

The Dead Zone

MacGyver sped across the ice, tapping the puck every few seconds to keep it moving exactly where he wanted it. The almost mummified goalkeeper in front of him seemed to dodge back and forth clumsily to keep up with his expert moves.

Mac grinned under his helmet and whacked the puck one last time with just a little more effort. It flew past the keeper, bouncing into the net behind as he crashed down onto the ice helplessly.

MacGyver bent his knees, turned his skates at a 90 degree angle against his momentum, and slammed to a halt laughing so hard he almost dropped his stick.

The keeper grumbled, pushed up onto his elbows and then pulled off his helmet. “Mac, did you really need to torture me this way?” Jack Dalton’s moustache twitched pathetically. “I get it, I really do...I should never have taken all your furniture again. Once was enough, I admit it. Please...no more hockey torture? I repent my sins!”

“*That*, I believe when I see,” Mac teased, helping his old friend up with a gentle tug. “But you do admit you’ve had this payback coming a long time? As in a *long* time?” He wiggled his eyebrows with a smirk.

Jack wobbled on his skates and almost tumbled back to the ice. “I’ll confess to anything if it gets me somewhere warmer, with say a beer, and maybe a cigar? Oh, and my hat back...” He looked at the helmet distastefully.

“Maybe I should just shoot one more puck...” Mac’s eyes twinkled as Dalton’s face turned to one of horror.

“Ooh, I don’t envy you Jack...” A new voice filled the arena and MacGyver spun lithely around on his skates to see Pete Thornton standing by the nearest barrier. He was smiling, but somehow his face looked pained. “Been there, done that, felt the bruises,” he added.

Mac’s jovial expression remained, but he let go of Jack’s arm, who then promptly crashed back onto the rink, and skated over to Thornton. He’d known Pete too long to not realize the man was upset. “What’s going on, Pete?”

Pete sighed, as if it had been the inevitable question. “Remember Captain McKenna?”

Mac nodded. “Sure, the guy on the *Eternal Flame*? When we went out looking for that wartime U-boat?” He put down his stick, climbed off the ice and took a seat, Pete instinctively followed. “I assumed Phoenix gave him another command?” He grabbed a towel he’d left earlier and wiped at his neck, ignoring Jack as he finally clambered awkwardly off the ice.

“That’s him,” Pete confirmed. “We gave him a research vessel that was recently deployed looking into unusual weather conditions, and how they might be responsible

for..." His voice trailed, as if he wasn't sure how to broach the next part of the conversation. "...Responsible for certain phenomenon in the North Atlantic Ocean."

MacGyver's eyes widened. "The Foundation is actually investigating the Bermuda Triangle? Isn't that a little too myth and legend for them?"

"Purely from a scientific point of view," Pete hastened to add. "We're not looking at aliens, time warps, government experiments and such nonsense, just natural possible causes, like unexpected weather patterns and so on."

"Okay, so what does this, and McKenna have to do with me?" Mac ran a hand through his sweat-drenched hair and decided it was time for a shower once their chat was over.

Pete took a deep breath. "Because the ship McKenna was in charge of has disappeared. The Coast Guard just lost her off their scopes, and they can find no wreckage, no survivors, no radio beacons, nothing."

Mac exhaled and took a moment to digest the information. It was pure bad luck that McKenna had lost another ship, surely after the *Eternal Flame*? If of, course, this new ship was lost. MacGyver was a firm believer that there was a rational explanation for everything, but he could see why even Pete was spooked. "You want me to go out there and try and figure this out so it doesn't just turn into one more Devil's Triangle story, right?"

Pete nodded. "I'd like to say I want you to find that ship's crew alive, but I have to be realistic, it's been seven days with no contact. Right now, finding out what happened is even a long shot at best, but if anyone can do it, I know it's you, Mac."

Jack who had been patiently waiting and listening finally joined the conversation. "Well don't look at me! No siree! No sensible, honest to God pilot would risk his neck over those waters. Not even Dangerous Dalton here..." He patted the padding on his chest. "I know when not to push my luck, just like when I knew those three Haitian girls was one girl too many..."

"Relax, Jack," Mac soothed, "no one is expecting you to go anywhere."

"Phew, good job, because I'm superstitious, you know." Jack made the sign of a cross over his chest and stumbled off to the locker room.

Once his grumbling retreat was over, MacGyver focused back on Thornton. "When do I leave?"

Pete pulled an envelope from his inside breast pocket and passed it over. MacGyver opened it to find an airline ticket, a hotel room booking, and a letter to the captain of a private research vessel named *The Crucible*. He raised a brow when he noted it was a woman. "Captain Cynthia Dawson, huh?"

Pete chuckled. “Don’t let that fool you, Phoenix hired her and *The Crucible* for a reason, and not just because we don’t have any of our own cruisers in the area. She’s a tough cookie, has way more experience in those waters than most men, and...”

“And?”

“And she won’t waste time falling for your wily charms.” Pete chuckled again.

“Pete! I gave up that occupation years ago!” MacGyver feigned a hurt expression before remembering his friend couldn’t see it.

“Seriously,” Pete continued. “She’s the best, if McKenna’s ship *can* be found, I know you’re the best team to make it happen.”

“Any details on the ship’s last location, size, specification, crew, what exactly she was doing out there?” Mac slid the envelope into his helmet for later retrieval.

Pete nodded. “Dawson has everything you need already set up in a cabin ready for you to start brainstorming.” He put a hand on Mac’s shoulder. “Good luck, and Mac? Don’t you get lost out there too...”

Thornton’s expression said he wasn’t joking, and MacGyver hoped that wasn’t a bad omen, even if he wasn’t superstitious like Jack.

* * * *

St. George’s Harbor
Bermuda
Three days later...

MacGyver took off his sunglasses and paused before moving up the walkway to *The Crucible*. She wasn’t a huge research ship, but what she lacked in size, she made up for with her imposing lines and impressive tech. He had originally wondered why Phoenix had chosen research over search and rescue, but maybe insight from one could lead to the other.

Mac slid his glasses back, shifted his pack on his shoulder and moved on until he reached the deck. A short brunette in a white officer’s uniform awaited him, although he hadn’t seen her moments earlier. He guessed it was Dawson right off the bat – she was just as imposing as her vessel, despite her stature.

“Mr. MacGyver, I presume?” She offered curtly with a nod of her head. “I’m Captain Dawson, welcome aboard.”

Mac paused, guessed her brusqueness meant she thought he wasn’t needed, and then answered. “Please, call me Mac.” He tried to soften the mood, but Dawson ran a hand through the front of her hair, turned and pointed to a nearby open cabin door. “I have everything Mr. Thornton sent over ready for you.”

Mac followed her inside, and was again impressed by what he saw. Pete had been right, Dawson might be curt, but she was good. A white board had been set up with a map plotting McKenna's course, along with any radio communications marked when and where they'd been received. Nothing in McKenna's messages had given any cause for concern, and the route he'd taken had been precisely by the book to what Phoenix had asked for.

"Exactly what kind of weather research were they doing?" MacGyver asked, setting down his bag on a nearby chair to examine the map more closely.

Dawson picked up a clipboard and rifled through several sets of paperwork on it. "Tropical cyclones," she replied with a sigh as if she thought it was nonsense. "Apparently, they were looking into whether downdraughts of cold air hitting the waters surface can cause an unusual kind of squall. Some scientist onboard named Richard Tapping though "hexagonal" clouds might be to blame, and they were using experimental weather balloons to investigate."

Mac sighed. It wasn't exactly exciting stuff, or anything that could have gotten the ship into difficulties. He tapped his bottom lip in thought as he took everything in, evaluating and calculating. "The Coast Guard searched here, *The Eurybia*'s last known position and a hundred mile radius around it. Did they look anywhere else?"

Dawson shook her head without even thinking. "No, there was no evidence to suggest McKenna had deviated, and that's a lot of ocean to check out without intel. And...they had another big call in two days later. A U.S. Navy frigate got into trouble and needed assistance. McKenna's people took the back seat to that."

Mac nodded. "So, despite what the information suggests, I'm thinking McKenna did go of course, but why, and where?"

"There's no reason he would," Dawson concluded. "He must have had technical problems, there was bad weather."

Mac shook his head. "If the ship had been in trouble, why didn't he radio for help? And if it happened too quickly, they'd have found wreckage on the sea bed. What if McKenna didn't want to deviate? What if there was something on *The Eurybia* worth stealing?"

Dawson checked more paperwork on her clipboard and shrugged. "Not according to the manifest Phoenix supplied. Nobody steals weather balloons."

"But what if there was something we don't know about? Ships don't just vanish despite what the local legends say. And the whole crew too? This isn't the *Marie Celeste* or *The Cyclops*." MacGyver touched the map with his fingertip, his mind thinking of every scenario. "Where there any other ships on a course that would have intercepted McKenna's?"

"Only one," Dawson confirmed. "*The Katarina*, out of a Cuba. She's a large private yacht. The Coast Guard already contacted her captain, but he says McKenna never even appeared on his radar."

“Unless he’s lying,” Mac pointed out, turning away from the board to face the captain. “Where would you hide a ship the size of *The Eurybia* if you had to get rid of it fast?”

Dawson shrugged. “On the bottom of the Atlantic, but the Coast Guard already looked.”

“No,” Mac corrected, “they looked at the bottom of the ocean where McKenna would be if he were on course!” He spun back around. “Show me *The Katarina*’s course on the map...”

Dawson pulled a sheet from her board and walked over, drawing on the map with a red marker. “This is their voyage over the week that *The Eurybia* vanished.”

Mac nodded to himself. “They would have been exiting the Coast Guard’s one hundred mile search zone just after someone noticed McKenna was missing. I think we should start a search of the ocean floor right about here.” He tapped the map.

“You think they knew where the Coast Guard would look, and scuttled the ship as soon as they got outside the search area? But why? Why steal her in the first place?”

“Because like I said, there was something onboard they wanted badly.” MacGyver frowned. “I guess we won’t get any more answers until we find the ship.” He turned away, the possibility that McKenna and his crew had been killed becoming all too real in his mind.

“And if you’re right?” Dawson seemed to read his mind. “What about Captain McKenna?”

Mac didn’t have an answer he wanted to repeat and simply shook his head.

