the screen.

“Thought you might want to see the encryption, it’s pretty extreme.” Seeley tapped a key and the screen cleared. “OK, let’s see what we’ve got here.”

MacGyver leaned forwards, reading the small print. Seeley scrolled through the files they had copied, until MacGyver stopped him, pointing at the screen.

“That one.” He sat back as Seeley opened the file and a schematic drawing of an aeroplane filled the screen.

“This is it. This is what Steve was so worried about.” Seeley clicked through the information files and gave a low whistle. “Mac, this is bad.”

“Yeah. Yeah, it is.” MacGyver frowned, reading the text. “Flip back to the drawing, would you?” he stared at the picture, running calculations in his head. “Not only do Atlas have the bugs, they’re pretty much able to distribute them. If they get this thing built.”

“How long would it take to build?” Seeley picked up a pencil, tapping it against the desk.

“I’m not sure.” MacGyver folded his arms, ignoring the cat rubbing against his back. “It’s a pretty specialised job...” He shook his head. “It may even not be related, and I could just be seeing Atlas everywhere I look. Seeley, what was the security on this file like? Is it what you’d expect army diagrams to have?” He held up his hand, seeing Seeley’s stare. “Not that I’m suggesting you spent your time as a Fed breaking into army files.” He studied Seeley’s carefully neutral expression. “Unless you did, of course...”

“No comment.” Seeley grinned. “But, hypothetically, of course, this file had very different security from what I would expect from a standard army file, even a top secret one. Not the same at all.”

“I’m guessing more advanced security than expected?” MacGyver sighed as Seeley nodded.

“Seeley, we’re in really deep here. I’m pretty sure the CCTV caught us, which means the army are probably reporting us as intruders right about now. When the MPs check the army personnel records and the criminal databases, they’re going to find both of us.”

“And then they’re going to arrest us.” Now Seeley’s face was grim.

“And then they’re going to lock us up for busting into a top-secret military facility we shouldn’t have known about and they’re going to throw away the key.” MacGyver stood up, pacing the room. “And don’t get me started on what Atlas will do when they find out we were in there! Which they will, because they have someone inside the base!”

“Someone who scared the socks off Steve’s CO enough that he – or she – has let this happen under the army’s nose.” Now Seeley stood up, shoving his hands into his jeans pockets and turning to stare at MacGyver. “We’re in trouble here, Mac.”

“Yep.” MacGyver glanced out of the window, moving out of view as he remembered a shot blasting through a café window in Berlin. “We’re in trouble!”

Part Four

“OK.” Seeley scrubbed his hands across his face, looking suddenly tired. “We’re in trouble.” He sat down at the computer, staring at the aeroplane conversion instructions without reading them.

“CCTV caught us on the base, our army records will identify us and we don’t live so very far away. How long do you reckon we’ve got to tell someone about this before the MPs arrive?”

“I’m surprised we can’t hear boots in the hallway already.” MacGyver glanced at his watch. “They’ll certainly join up all the dots tonight.” He turned, pacing the length of the room. “We can’t tell the police because that means admitting we were trespassing on an army base, and then *they’d* arrest us.”

“Maybe not.” Seeley spun his computer chair around to face MacGyver. “If I’m right about the weird security on the file, and if Steve’s right about his CO running scared about the project, maybe the last thing Atlas or camp Parks will want is this getting out!”

“You mean if this is an under-the-table deal, and Camp Parks have no idea what’s going on.” MacGyver nodded. “That fits. Strong-arming someone at Camp Parks to push this through without going through proper channels is just their style, and the army would never want to admit that this had been going on right under their noses!”

“Atlas have plenty of juice if they’ve got a base CO in their pockets.” Seeley frowned. “I don’t like any of this.”

“What’s to like?” MacGyver paced again, stepping over Mozart. “Let’s say we’re right. Or Camp Parks never report his because only their inside man ever knows about the break in. What happens next?”

“Their inside man reports back, sending our photos to his superiors at Atlas.” Seeley shrugged. “It’s what I’d do.”

“Right. The Atlas send someone to make sure we don’t tell anyone else what they’re up to.” MacGyver sighed. “Seeley, I—”

“Don’t.” Seeley shook his head. “You were about to apologise for dragging me into this. Don’t.” he turned back to the computer. “I say we tell Pete. He practically told you he knew what we were going to do, and if it was him, you know he’d have done the same.”

“Yeah, I know.” MacGyver nodded, his face grim. “Let’s make a copy of that, just in case. That way, if something happens to us, at least someone else knows.”