Dawson headed for the door, and then stopped. “I’ll plot a course for those coordinates right away, but this is one time I wish we did find an empty ghost ship, even empty is better than the other possible alternative.”

* * * *

The Crucible Research Vessel
North Atlantic Ocean
1500 hours
Two Days Later

Captain Dawson watched as the ship’s sonar slowly scanned the ocean below them, every now and again picking up some anonymous echo that turned out to be a shoal of fish. Her expression said she was frustrated, and she looked up and scowled at MacGyver to show her annoyance. She obviously didn’t believe his theory that McKenna’s ship had been hijacked and taken elsewhere to dump.

MacGyver found her annoyance amusing, and couldn't resist a small smile, which earned him yet another frown from the brunette at his side. He opened his mouth to comment, but a new ping from the speakers made him stop.

They were right over the top of something large, and this time, it wasn't any kind of fish.

"Captain, we're picking up something big." The crewman pulled off his headset, aware that the noise was now on speaker. "I'd say this thing is definitely the size of *The Eurybia*."

Dawson looked at Mac. "I was hoping you were wrong."

"If it's any comfort, so was I," he admitted. "I still might be. There are a lot of wartime wrecks out here." He put his attention on the crewman. "How deep is she? Can we dive on her?"

"Yes sir, whatever we're picking up is in pretty shallow water, there's a coral reef and an ocean shelf down there and she's sitting on it."

MacGyver looked to Dawson. "I'm going down there, care to join me?"

The captain smiled wryly. "Don't you know captains aren't supposed to go on away missions?" When Mac's brow furrowed, she chuckled for the first time since they'd met. "Just a little *Star Trek* humor," she explained. "And for the record, wild horses couldn't keep me away. I need to know what happened – because I sure as hell don't believe in the Bermuda Triangle."

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MacGyver and Dawson hadn't taken long to suit up. Both wore special face masks with microphones so they could communicate with one another under the water more easily, as well as with the ship topside.

MacGyver went in first, flipping backwards into the ocean and creating a wash of water back over the deck. Dawson followed just as lithely, and they sank into the depths together.

The water was warm, yet somehow not comforting as they swam past a coral reef alive with marine activity. Beyond the reef, something darker colored the water, and it was soon apparent that there was indeed a ship sitting crookedly on the underwater shelf.

Fish swam in and out of ports that had been somehow smashed, and a sea horse hovered as if it was watching their approach.

Dawson slowed, pointing to the bridge. "I think we should check out there first?" Bubbles danced from her mask, ebbing away to the surface of the ocean like underwater fairies.

Mac nodded and gave her the thumbs up, kicking hard to take point as he flicked on a special waterproof flashlight. The beam cut through the darkness as they pushed through an open hatch into the bridge area.

It was empty.

Mac's heart leapt, could McKenna still be alive, or was his body, and the rest of the crews' elsewhere on the sunken vessel? He floated across the bridge, looking for clues as to why the ship had gone down, but there was nothing.

He whirled around to face Dawson, who had picked up an officer's cap from the floor. A crab drifted out from it, fell back to the deck plates and scurried away.

Dawson raised a brow beneath her mask. "They left in a hurry..."

Mac nodded. He'd also spotted an empty coffee mug on its side on the decking. But that didn't give any answers. "We should split up and search the rest of the ship," he suggested. "I'll go aft, you go forwards?"

Dawson gave him the thumbs up and kicked off out of the hatchway, more bubbles trailing her.

MacGyver checked his tank gauge, and then turned for another hatch behind him. The hatch led to stairs down into the holds. This was where the research equipment and weather balloons were kept, and if *The Eurybia* had been carrying something not on the manifest, it would probably have been in the hold too. *But what? What could a Phoenix research ship be carrying that was worth this elaborate plan? If there even had been a plan,* Mac reminded himself. So far, they'd seen no reason for the ship to sink.

He floated down over the stairs into darkness, keeping his lamp directed centrally into the gloom. Hold number one had two hatches, and both were open. MacGyver slipped inside and wafted his light across the length of the room. Equipment lay toppled and smashed where it had broken from its securing straps as the ship sank.

Behind several large metal crates, Mac spotted what he was looking for. There was a long gash in the hull that twisted outwards. *The Eurybia* hadn't hit another vessel; the explosive force that had taken her to her grave had come from within.

Mac kicked towards the hole, examining it further as his beam played across the torn metal plates. His experience with bombs instantly told him the tale. *The Eurybia* had definitely been brought here and scuttled on purpose. But why and by who?

And where is McKenna and the rest of his people?

"MacGyver, you got anything?" It was Dawson, and she sounded frustrated again. "There's no sign of any of the crew up here, and no evidence of any foul play."

“I found the reason she went down,” Mac confirmed. “But not one body. I just need to check out the second hold for the full sweep...” He moved away from the hole as a myriad of luminous tiny fish pushed through it and almost hit his faceplate.

Mac took down a breath, enjoying their beauty for just a second before heading for yet another hatch. He stopped short when he realized there was a problem. The very last place McKenna and his people could be was in hold number two, and the only way in was blocked by yet another piece of damaged equipment that had fallen across the doorway. He exhaled sharply, sending bubbles after the shoal of minute fish.

The large shaft was definitely going to be too heavy to move with just brute force, and MacGyver had no intention of going back topside without all the answers. He spun around, his eyes searching for something amongst the gloomy waters that he could work with.

Everything around him was electronic, and in this situation, quite useless. He remembered hold number one, and swam back through the hatch to more interesting bounty. Several of the weather balloons had burst from their cases and were floating around like giant bright red jelly fish. Now this was more interesting.

Mac wafted towards the smallest and caught it in his gloved hands. An idea was forming, and he'd done similar in the past using water, but this time he was going to reverse the process.

Gathering the balloon up like an expended parachute, he towed it back to the shaft blocking his way. The metal arm was from some kind of portable crane, and it had kinked in the middle as it had impacted with the hatch.

MacGyver fed the small balloon under the arm carefully so as not to tear it, and then checked his tank gauge again. He wasn't going to have much time left after his little “trick” to check out the hold, but it would save them coming back down again.

He sucked down two or three long breaths, then unhooked the oxygen supply to his mask, letting it flow into the opening at the base of the weather balloon. After a few moments, the captured air began to slowly fill the balloon, inflating it. As it moved upwards, trying to get to the Atlantic's surface, it gradually took the shaft with it.

The metal screeched under the water as it grated on the hatch, leaving huge scratch marks in its wake.

When the hatch was finally clear, MacGyver re-attached his airline, took several grateful breaths, and then swung open the doorway with a couple of yanks on the handle.

Inside hold number two seemed even darker and more eerie than its predecessor. If Mac had been superstitious at all, he would have balked as he entered. It was always silent beneath the waves, and yet here, somehow the silence seemed interminable.

MacGyver played his flashlight around, picking out more equipment. Mostly here it had remained secured to the deck plates with huge straps, and there was no room for anything to be “missing.”

It didn't make sense. If *The Eurybia* had been hijacked for her cargo, then how come nothing appeared to be absent?

Mac paused in mid-thought. Actually, there *was* something missing – a very big something. This hold, just like the others was completely empty. There wasn't one single crewman's body.

He remembered his early conversation with Dawson. “*This isn't the Marie Celeste or The Cyclops...*” Except, maybe it was.

MacGyver suddenly felt cold – not beneath the ocean cold, but cold to the bone. It was like some ghostly presence had wrapped a blanket of pure ice around him, and he couldn't shake it off. His faceplate began to lightly mist over, and he felt an uncontrollable urge to flee back to the surface. *You're running low on oxygen anyway, just go...*

Mac turned to head back to the hatch he'd just freed off, but something caught on the light in his hand and it was tugged from his grasp, landing in some hidden depth where no radiance showed. He was plunged into instant darkness.

Don't let it get to you...its just coincidence...your mind's playing tricks!

MacGyver closed his eyes and took a couple of long, calming breaths. He was about to try to feel for the light, when something touched him – something like long spindly fingers wrapping themselves around his arm until it hurt.

Part Two

Mac whirled around in the water reflexively, and came face to face with Dawson. She pointed her light his way, apparently realizing he was disorientated and surprised.

“Whoa, what's got you so spooked?” She spoke through her mike.

MacGyver shook himself and took a moment before answering. “Lost my light, and I guess I got a little...”

“Spooked,” Dawson offered again.

This time MacGyver didn't argue. “There are no bodies, not anywhere. Why would anyone take over the ship, move it here and then scuttle it, but take the crew?”

“Scuttle it?” Dawson wafted her flashlight as if looking for evidence of what he was saying.

“Yeah, there's a tear in the hull that definitely came from explosives on the inside of the plating,” MacGyver concluded. “But why? What could be so important on a

research ship? And where is McKenna?” He suddenly remembered his air supply and checked the gauge. It was going into the red zone after his stunt with the balloon. “I think we better get topside, I had to use half my tank.” He gave a thumb upwards and Dawson nodded.

As they swam back out of *The Eurybia*, Dawson took point. “I think I might have an answer to your question about what was important,” she offered cryptically. “And it wasn’t an item, it was a person...” She kicked upwards towards the shadow of the ship above them. “I checked out all the cabins of the key crew members. Everyone’s personal effects were still there except one – Tapping’s.” She broke through the waves, and MacGyver followed.

Mac pulled off his mask first and gently bobbed in the water until Dawson did the same. “You think this was all over some weather specialist? Why would anyone kidnap a whole crew to get to a man that watches clouds?”

Dawson shrugged and then tossed her mask onto the low level deck section specially made for divers. Placing her hands on the ledge, she rolled on board and sat up, running a hand through her soaking hair. “I have no clue,” she admitted. “But isn’t that what you’re paid the big bucks for?”

Mac clambered onto the deck and settled down next to the captain. He cocked his head, mimicking her hand movements through his own hair out of habit. “Then I guess I better find out...”

* * * *

The Crucible
North Atlantic Ocean
1800hours

MacGyver and Captain Dawson waited impatiently as the ship’s communications officer established a satellite call to Pete Thornton at Phoenix’s head office. He’d been contacted earlier, asking for any information on Richard Tapping, and on *The Katarina* and her owner.

After a few tense crackles, Pete’s voice came in hollow from across the heavens. “Mac, I have some pretty interesting information on *The Katarina*. She’s owned by a Cuban arms dealer named Paolo Famosa! It looks like his specialty is stealing new weapons technologies and selling them to the highest bidder.”

“But there were no weapons on *The Eurybia*, unless there’s something you haven’t told us, Mr. Thornton?” Dawson cut in with a slightly acerbic tone.

“No, she was strictly research I assure you,” Pete confirmed. “That’s what doesn’t make sense. That and the fact you seem to think Richard Tapping was somehow involved.”

“You’ve got nothing on Tapping’s background check?” MacGyver raised a brow, but had already guessed the answer was no from Pete’s previous comment and tone.

“Not a thing,” Pete agreed. “Tapping had the highest grades in his year and went on to be an intern at the Sendrex Kiva Laboratories in New Mexico. He worked under a Dr Carl Steubens until the project there was shut down. Then he moved on to...”

“Hold on,” MacGyver cut in. “Tapping worked with Steubens on the ozone layer project at Sendrex?” His voice had gone up a notch, as if he finally understood what was going on.

“Yeah, how’d you know?” Pete sounded genuinely curious.

“Let’s just say I had first hand experience of Kiva and Dr. Steubens, and neither was exactly welcoming. The thing is, the project wasn’t officially shut down, Steubens blew the labs because he suspected Sendrex wanted to use his rainmaking research as some kinda doomsday weapon. Chain reactions that would destroy the ozone and let the sun’s ultraviolet rays burn everyone who wasn’t protected.”

“My God...” Thornton sounded genuinely scared, and next to Mac, Dawson’s mouth fell open in horror.

“You think this Paolo Famosa expects Tapping to be able to finish Steubens work and actually build a weapon?” Dawson was staring at Mac expectantly, and there was fear in her eyes – something MacGyver hadn’t seen before.

Mac shrugged. “It’s the only explanation I have that makes sense, even if it is terrifying.”

“I doubt Tapping can actually do it. According to the information I have, only a Dr. Sydney Marlowe ever came close, and he died in a car accident two years ago.” Pete paused. “Mac, what do you think?”

MacGyver bit his lip and turned away from the mike for a moment in thought. Could Tapping know enough to be dangerous? Famosa was obviously betting a lot of money, time and effort that he could. “I think we need to find Famosa and fast,” he eventually answered.

Dawson put a hand on her hip, some of her former sass returning. “And just how do we do that?”

“We don’t have to...” Dawson’s second in command had entered while they’d been talking, and interrupted without asking. “A yacht just joined us on the port bow, ma’am. It’s *The Katarina*, and she’s armed.”

Mac spoke to the microphone first. “Pete, we’re gonna have to close this call and go find out what’s happening. Catch you later.”

“You hope!” Pete said with great concern. “Watch yourself, MacGyver, I don’t want you on my AWOL list like McKenna.”

“I don’t plan on it, trust me.” Mac cut the conversation and headed after Dawson and her number two, who had both already stepped back onto the bridge.

As MacGyver moved to join them, he spotted *The Katarina*, and one of her crew with a missile launcher, pointed right at them.

“They’re targeting below our waterline,” Dawson observed.

A second man appeared on the other ship with a megaphone. Somehow, MacGyver guessed it was Famosa. “Surrender your vessel and be boarded, or die here.” It was a simple message.

Dawson’s brow furrowed and she looked to Mac. “No way am I giving up my ship to that pirate!”

“Giving it up temporarily is better than dying permanently.” Mac stepped to the hatch and onto the deck outside to get a better look. “I’d say surrender, we get to find out if we’re right about Tapping, and see how far they’ve gotten. Then we make our move.”

Dawson looked perplexed. “We make our move? How does that work if we’ve already surrendered? Are you mad?”

Mac smiled wryly. “Some folks say I am,” he half joked. “Trust me; it’s not the cards we play right now that matter, it’s the ones we pick up from the deck during the game.”

The captain rubbed at her neck for a moment then turned to her bridge crew. “Do what they say,” she said with sigh. Then she turned back to MacGyver. “You better just hope they don’t kill us outright, before we can get those other cards...”

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Famosa’s yacht was far smaller than *The Crucible*, but somehow he’d managed to pack a small arsenal onto it, along with a healthy supply of henchmen. Once they’d boarded Dawson’s ship, it had taken just twenty minutes to secure it, and move key personal over to *The Katarina*. The big question now, was what did Famosa intend to do with them.

MacGyver pondered the thought as he and Dawson were led to an inner locked cabin by a hefty Cuban with a moustache, and custom Beretta. The Cuban was silent, but gestured with the gun for them to enter through the mahogany door after he’d unlocked it.

Once they were inside, he slammed it shut, remaining on the outside.

A lean man with wiry spectacles that Mac guessed was about thirty five looked at them from a desk chair with searching blue eyes. Mac realized it was Tapping. It was funny, but he didn’t look like a man who held the fate of the world in his hands. He looked like a very young college professor who was a little retiring.

Tapping squinted for a second, pushed his glasses up his nose and then spoke. “Hi, um, my name’s Richard...” He paused as if unsure what else to say. “I...guess you were brought here against your will too?”

“Yes and no,” Mac answered, thinking of how he’d told Dawson to give it up. “We’re actually here looking for you, Dr. Tapping.”

Tapping looked genuinely surprised. “Forgive me, but you don’t exactly appear to be a very good rescue party?”

“Phoenix sent us,” Dawson joined in. “We were looking for *The Eurybia*; we thought she’d gone down in a storm maybe, but not this.” She gestured around her. “Although I’m still not sure what this is?”

Mac retook control of the conversation. They needed quick and concise answers before Famosa really held the upper hand. “Famosa took over *The Eurybia* to get to you.” He looked directly at Tapping. “He sank her where she wouldn’t be found for awhile, giving him time to use you for his plan without the authorities stepping in. He wants some kind of weapon that controls the ozone, right?”

Tapping gaped. “How did you figure all that out?”

Mac brushed his question aside, pulling up a chair beside the scientist and leaning on its back. “Let’s just say I met the master of all this once, Carl Steubens, so when I saw you’d worked with him, and that Famosa wanted you for something...”

“But now you’re his prisoner too, and you may have just given him what he needs to complete the weapon...” Tapping took off his glasses and held his head in his hands. “There wasn’t the right equipment on *The Eurybia* to finish the machine. It was the only ace I held, but now he’ll pillage supplies and equipment from your ship too.”

Dawson put a hand on her hip and her eyes shone with rage. “You’re making it sound like this Famosa has already got you constructing this thing that can kill the planet?”

Tapping’s blue eyes seemed to dull, and he looked away, staring at the wall. “There’s an uncharted island near here, very small, no inhabitants. He took me and *The Eurybia*’s crew there. He said he’d execute them one by one until I built it. Four men had to die before I gave in. I should have given in before one died...”

MacGyver put a hand on Tapping’s shoulder. “Their deaths aren’t down to you. Famosa killed them. You can’t give him this machine, no matter what he threatens. Millions will die, not just four. What about the crew now?”

Tapping looked back at them, sliding his glasses back into place. “They’re on the island; he’s using them as slave labor until he’s got what he wants. Then I guess he’ll kill us all.”

“We have to stop him, right?” Dawson had moved to a port hole and was peering through it at what was going on above deck.

Famosa's people were stripping electronics from *The Crucible* at an alarming rate and stowing them carefully in *The Katarina*'s hold. Famosa was overseeing the work like his children were being brought on board, not equipment.

"You can't stop him," Tapping said nervously, rubbing his hands together in trepidation. "He'll kill everyone that bit quicker. There's no way."

Mac shook his head, his blond mullet swaying. "There's always a way. And it doesn't have to involve killing, either. What we need is for me and Captain Dawson to get to the island and sabotage the machine."

It was Dawson's turn to scoff. She slid down onto a couch, rubbing at her temple like she had a headache. "Right, we'll just jump right on overboard, swim to the island, blow up the device and rescue McKenna and his people, all without Famosa shooting us!"

Mac smiled. "Yes, ma'am, that's kinda my plan..." He looked to Tapping. "How far is the island from here?"

The scientist pinched the bridge of his nose in thought. "I'm...um, really not even sure where "here" is, but we didn't travel very far. I'd say a couple of nautical miles south of here."

"Two miles?" Dawson didn't look impressed. "We can't swim that even if we get off this bucket!"

"Aww c'mon, people swim the English Channel and that's twenty miles!" Mac half-teased. "And the world isn't even at stake..." He grimaced. "'Course, we do need to figure a way to escape that would mean Famosa didn't know what we're up to..."

"How?" Tapping had nervously taken off his glasses again, and was cleaning them with very shaky hands as he spoke. "The only way I've seen anyone get off this yacht that wasn't a crewman, was in a body bag."

Mac's face suddenly lit up. "Actually, that's not a bad idea! Except not the body bag." He began to rummage around the room, sifting through cupboards and under Tapping's bunk without explaining what he was doing. Every now and again he'd pause. Eventually, he pulled out a pair of sweat pants and a t-shirt and passed them to Dawson. "Take your uniform off, and put these on."

Dawson took the clothes, inspected them like she was buying fashion attire and then growled back. "You're kidding right?"

"Nope..." MacGyver peeled off his own jacket and tossed it down, but it was obvious from his face that he hadn't quite gotten everything he needed. Part of the puzzle was still missing, and he'd exhausted every space to look for bounty.

Behind Tapping was another mahogany door, and Mac took two quick steps over to it and instinctively tried the handle. It was locked, as expected. He slid a hand into his jeans and pulled out his pocketknife. Famosa's Cuban henchman had failed to frisk

them, and MacGyver was going to use the opportunity. Within a minute, he'd picked the lock, and was inside some kind of control room for the yacht.

MacGyver stepped inside, putting a finger to his lips to signal to Tapping and Dawson to keep quiet. Machines around him whirred and beeped, and occasionally grumbled into life as the yacht's crew brought various systems on and offline.

Mac bit his lip, then noticed a couple of yellow inflatable life jackets hanging from a peg. He smiled, part one of his problem had been solved. Now for part two. He pushed on past the computer controlling the hydraulic thrusters until he came to part of the steering gear.