They spent the rest of the evening copying the files onto Seeley’s computer. MacGyver printed out a copy and mailed it to Hines in San Francisco, with a note explaining that the contents of the envelope were very hot property indeed. Seeley checked through the other files, finding a number of secret projects but nothing else that looked Atlas related. The name ‘Carmichael’ came up on a few of the files, including the aeroplane schematics, but they were unable to trace it any further.

“We have to find a way to slow Atlas down.” Seeley stretched, leaning back in his chair. “We can’t tell the police and Pete won’t be able to go public with something that can’t be associated with Phoenix. What can we do?”

“We need to find a way to name and shame Atlas publicly, but without it getting back to us.” MacGyver stared at the ceiling, stretched out on the couch with Mozart asleep on his chest.

“Who’d believe us? It sounds like one of those wild stories you’d read In the National Enquirer. My daughter loves those sleazy tabloids, tells me all manner of far-fetched garbage she reads in those things.” Seeley shook his head.

“Supermarket tabloids!” MacGyver sat upright, dislodging the cat. “Actually, that’s a really good idea!” He jumped up off the couch, grabbed his jacket and headed for the door.

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“Where did you go last night?” Seeley watched MacGyver hang up his jacket and cross to his desk. “I was just starting to think something might have happened to you when you finally called.”

“No, I’m fine.” MacGyver put a newspaper and the portable drive on the desk. “Sorry if I worried you.”

“No problem.” Seeley narrowed his eyes. “So, where were you?”

“Calling in a favour.” MacGyver grinned, then turned as Helen called his name.

“Mr. Thornton would like you to drop in when you have a moment.” Helen smiled. “Morning, Seeley. MacGyver, he said it wasn’t urgent, but he looked worried, so...”

“No problem, Helen. Tell him I’m on my way, OK?” MacGyver stood up, picking up the paper and the drive. “Here goes!”

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“So, there you have it, Pete.” MacGyver placed the newspaper and drive on Pete’s desk and held up his hands. “We think we know what Atlas is up to, and we have a name, but we can’t use any of it to stop them.”

“Because it’s tainted evidence, right.” Pete drummed his fingers on his desk. “You and Seeley took a big risk, you know.” He held up a hand, hearing MacGyver’s intake of breath. “Mac, I know Seeley was in on this too. Have you briefed him on how much he needs to increase his own security measures?”

“I have.” MacGyver nodded. “Though I don’t know how much good it will do. Potentially we’re both in the firing line now, and they have our faces on camera. Seeley’s friend has put in for a transfer off the base, and he told us Camp Parks’ security doesn’t include CCTV, so we have to assume the camera could have been put in by Atlas as extra security for their project.”

“Hmm.” Pete frowned. “We need to find a way to slow them down long enough to get some evidence we can pass on to the police. Something obtained legally that they can use to arrest this Carmichael character.” He paused. “That name sounds familiar, as though I’ve heard it somewhere before...”

“It could be a company name – Carmichael doesn’t have to be a person.” MacGyver stood up. “as for slowing Atlas down, I’ve managed to arrange a little unwanted publicity. They seem to like

lurking in the shadows, so I hope this will help.” He put the newspaper into Pete’s hands.” He left, stopping to ask Helen to step in and help Pete with the newspaper.

*

“I assume you’re responsible for this!” Nikki held up the newspaper that she, Seeley and Willis were crowded around. MacGyver grinned, crossing the break room and helping himself to a drink from the water cooler.

“Superbugs In The Sun! Secret Nazi Death Gang Hard At Work In California!” Nikki read the headline, glanced at the diagram printed underneath and then looked at MacGyver over the top of the newspaper. MacGyver shrugged, grinning.

“It seemed like the best way to go public with this. Millions of people read them, and the conspiracy theorists are going to go nuts. Hopefully Atlas will have to lay low for a while, giving us time to find a way to shut them down for good.” He took a sip of the water.

“How...?” Seeley shook his head, confused.

“You’re not the only one with friends in low places!” MacGyver saluted him with the paper cup and walked back to his office, feeling happier than he had done for a while.

*

Across town, a shadowy figure stood at the window of a luxurious corner office. Silhouetted against the bright sky, he looked across Los Angeles at a building glittering in the sun. The building was a modern one, glass and steel and mounted on a central column. The figure drew on a cigarette, holding the smoke in before blowing it out to curl against the windowpane.

Behind him, a computer hummed. On the screen was a grainy image – a CCTV photo of two men. One was turning away, his profile blurred as he moved, the other looked full at the camera, his face clear.

The shadowy figure took another drag on his cigarette. As he exhaled, one word hissed out in the cloud of smoke:

“MacGyver.”