The correct fluid within the power pack "should" be clear, but MacGyver was hoping that *The Katarina*'s manufacturers had taken a short cut, like many boat builders did, and used automatic transmission fluid.

He used his knife again to remove the reservoir cap on top of the pack, and smiled as his hunch played out. The fluid was a nice rosy red color.

Mac stepped back into Tapping's room, grabbed a half-filled mug from the table and then cut one of the lines to the reservoir with his blade, draining fluid into the mug. The move would gain him the liquid he needed, whilst robbing the system of a vital fluid – later, that would hopefully keep Famosa busy while they got to the island ahead of him.

"Just what the heck are you doing?" Dawson asked as she pulled on the clothes he'd given her.

Mac continued to work as he answered. "Oh, just getting us that nice long swim, ma'am..."

The captain's face suggested she'd rather have stayed with Famosa – at least for a second.

* * * *

The Cuban paced back and forth outside the cabin door, his hands clasped behind his back like they were handcuffed there. Famosa could be a rewarding boss, but he could also be erratic, and over the top. Today, he was the latter two.

Raoul sometimes wished he'd listened to his momma and become a taxi driver, or maybe work in a bar. At least with those professions, your superior wasn't likely to shoot you if he was having a bad day.

The lock on the door he was guarding clicked, and Raoul instantly forgot other career options as his mind focused on what he should be doing. He stopped pacing, and his left hand reached under his jacket for his revolver. He remained silent as the door creaked slowly open and then paused in mid-swing.

Seconds ticked by, and the door didn't move further.

Intrigued, Raoul finally made the first move and stepped forwards, cocking his head close to the mahogany for sounds from inside. The moment his ear touched the wood, the door moved again, slamming him backwards with such force, his gun hand hit the wall and the ironically Beretta tumbled to the decking.

MacGyver bounded from the room first, with Dawson quickly following behind. He didn't stop to punch out Raoul or tie him, heading straight for the transom outside.

Raoul stumbled to his feet, cursing under his breath as he steadied himself against the wall and picked up his weapon. He gave chase within seconds, but whether that was fast enough for Famosa remained to be seen.

“Enrique! The stern, *NOW!*” Raoul barked out the order to a younger subordinate who was perched on top of the yacht's bridge with an Uzi. “They're getting away!”

MacGyver seemed to hear Raoul's order, and he paused for a second, looking back at the two men now giving chase. Somewhere in Raoul's brain, he registered that this MacGyver was carrying something over his shoulder, but the thought was lost in the moment. MacGyver grabbed Dawson's hand and yanked hard as a hail of bullets tore up the decking at their feet, and within a second, the pair were overboard.

A huge splash indicated their arrival in the Atlantic, and Mac and the captain quickly began to swim away from *The Katarina*.

“Shoot again!” Raoul's voice cracked. He was afraid now, because in the periphery of his vision, he could see Famosa approaching from the forward hold. As he spoke, he emptied the chamber of his automatic at his prey.

MacGyver bobbed under the waves to apparently try to avoid the spray of bullets. Dawson followed his lead, her legs kicking high as she dived.

Famosa joined Raoul, his face a mask of pure fury. “Idiots! How could you let them get free? Kill them! Kill them now!”

Raoul and his younger cohort opened fire again, their bullets tearing into the waves and deep beneath for over a minute. Each man reloaded several times as their weapons emptied.

“Wait!” Famosa leaned over the yacht's side rail as something bobbed up in the water - a leather jacket, jeans, followed by the unmistakable scarlet stain of blood amongst the waves.

A second body surfaced, along with more blood.

Raoul exhaled a sigh of pure relief. The escapees had been dealt with. No doubt there would still be repercussions from Famosa, but not as much now that MacGyver and the ship's captain were dead. “He picked the lock somehow,” the Cuban admitted. “But at least Dr. Tapping didn't try to follow.”

Famosa rubbed a hand across his face then turned to Raoul, his expression emotionless. “And for that, I should let you live?” The sentence was a question, not a fact.

Raoul’s jaw dropped just before his eyes saw the tip of the bullet that was going to kill him. Ten seconds later, the Cuban henchman tumbled stone dead into the Atlantic, his stocky body joining that of Dawson and MacGyver, dipping and weaving along with the ocean’s swell.

Part Three

MacGyver wasn’t sure what his own record for holding his breath was, but he was sure he’d just broken it. Rigging the clothing with the life jackets inside and the fluid for blood had been the easy part, staying submerged while Famosa’s people fell for the ruse was another matter.

Mac kicked hard, pushing through the underwater gloom and under *The Katarina* to resurface the other side behind *The Crucible*. Famosa’s people hopefully wouldn’t be looking for them at all, but if they still were, it wouldn’t be here.

He gulped down several long breaths and waited for his pounding heart to calm. A splash at his side indicated Dawson had joined him, even before she spoke.

“I think they’re falling for it,” the captain offered, sucking down air. “That was pretty smart, inflating those vests in the clothes...”

Mac shook his head. “They won’t fall for it for long. Once they try and pull in the bodies the game is up. I’m just hoping the lack of steering fluid in the system holds them up long enough for us to get to the island first...” He squinted, looking into the distance where Tapping had suggested they would find the tiny land mass. It was there, visible on the skyline, but it looked painfully far away considering they had to swim. “C’mon, we need to hurry.”

MacGyver pushed off, taking one quick look behind to see if Famosa was trying to move the yacht. So far, its engines remained silent. He felt an internal sigh of relief, and then settled into a rhythm. Dawson followed, quickly moving to his side with just as quick a pace.

After a few minutes in the water, MacGyver had to admit that maybe this wasn’t such a great idea. He wasn’t in his twenties anymore, and his muscles and joints ached from the exertion. He reminded himself what was at stake, and pushed through the pain barrier.

This wasn’t just a friendly race; it was a contest to save the world from an arms dealer that didn’t care if he sold a new weapon to a madman.

* * * *

Somewhere in the Atlantic
1hr 20mins later...

MacGyver pulled himself up onto the small, rocky beach took a few steps until he was out of sight, and then collapsed onto his back, finally allowing his muscles to relax.

The perfect blue sky above him was pockmarked with high cumulus clouds that painted the scene, making it look idyllic. He almost wanted to close his eyes and sleep, but Dawson's breathless arrival reminded him that wasn't possible.

"The next time you suggest we take a swim, I'm going to punch you out!" The captain slumped onto a small boulder and sagged.

"Yes, ma'am..." Mac pushed up onto his shoulder, some of his strength returning slowly. He peered back at the ocean, searching the vista for Famosa's yacht. It didn't take long for his eyes to latch onto the sleek vessel, and it was moving, albeit more slowly than it should. "We need to find McKenna and the machine, our friend Paulo is on the move." He pointed out to sea.

Dawson turned and scowled as *The Katarina* grew closer. Reluctantly, she pulled herself up and offered Mac a hand, which he gratefully took. "Where do we start? Famosa will have plenty of his people around, we can't just roam across this place."

MacGyver brushed off his wet clothes and shielded his eyes from the sun to get a better picture of their position. After a moment, he pointed south. "We follow the smoke, and we keep our eyes peeled for bad guys."

"That might be easy for you, but I'm a ship's captain, not *Rambo!*" Dawson padded after Mac as he scrambled over boulders and into an area of dense foliage.

Mac ran a hand through his wet hair as he moved. "I'm hardly *Rambo*," he assured. "Live off the land, even in a jungle with just a knife, yeah, I can do that, but all those guns?" He stepped over a fallen branch.

Dawson struggled over the same branch, her gait much shorter. "You don't like violence, huh? I wish my ex-husband felt that way. It got to the point where I started throwing punches back..."

Mac winced. No relationship should ever end up that way. Maybe being single wasn't such a bad thing. "Divorced?" He guessed.

Surprisingly, Dawson shook her head. "Nope, I didn't get the chance. He was a cop. Some young punk with a Beretta took him out. So, even though he was an ass, I get your point about guns."

"Some day society will learn." MacGyver sighed. "But until then we just have to pick up the pieces." He paused as he finished the sentence, his attention taken by something else.

Pulling back more foliage, Mac revealed the ragged, broken frame of an aircraft half suspended from the overhanging trees in front of them. The plane had once been blue, but now it was faded and in places was almost unrecognizable. One of the wings had

snapped, and sat in an upright position as if saluting some long dead general. The cockpit glass was still in place, but bullet holes and jagged cracks filled the front of the canopy.

“Dawson appeared almost awestruck by it. “What is it? I mean, it’s really old, right?”

MacGyver moved forwards until he was able to touch the snapped front propeller section that had torn up the ground many years previously. “It’s U.S. Navy – a Grumman Avenger from the Second World War, I’d guess. They used them for torpedo planes out here.”

The captain nodded as if that somehow made sense. “I sure wish we could use it to fly out of here, but even your talents can’t fix that.”

MacGyver raised a brow. He hadn’t realized Dawson knew his background. But then, he liked to know who he was working with, why shouldn’t she want the same? “No, ma’am,” he admitted. “I can’t fix it, but that doesn’t mean it can’t be useful.” He stepped onto a boulder giving enough height for him to grab onto the fuselage and hoist his body up next to the canopy. With a little leverage, he managed to release the catch, and a central glass section fell away, crumbling as it hit the earth below.

Dawson grimaced, and it was clear she expected to see skeletal remains glaring back at her from the plane, but mysteriously, even though the canopy hadn’t been popped, it was empty.

Mac peered into the back, where two other crewmen would normally sit, but the Avenger’s mystery deepened. There were no bodies. The angle the plane had come down at, even if they’d escaped uninjured, they’d have needed to release the canopy or break it to get out.

“Where is the pilot?” Dawson’s voice cracked, and for the first time she showed a vulnerable side. “How could they get out?”

“I don’t know,” MacGyver admitted.

“Didn’t a whole flight of these planes go missing in the triangle back in the forties? This couldn’t be..?” Dawson’s face said she was actually considering something strange, despite their earlier conversations.

Mac finally smiled. “Nope,” he reassured, “this isn’t one of Flight 19. That was a navigation training exercise, meaning no weapons, this puppy was armed.” He lowered his body just enough to be able to point to a torpedo slug under the Grumman’s midsection. It was almost obscured from view by the ever-growing flora. “And that small fact might come in handy, depending on what we find at the end of that smoke signal the bad guys are giving off.”

Dawson frowned, peering at the torpedo as if it would sprout legs. “Huh?”

“We might be able to use the Torpex explosives inside that thing to blow up Tapping’s ozone killing machine if they’ve gotten far enough for it to be dangerous.”

MacGyver pulled back up to the cockpit and swung his upper body inside as he spoke. After rummaging for a few seconds, he tossed a still-packed parachute to the ground, and then jumped down to join it with a flare gun in his right hand.

“Are you planning on telling the bad guys where we are?” Dawson looked skeptically at the flare.

Mac ignored her and tucked it into his waistband. Then he hunkered over, checking out the ancient parachute. The material hadn’t perished, which was amazing considering its age. He took out his knife, opened up the pack and spread the chute out over the ground, carefully running the lines to the harness flat at first, and then guiding them up into the nearest tree.

“Can you gather some twigs, leaves, anything to camouflage the chute, and spread it out over the canvas?” MacGyver pointed to the ground, while he continued to work up the tree.

Finally Dawson realized what he was up to. “It’s a trap!”

Mac nodded. “Our bad guys walk onto the chute, I cut this line here, and it will scoop them up and dangle them in midair until we cut them down, and not one gun required.”

“Neat, unless they happen to have a knife in a pocket like you,” Dawson mused as she spread out greenery and twigs.

“At the very least, it will buy us time,” Mac countered, dropping down from his position. “And the flare will get them curious enough to come over here.” He tapped a hand to the gun at his belt.

“That’s great, but what is the point in distracting Famosa’s goons if we can’t deal with the machine, or whatever this ozone killer is?” Dawson finished her foliage patchwork and looked at MacGyver expectantly, sweat dripping from her forehead.

“Because that’s what I’m going to deal with next, and for that, we need the torpedo...” He rolled under the remains of the plane and took a look at the weapon. He knew first hand that old ordnance didn’t necessarily mean bad ordinance, but that also meant the torpedo would have to be handled with care. It might still be explosive, but it also might be a heck of a lot more unstable than when it left the factory.

“How can we use a torpedo, even if you can arm it? They’re for under the water, not over it!” The captain looked both puzzled and frustrated at the same time. She mopped her brow with her left forearm, and slumped down onto a moss covered rock.

Mac gently patted the faded projectile. “Two hundred and seventy pounds of this baby is something called Torpex – it was developed by the British, and is forty-two percent RDX, forty percent TNT and eighteen percent powdered aluminum. It’s fifty percent more powerful than TNT alone by mass, and we’re going to use just some of that to make a little trouble.” He climbed back up into the cockpit and pulled the torpedo release, there was a pause, a horrendous metallic screech and the rusted mechanism

gave way, letting the torpedo drop a short distance onto a small bush. The bush thankfully broke the fall as he'd hoped.

Dawson turned away, half-expecting a bang. When none came, she moved closer, apparently curious. "I read your profile, I know you used to do this for a living, but I really didn't think it would be a skill we used on this trip."

MacGyver turned his knife to the screwdriver selection and began to undo a plate on the torpedo. Somehow, he managed to look up at Dawson at the same time. "Always expect the unexpected, then you have a chance of being prepared." He nodded as he looked back down into the bomb. "I can work with this. While I'm removing the explosives and detonator, can you check out Famosa's camp? I need to know just how big a bang we're going to need to knock out Tapping's creation."

"I thought I didn't need to play *Rambo*?" Dawson quipped, somewhat testily. "I'm a ship's captain, not DXS." She exhaled. "I'll do what I can, but if those people get their hands on me, I expect a rescue, okay?"

Mac smiled. "Don't worry; they won't keep you too long. Once they know how grouchy you are, they'll give you back."

She threw him a mock glare, then carefully picked her way through the bushes and off into the island's inner bowels. This whole mission now relied on their teamwork, and their ingenuity. MacGyver only hoped they had enough of both to make it happen.

* * * *

Dawson hated being off her ship. Somehow it was her comfort blanket, and although she was quite capable of navigating her way around the island, and doing the recon work, she suddenly felt more alone than she ever had, even after her husband had died.

She trusted MacGyver one hundred percent, even though they'd only just met, but even that gave little solace to how she was feeling right now as she padded over a small stream.

Her boots kicked up water, and she balked at the splashing sound, hoping the enemy wasn't close enough to hear. She slowed her gait, being more careful about noise. Famosa was not someone Dawson wanted to see again anytime soon.

The smoke she was following was growing thicker as she grew nearer, and she hunkered down, attempting to use the local vegetation for more cover.

A shape ahead in the foliage caught her eye, and she couldn't help but deviate towards it. As she closer, she realized it was a faded and creased leather boot. The boot was attached to a leg that's trousers had long since rotted away. In fact, it wasn't even a leg at all – at least not with any flesh.

The sight of the skeleton didn't faze the captain. Whoever this poor soul was, he'd been dead a very long time. The bones were sun-bleached and the attire on them nothing more than tatters.

She wiped sweat from her brow, and then leaned over the body. Maybe she'd found one of the men from the downed plane?

There was a book, maybe a journal or log under the skeleton, its decrepit pages bound by a tan leather cover. Dawson carefully picked it up and tucked it into her pocket. The man's family needed closure, even now all these years after the war.

A snapping sound caught her ear, and she spun around as someone padded through the undergrowth towards her. Without thinking, she dived for cover behind the skeleton and waited for the newcomer to pass. It was the young man from *The Katarina* that had fired on them with the Uzi. He looked agitated and nervous. He paused and looked around as if he sensed her, then moved on towards MacGyver's position.

If she could quickly gather the information they needed about the machine, that might work in their favor, as he'd be more easily lured into their trap out of the way.

Dawson waited until his footsteps faded and then headed the way he had come. The path through the brush widened into an opening just a short way from the trail. She pushed behind a tree of some kind for cover, and viewed the scene.

Famosa's people had made quite a large camp, and there were three tents positioned to one end. The other side, some of McKenna's crew worked on something that resembled a generator, although it was connected to an awkward looking satellite dish that had been jury-rigged from *The Eurybia*. It had to be the machine.

Dawson counted Famosa's goons. There were about three in view at any one time, but she was sure there would be more on the island, maybe even in the tents. They were all armed. She pinched the bridge of her nose, wondering how she'd gotten involved in such a mess.

Then, reluctantly, she turned tail and carefully picked her way back to MacGyver, almost passing the bad guy she'd seen earlier. He was sitting on a boulder, puffing on a cigarette as she slipped around him silently, keeping to the trees.

* * * *

MacGyver looked up from joining two wires together as he heard Dawson's approach. He smiled, even though she was still scowling. "Did you find them?"

"One of them almost found me!" The captain snapped, and then sighed. "He's on the trail a short way back." She jerked a thumb as she sat down to catch her breath.

Mac concentrated on finishing his bomb, screwing down another wire to a small contact plate he'd salvaged from the torpedo. "What about the machine?"

Dawson nodded. "It's at a camp they've set up. McKenna's crew is still working on it. But why here? Why not make it back on dry land, in some warehouse or even back in Cuba where he's safe?"

“Maybe he has a buyer out here that wants a demonstration?” Mac completed his work and wrapped the small bomb into some canvas from another spare parachute he’d found.

Dawson shook her head. “Now what? There are at least four of Famosa’s people I can see, there maybe double, even three times that I can’t see!”

“It doesn’t matter.” Mac slid his knife back in his pocket. “All we need is to disable that machine. He won’t have parts to make another. It will give the authorities time to get here. Don’t forget, our ship will be classed as missing soon when Pete can’t get through. He’ll send in the cavalry.”

“You hope!” Dawson scoffed. “So what’s our move?”

MacGyver turned and pointed to the line that controlled his “trap” up in the tree. “I head for the camp. When I’m halfway, I’ll shoot off the flare and hopefully Famosa’s people will come running. You pull cord when they’re in the centre of the chute, and bingo! We trap them, even if it only buys us minutes to blow the machine.”

“Okay...so what do I do after I pull the line? They’re going to figure a way out pretty fast, you know that right?”

“Um...run?” MacGyver couldn’t help but tease. “Seriously, try and find somewhere to hide. If I don’t get caught, I’ll find you.”

“*If* you don’t get caught? Jeez, that’s comforting!” Dawson began to clamber up the tree anyway, and after just seconds was perched on the branch where Mac had rigged the line. “Okay cowboy, go blow something up!”

Mac shot her a small salute. “Yes ma’am!” He assured as he jogged away towards the still spiraling smoke.

He picked his way along the path, mindful of the henchman that may or may not still be smoking.

The goon had apparently started his last cigarette, and screwed up the empty packet, tossing it into the shrubbery as MacGyver approached.

Mac hunkered down, retrieved the flare from his belt and fired it off back on Dawson’s direction. The Cuban started as the smoke trail into the sky suddenly ignited in red, shooting fire across the pale blueness of the heavens. He threw the cigarette down still burning and began to run towards the downed plane.

MacGyver didn’t move, hoping that more of Famosa’s people would come running. It took five minutes, but two more men appeared, both armed with machine guns. They were more wary than the first man, slowing and wafting their guns around expectantly as the trail widened.

As soon as they were out of sight, Mac took a risk that no more would follow and bounded out onto the trail. It took a further two minutes, and he was at the clearing. There was no sign of the fourth guard, or McKenna's people. In fact, the whole area was deserted. It was too good to be true, and suddenly Mac's sixth sense was screaming to run, just like he'd told Dawson.

You can't run, if this machine is finished, and it works, it could be the end of the planet...

MacGyver moved warily over to the machine. It looked ridiculous, like some overgrown Bond movie set gone wrong – except this was no joke, no film set, and no prop. He dropped onto his knees, pulled his homemade device from his shoulder, and un-wrapped it from the parachute canvas. There was no clock, only the timer used inside the torpedo, and that was fifty years old.

Mac placed the bomb up to what he hoped was the device's power source. It looked like a marine battery of some sort, maybe from *The Eurybia*, or maybe even Famosa's yacht. He touched a wire onto a contact, listened for a familiar tick, and then backed away, intent on turning and running before he was caught up in his own explosion.

He only half turned, when he bumped into something soft. Surprised, Mac stepped back and realized he'd walked into Dawson – or rather, a gagged and bound Dawson. Behind her, Famosa grinned like he'd won some kind of prize for best criminal lunatic.

"I've heard a lot about you MacGyver, so nice to finally meet." Famosa held a blade to Dawson's throat. "You see, we've been having some trouble getting our friend Tapping's creation to work, and I have a buyer inbound from Puerto Rico that wants to see results."

Mac's eyes narrowed. "I don't see how I fit into that equation."

"Because you're good at "fixing" things, aren't you? And I want you to fix the machine." Famosa pointed to the thing that looked like Frankenstein had created it to match his monster. "First, you'd better remove the bomb, or we'll all go together..."

MacGyver licked his lips. He didn't want to remove the bomb, and he certainly had no intention of "fixing" anything. On the other hand, he didn't want to be scattered all over the island in little pieces even Pete couldn't identify. He leaned down, slowly removing the wire he'd connected earlier until the bomb stopped buzzing.

Famosa nodded with a grin. "Give him the plans..." he looked to one of his subordinates, the young one with the Uzi who liked to smoke.

The man looked scared, but did as he was told, handing over a schematic that had obviously been hastily hand drawn by Tapping.

Mac took it and for a moment, considered tearing it to pieces.

"Fix it," Famosa hissed, his eyes growing dark as his pupils narrowed.

“And if I don’t?” Mac dared to ask.

Famosa dug his blade just slightly into Dawson’s neck until she whimpered, even through the gag. He drew blood that trickled down her throat and onto her top. “Then I slit her throat in front of you, followed by someone from both crews until you agree...”

Part Four

MacGyver had expected something evil, and he got it. Still, it had been worth a try to buy time if nothing else. He nodded in defeat. “Alright, I’ll try to help, but I need Tapping to talk me through how it works, and what you’ve done so far.”

Famosa sniffed, as if he was thinking about it. “Very well, I’ll have him brought from my boat. In the meantime, you can enjoy the comforts of one of my tents.” He looked to the man with the Uzi, pushing the girl into Mac’s arms. “Tie him up and put them in my marquee. Guard them well, or you will join your friend as shark food...”

MacGyver found himself pushed rapidly towards a pale blue tent and pushed inside, along with Dawson. Another harder shove landed him on the floor.

“Put your hands behind your back!”

Mac complied, and felt his wrists hastily and roughly bound with something that felt like wire. It cut into his flesh every time he made the smallest move.

The guard spun him around, and then bound his ankles in much the same manner. Satisfied, Uzi boy exited, but his shadow could be seen just outside the zippered doorway.

Dawson looked at him, her eyes welling with what looked like anger – it was hard to tell, as she was still gagged. At least MacGyver had escaped that fate. He slid forwards using his knees and feet to drag himself next to the silent captain.

“I like it when you’re this quiet,” he teased, trying to lighten the mood.

Dawson scowled and a muffled retort that sounded like Daffy Duck on a bad day came from beneath the gag. She rolled her eyes and exhaled deeply.

Mac looked around. There was a pole next to the captain for the tent roof. It had little metal pins in, that when pushed let the pole retract to pack away. “Can you rub your face against the pole, maybe snag the gag and pull it down on one of those little pins?”

Dawson’s eyebrows lifted, and she tried out the move. At first, she scratched her cheek, but in the second attempt, the gag dropped to her neck loosely. “You’re probably going to regret helping me do that,” she joked quietly. “First up, though, how the heck do we get out of here?” She looked down at the wire that bound them. “It’s cutting my flesh just looking at it!”

MacGyver bit his lip. He'd already take an inventory of the tent, and it wasn't good. There was nothing inside they could use to sever the wires holding them. He was just about to say as much, when a noise caught his attention from outside.

Not just any noise, but something behind the tent, on the actual canvas. Mac shuffled his body around until he could focus on the sound, and was surprised to see a knife, hacking carelessly through the material until there was a human-sized slit. Ten seconds later, a face pushed through, along with a hat – a pilot's cap, to be precise.

MacGyver didn't know whether to sigh with relief, or panic. "Jack!" He squawked almost too loudly. "What the..."

Dalton pushed all the way into the tent, careful not to raise his voice how MacGyver had. "Jeez, I travel all this way to rescue your butt, and you're not even pleased to see me?" He looked genuinely offended, although Mac knew otherwise.

The fact hit MacGyver that he hadn't told Jack where he was going in the Bermuda Triangle, and even if he had, they were now nowhere near those co-ordinates. "Hey, just *how did* you find me?"

Dalton shrugged and grinned. "Well see, I was at your apartment, going through a few things, and I found these tracking gizmos. I think you'd made them for Phoenix. Anyhow, I kinda slipped one into your sneaker, just in case you got in trouble. I mean, it is the Devil's playground and all."

Mac was amazed and disgruntled. "What were you doing in my apartment in the first place? Don't you dare tell me you've moved all my furniture again, that is so getting old, if I wasn't tied up I'd..."

"Swing for me? I know, but look at it this way, it worked out great!" Jack's moustache twitched as he smiled. "I'm here to rescue you and..."

"Jack, what aren't you telling me?"

"Mac, me boyo, would I keep anything from you? My friend, my Compadre..." Jack stopped, looked down at their bonds and then shrugged. "I forgot the wire cutters. I mean, how was I to know they were going to tie you with something that wasn't actually rope?" He pulled open his jacket to reveal a hunting knife. "Rope, twine, string, cord, thread, yarn...all those I can deal with. Just not wire."

MacGyver's shoulders sagged. If that was the only reason Jack's moustache was twitching, they might stand a chance. "Anything else you might wanna tell me?" He raised a row, hoping Dalton said no, but it was, as ever, too much to hope for.

"Well...I think the bad guys might have found my plane, but it's okay, kemo sabe! I got a message off to Papa Thornton as soon as I found this island!" Jack sounded victorious, and his eyes danced smugly.

"What did he say?"

“Okay, so he didn’t actually get time to answer. I think your bad guy has some kind of jamming device, as soon as he saw my plane my goose was cooked.” Jack tried in vain to undo the wire that had been tightly wrapped around Mac’s wrists and ankles.

“So you don’t actually know if Pete even got the message?”

“Hey, I’m confident! When have I ever let you down?” Jack looked hurt again. “Okay, so maybe a few times, but I’m good, you know that.”

“A few times! More like every time!” Mac’s voice went up an octave again until Dawson interrupted.

“Do you guys need a room? Jeez, it’s like *The Odd Couple!*” Dawson puffed out a breath in frustration. “Do you think we can get out of here, then you two can bicker all you like?”

“Okay,” Jack agreed amiably. “I’m up for suggestions how to cut the wire? I mean, I can’t exactly carry you two out of here. Well, maybe the girl, but Mac, I hate to say it buddy, but you’re too heavy.” He shrugged.

“You don’t cut the wire, and we don’t get out of here.” MacGyver offered helpfully. “In fact, you just leave us right where we are.”

“Say what?” Jack and Dawson chimed together.

“There’s nothing to cut the wire, and we’re not Easter Bunnies, we can’t hope outta here. Not to mention, if we leave, that means Tapping will be at Famosa’s mercy.” Mac looked pretty serious as he spoke. He wasn’t joking. “If Famosa still thinks we’re his prisoners, at some point, he’ll untie us to work on the machine. Once all three of us are free and together, you can come back and do you’re cavalry routine.”

For a second, Jack looked ecstatic, then it seemed to hit him he might have to get up close and personal with a few Cubans, and he balked. “Exactly how can I save you from the bad guys in broad daylight, and when they have guns, and I just got a whole lot of sass and this knife?”

MacGyver looked to Dawson. “When Famosa caught you, had you tried to spring my trap?”

The captain shook her head. “No, it’s just as you left it.”

“Okay, Jack, I’m going to give you some instructions, but I don’t want you to make a move until I give a signal.”

“What kinda signal?” Dalton had moved to the back of the tent to make his exit, as if he was already afraid of being caught. Action that involved personal danger was not on his to do list.

“Ugh, I might have to wing it on that,” Mac admitted. “But trust me, when you see it, you’ll know...”

* * * *

It had taken Famosa twenty minutes to get Tapping from his yacht onto the island, and a further ten to their arrival at the camp. Jack had just left the tent when the guard had returned and cut MacGyver and Dawson free, dragging them back out to the machine.

Tapping was there waiting, a bunch of schematics in his hand. “I’m sorry you had to get involved in this mess,” he apologized, fiddling with his glasses.

“It’s what we do,” Mac assured, rubbing at his wrists where the wire had cut into them.

“Enough of the chit chat, make the machine work!” Famosa was rubbing sweat from his brow as he spoke, and he looked tired and irked. “You have one hour.” He glanced at the nearest guard. “Give them whatever they need, tools, men, whatever, just *make it happen*.” He turned and headed for another tent, apparently one reserved for him and his soon-to-arrive guest only.

Once he’d vanished under the tarp, the guard prodded Mac with the tip of his Uzi. “You heard what the boss said, fix the machine, or I’ll hurt the girl real good...” He sneered.

Dawson scoffed, and for a second Mac thought she was going to slap the Cuban, instead she shot Mac a questioning look, and he knew she was waiting for his infamous signal to Dalton.

MacGyver pulled open a tool box and began to rummage through it while looking at Tapping. “We need to make it look good,” he whispered, “but we also need to make some smoke. Can we short something out?”

Tapping grimaced, and it appeared he found it painful to actually damage his creation. “Do we have to? What if we can’t fix it before the hour is up?”

“We don’t exactly plan on finishing this thing anyway,” Dawson interrupted. “How can we, with the damage it could do to the planet?”

Tapping seemed to think about it, glanced at the guard, and then picked up some tools from the open box Mac had been sifting through. He edged over to the machine, removed a plate and then ran a small screwdriver over two contacts simultaneously.

There was a large spark, a hiss, and then a steady stream of white and grey smoke oozing into the atmosphere.

The guard was instantly upon them. “What did you do?”

“It’s nothing,” Tapping reassured. “Just a little slip of the wrist, but I had to change that circuit anyway. It will be fine. Trust me.” His eyes flashed with sincerity and Mac was impressed with his sudden acting skills.

The guard didn’t buy it and moved closer, wafting his 9mm at them as he approached. He passed Dawson, focusing on the two men – and that was his first mistake. Surprising even MacGyver, Dawson pounced, landing a left hook on the man’s jaw like she’d been having lessons from Mike Tyson. The punch didn’t have the weight behind it a man’s would, but the shock factor was enough for her to land another before the guard could react, and he flew backwards onto the ground.

Dawson grabbed his Uzi and backed up. By now the other two guards on the perimeter of the camp had seen what was happening and began to shout. One let off a clip at them, bullets tearing into the earth at their feet, and a few slugs hitting the machine.

Famosa heard the ruckus, and appeared from his tent spouting profanities at his men. “You idiots! Don’t shoot near the machine! We don’t have the spares!”

Mac grabbed Dawson, dragging her behind the giant contraption, using it for cover. Tapping joined them breathlessly. “We can’t stay here for ever!” He panicked. “They’ll only hold off for so long, machine or not!” His eyes strayed to his creation, and for a second it was like a father’s grief at the thought of it being harmed.

“It’s time to make a run for it!” MacGyver pointed to the tree line behind the machine, nodded, and then launched into a run still holding Dawson’s free hand. In seconds he was crashing through brush with the girl in tow, hoping the scientist would follow.

Behind, he could hear Famosa yelling more orders and a steady stream of gun fire at their heels as the Cuban guards gave chase. One slip now, and those bullets would be tearing into them, and not the ground. Mac tried not to think about it as he crashed past a tree so hard he tore a branch off. Dawson yelped as the rest of the recoiling foliage hit her, but she didn’t stop.

The clearing near the downed plane was just ahead of them, and MacGyver prayed to whoever was listening that Jack was there, and was going to get his part right.

The torpedo plane beckoned them, and Mac felt Dawson pick up speed as she saw it too. Was Tapping still behind them? MacGyver daredn’t look for fear of slowing, but as they careered over the hidden parachute, he yelled until his lungs hurt. “Now Jack! NOW!”

They’d just skimmed the chute and fallen headlong into some bracken when a whoosh of air and two anguished yelps made them finally turn.

The parachute looked strange – almost upside down as it dangled with two struggling henchmen.

Jack appeared, a childlike grin on his face, his moustache twitching this time with delight, not a lie. “I told you I could do it, Compadre!”

The delight was short lived as Famosa appeared. He'd been at the rear of his group, and hadn't fallen into the trap. Now, he held a Glock automatic on them all, and he was smiling almost as much as Dalton. Unexpectedly, Tapping was at his side, and although he wasn't exactly beaming, he was no prisoner.

"Dr. Tapping?" Dawson's head cocked to one side as realization seemed to hit her. "What are you doing?"

MacGyver was more direct. "You sold out to him, didn't you? What did he promise? Money? Fame?"

The scientist fidgeted. "Neither," he admitted. "He offered me recognition. After Steubens, I was nobody. All I could do was get work on your pathetic research vessel, and I'm better than that. Always was."

"I offered him the chance to work on what he wanted, not on what the establishment decided," Famosa interrupted. "Oh, and I pay better too, even if he isn't admitting it."

"Excuse, me, but didn't someone say the work you're doing for Mr. Bad Guy here could end the world? Isn't that taking job satisfaction a little too far?" Jack's eyes were wide. "And what good is recognition if the world ends a few seconds later when you switch that thing on and we all go kapuff?" He clicked his fingers for effect.

"It won't," Famosa purred. "Tapping here assures me he not only continued Steubens research, he improved on it – we would have been able to control the ozone layer and hold the super powers to ransom – but you've messed all that up, at least this time. And for that, you're going to pay." His finger ticked on the Glock's trigger, and he was about to open fire when a whirring from the heavens stopped him.

The whole group looked up to see a helicopter flying in from a distance. The pale blue chopper blended in and out of the perfect, cloudless sky like it had a malfunctioning cloaking device, but it was merely a trick of the light.

Famosa's cocky smile thinned and he swallowed hard. "That will be Ramirez, and he's expecting a fully working device."

"I can't make that happen, not now...n...not here!" Tapping was stammering, and his hands had begun to shake.

Famosa nodded. "I think we better leave the party before Ramirez arrives, he's not the type you disappoint and live." He reaffirmed his grip on the automatic, moving closer as he pointed it at MacGyver.

Mac was ready for it. While all eyes had been on the bird in the sky, Mac's hands had slowly moved behind his back, and he'd opened up his pocket knife. The rope securing the parachute trap, and Famosa's men, was fastened to the nearest tree, and he intended to use that.

As Famosa pulled the trigger, MacGyver dived backwards, slashing at the rope with one swift wrist movement. The line snapped, and the chute dropped as the bullet hit the tree, splintering it.

Famosa and Tapping suddenly found themselves on the ground, knocked from their feet by the two falling henchmen.

MacGyver, Dawson and Jack ducked into the undergrowth, intent on running again, but they needn't have bothered. In fear of his own life, Famosa picked up the Glock, ran a hand through his hair and indicated that his men should move out.

"Back to the yacht before Ramirez realizes what's happening and opens fire! He's bound to think this is some kind of double cross if I don't come up with the device!" Famosa tucked the gun into his belt and jogged after his terrified men. Tapping brought up the rear.

Dawson emerged from the trees first and watched the Cuban making his retreat. "Whoa, now that wasn't a move I was expecting! I thought we were dead for sure!"

"Nah," Jack cooed, "I'm sure they just finally realized who they were dealing with!"

Dawson cocked a brow. "What?"

"Dangerous Dalton, that's what! They knew I had them right where I wanted them, eh, Mac me boyo?"

MacGyver appeared and grimaced. "It's great that we didn't end up dead, but we still don't have time to joke. Famosa still has Tapping with him, and if we allow them to get away, then the world still isn't a safe place." He slid his knife back in his pocket and bit his lip.

"This is the part where you say something profound and very, very stupid, like we have to stop them, right?" Jack screwed up his face in a wince that could have won a prize.

"How?" Dawson didn't sound against the idea, but her expression said she didn't think it was possible. "They have guns; we have a pocket knife and a pilot with a big mouth!"

"I resemble that remark, madam," Jack chuckled then looked at his friend more seriously. "Mac, she has a point, but that isn't going to stop you, is it?"

"They're headed for Famosa's yacht," MacGyver pondered out loud. "If we stay on the island, their weapons can't touch us, but we can touch them." He hunkered down to the disemboweled torpedo. "I think we should put this puppy back together and fire it at them. I can lower the amount of explosives to hopefully do minimal damage, just enough to stop them without hurting anyone until Pete gets here with help."

"We can't fire a torpedo from land!" Dawson had a hand on her hip, and she was obviously frustrated.

Mac ignored her and stared at Jack. “No, but we could drop it from a plane, like it was intended.”

“Ugh, no we can’t.” Jack took off his cap and mopped his brow. “I told you Famosa’s people spotted me? Well they opened fire, took out my flaps. I think they bust the cable control. I can whiz around on the ocean all day long, but I can’t take off, and if I could, I wouldn’t be able to land without stalling.”

“MacGyver looked at the rotting torpedo plane. “You’re plane is how old?”

Jack looked terrified and held up his hands. “Oh no! You’re not fitting things off a crashed bird on to my baby! It’s bad luck! I’m bound to crash again!”

“You always do anyway...” Mac shook his head, then turned to Dawson. “Get back to the clearing, make sure all of Famosa’s people are gone, and get McKenna and the crews. I need the explosives I planted on the machine, and something that uses battery power, a radio maybe. This type of torpedo used batteries, and they’re gonna be flat. I’ll start getting the torpedo back together ready, and then the cables from the plane for Jack’s.”

Dawson nodded and jogged away without questioning MacGyver’s wild plan. Jack was conservative. “I’m so not flying that puppy, no siree! Not here in the Devil’s playground! And anyway, what about a release mechanism? We don’t have time to strip that off this wreck as well.” He leaned over, examining the equipment he was talking about. It was rusty and bent.

“I’ll use the release bracket from this, but someone will have to be under your plane on one of the floats to drop the torpedo manually...” Mac worked as he talked, screwing back the innards of the torpedo. Once he could do no more without the Torpex, he moved to the underside of the bomber and began unscrewing the release mechanism with his knife. It was hard going due to the corrosion, and his hands slipped several times, skinning his knuckles.

“Whoa...I’ve changed my mind,” Jack cooed. “I’ll do the flying, I’ll risk my neck, but on the inside.”

Mac frowned as a screw decided to be stubborn. “Start stripping the flap cables, we might need to shorten them, or maybe even join one.”

By the time we’ve done all this, Famosa and his goons will be long gone anyway!” Jack seemed to get some comfort from the thought, took off his leather jacket and set to work.

MacGyver decided it was wise not to mention that Famosa’s yacht was still struggling to steer after his earlier sabotage, and would probably still be in range even in an hour or two.

* * * *

Fixing the torpedo to run on the batteries Dawson had managed to conjure had been relatively easy, but fixing Jack's plane hadn't been so simple. The bracket for the torpedo to drop from had to be modified to work without a cable, and as MacGyver had feared, someone was going to have to ride under the plane to release it.

Thankfully, Famosa had left an abundance of tools to work with from his failed project, and Mac had been able to use wood from nearby trees to pack under the bracket to make it low enough to ride on the belly of the Cessna. Mac was not, however, looking forward to sitting on the pontoon while Jack flew the thing, but he doubted there would be any other volunteers.

The final, and hardest job, was getting the flaps on the Cessna operational again. It was an old model, almost vintage, but there were still massive differences in design to the warplane he was plagiarizing for parts.

The control cables were simply too short, and that meant stretching them beyond their limits to fit. To make it happen, Mac had jury-rigged some ropes onto a nearby tree, along with half of McKenna's crew tugging on them while he affixed the ends, but how long it lasted before snapping was anyone's guess. He hadn't told Dalton about that small fact, or he doubted Jack would have taken off. He was crazy, but maybe not that crazy.

Mac wiped a greasy hand across his brow as he slid in the last screw and tightened it down on the wing. He realized he had oil on his forehead, and wiped it away with a rag Dawson provided. The work had taken over two hours. Just how far could Famosa get in that time?

"Jack are you ready?" Mac stood up, tossed down the rag and eyed the bobbing pontoon he was about to ride on distastefully.

"Err nope," Jack answered honestly. "Of all the crazy things I've gotten you into, I don't think one has ever been this nuts. You owe me for this one, kemo sabe!" His moustache twitched to say he was in a playful mood.

"Just get in and fly will you? We can talk about how much this is going to cost me in pranks later..." Mac smiled and grabbed a small section of rope, tying himself to the outrigger that held the pontoon, just as a precaution.

Dawson shook her head. "I can't believe you're doing this!"

Mac scowled. "Neither can I, but how else do we stop Famosa and Tapping causing a global catastrophe?"

Dawson didn't an answer, or if she did, it was drowned as Jack fired up the plane's ancient engine and powered up for take of. The flaps on the wings moved up and down as he tested MacGyver's handiwork, and then he opened up the throttles.

The little red patched up Cessna began to move, gathering speed as it bobbed on the perfect blue waves. Within seconds, it had enough lift and soared upwards, making

Mac's stomach lurch as he saw the sea beneath him begin to grow small and insignificant.

Jack had his door propped open, so they could communicate somewhat, even over the sputtering Continental motor.

"Can you see them yet?" Mac shouted, holding tight onto the strut as he spoke, the wind puckering his cheeks and chilling them.

"I see something on the horizon, and it ain't the Coast Guard," Jack answered with a yell. He grinned, as if he was suddenly having fun, and pulled down his goggles. "Let's party!"

He dived the plane a little, turning the nose to match the direction their target was traveling. Famosa's yacht grew from a pinprick in their vision to a discernable ship quite quickly.

"That's them," MacGyver confirmed, noting a helicopter on the aft section's mini landing pad. It looked like Ramirez had joined the party, despite Famosa trying to get away from him. *I wonder what's going on down there?* Would the two bad guys be arguing, or plotting a new strategy with Tapping's help?

As he spoke, the helicopter's rotors began to spin, and as Jack turned the Cessna for his torpedo run, it took off, heading south.

"Now what?" Jack bellowed, gripping the yoke a little too tightly for Mac's comfort.

"Stick with the yacht." MacGyver pointed downwards, just in case his friend hadn't made out his response.

Dalton nodded and push the controls forwards, putting the plane into a small dive. He gave the thumbs up that Mac was now in control of what happened next.

Mac swallowed hard and took the screwdriver from his pocket. He slid it into the mechanism, pushing the spring back by hand that normally a cable would control. The torpedo didn't move.

MacGyver pushed harder until the muscles in his shoulder ached with the exertion. The spring popped, and the ancient torpedo fell into the air, dropping harshly into the water below.

But would the makeshift battery power it to the yacht, and would it even explode?

Mac squinted, trying desperately to see beneath the waves, but even here in this perfect ocean, it was impossible. Seconds ticked by, then finally Dalton spotted what they were looking for.

"There! It's heading right for the hull! You got 'em Mac!"

MacGyver's eyes found the torpedo just as it impacted with thousands of dollars worth of prime wood. At this height, he couldn't hear the sound of the damage, or even the pop of the small explosion caused by his toned down Torpex, but he could see the water gushing into the newly-made hole.

Satisfied his work on the pontoon was over, Mac untied himself and climbed into the cockpit beside Dalton. He put on a headset to talk. "Okay, now we need to find that helicopter and follow it! Tapping could be onboard!"

Jack instantly looked horrified. "Are you kidding me? With this duck taped masterpiece of yours?" He nodded down, indicating the Cessna. "We'll be lucky to set this down without imploding!"

Something beneath him twanged, as if it had heard him.

MacGyver rolled his eyes. "Aww, now why'd you have to go and say something like that?" He groaned.

Jack tried the flaps.

Nothing happened.

"I err, think your newly-made flap cable just left the building," Jack informed. "And given the angle they're currently at, we're gonna stall this puppy mid-air if I try to land. Put simply, our goose is cooked, yet again." He wiggled his brows. "But hey, I've got you onboard, so I'm not scared, right?"

MacGyver exhaled. "You do have parachutes?"

Jack blinked and his eye twitched. "Are you kidding? Of course I got parachutes! They're right behind your seat! I paid good money for them in a Cuban market when I bought this flying masterpiece."

Somehow, MacGyver wasn't comforted. He pushed off his seat, inspecting what was behind it. After a little rummaging, he came across two brown, very dirty packs. He inspected them with disdain. "Jack...these are empty, there's no canvas, no silk, no cables, no nothing! They're full of newspaper! And the harness on this one is rat-eaten..."

"Oh boy...guess I should have looked instead of taking that ten-year-old kid at his word, huh?" Jack pulled his goggles back onto his cap. "But look on the bright side! They weigh a whole lot less!"

Mac tossed the packs out the open door and glanced into the back where Jack had removed the seats to carry cargo. There were several boxes, and they weren't all labeled the same. "What else you got back here?"

"Just some backpacks, dog food, oh, and a whole bunch of party balloons!" Jack grimaced. "Not very helpful, huh?"

Mac thought about it, then began unpacking the boxes. When he came to the balloons, he stopped, realizing they were quite large, and there were canisters of helium to inflate them. He smiled, and Jack frowned.

“I know that look,” Jack said worriedly, “you have some kinda crazy plan forming, dontcha me boy?”

“I’m thinking maybe we could tie a whole bunch of the balloons to a backpack each and jump out of the plane.” MacGyver began filling balloons while he talked, not wasting any time.

Dalton looked horrified. “Mac, do you realize just how many balloons it would take to lift us? Have you ever heard of such a thing as terminal velocity? Even if we jump over the ocean, the force we’ll hit the water with will squish us at this height!” He clapped both his hands together for effect. “Like a bug hitting a windshield,” he explained a little too graphically.

“Oh, it would take around six thousand balloons each,” Mac said as if he hadn’t a care in the world.

“Six thousand! I don’t have that many balloons, or enough helium!” Jack started to fidget with the controls as if sheer willpower could fix them.

“Will you relax?” Mac stopped working and stared at his friend. “We don’t need to take off, or float, we just need these things to slow our decent enough to give us a bit softer impact with the ocean, okay?”

Jack thought about. “MacGyver, did I ever tell you I love you and your crazy ideas?” He grabbed a pack and started fastening the inflated balloons to it like a harness while keeping the yoke steady with his knees. It was an unsightly, but necessary combination.

Once all the balloons were gone, and the gas cylinders empty, Mac looked over to his friend. “I guess this was my idea, I better go first.” He took a long, deep breath. Heights weren’t his thing anyway, but jumping from a plane with just balloons to slow his decent was making him feel very uncomfortable.

Jack patted him on the shoulder. “I’d love to say I’ll do it but…” he smiled playfully. “I’d hate to rain on your parade.”

“Thanks, I think.” Mac shot Jack a look and then moved to the open door. He needed to be careful as he stepped to the edge. If he trapped his creation and burst any balloons, the impact with the water would be a very unpleasant one. Under his breath, he took a small prayer, closed his eyes, and then pushed away from the moving Cessna.

The tumbling effect was instant. It was nothing like the graceful decent of a skydiver, and as the wind battered his cheeks, MacGyver had to wonder if his idea had any credibility at all. He felt his limbs yanked backwards by the force of gravity as he

plummeted to the ocean below. And somewhere in his mind, he hoped Sam would forgive him for taking this assignment if things didn't work out.

Seconds later, he hit the water – to MacGyver, it felt like he'd hit a brick wall, but at least a very slightly cushioned brick wall. He gasped, attempting to take down air, and instantly gulped down sea water. For a moment, disorientated, he floundered, splashing wildly with his arms until his confused brain could catch up with his body.

Mac spat out the water, calmed himself and did a mental checklist of his body. Everything seemed to be working, and nothing appeared broken, which meant his balloon decent had worked. He was going to be bruised and battered for a few days, but alive to tell the tale.

He began to tread water while pulling off the impromptu parachute, but was interrupted by a wild cry from above.

“Geronimo!”

Mac looked up just in time to see Jack Dalton hurtling towards him. He kicked away, attempting to avoid the tumbling pilot, but it was too late. Jack splashed down right on top of him. The tangle of limbs was short lived as Mac pushed him off.

“Will you get your own place! Sheesh, you're not satisfied with invading my apartment. There's a whole ocean to land in, and you crash in my spot!” MacGyver feigned anger as he swam backwards through the waves and spotted a ship approaching with U.S. Navy colors. Finally, Pete's cavalry was arriving.

Jack didn't see it. He was too busy grumbling. “Hey! This was your crazy idea. How can I help it if some of my balloons went south on me? I think you kept the best ones for yourself. You know that time when I thought I was dying? Well plummeting from the heavens just now brought it right on back to me...and not in a good way. I think you owe me a beer, or maybe a meal...or maybe even a plane!” He looked up to see the Cessna still airborne in the distance. It would carry on that way until it ran out of fuel and crashed into the sea.

Mac gave in, just a little. “I'll spot you for a beer,” he agreed. “But I think it's safer if you never own a plane again, like ever!”

Jack thought about it, then cocked his head as he splashed around clumsily. “You know what, Mac me boy? I think you actually might be right....” He remained quiet for a fifth of a second, then grinned. “Maybe I'd be better with a boat!”

* * * *

U.S.S. Barry

One hour later....

MacGyver slowly sipped his cocoa as he listened to Pete talking on a satellite phone. Pete wasn't happy, and neither were the U.S. government. While MacGyver had

stopped Famosa with his homemade explosives, Ramirez had escaped in his helicopter, taking Tapping with him.

Pete finally set the phone down and exhaled. “Well, that was one strange call,” he informed. “Ramirez and Tapping have vanished into thin air.”

Mac nodded. He’d expected as much. They would probably go to ground for some time before trying again with the device. “I pretty much expected it,” he said with a sigh. “They’ll be back, and much more dangerous.”

Pete shook his head. “No, I don’t mean they’re in hiding somewhere, they literally vanished! According to U.S. Navy and Coast Guard tracking and radar, they just disappeared somewhere north of Bermuda.” He clicked his fingers together. “Gone, just like that.”

“Equipment error, or maybe some kind of cloaking device?” MacGyver pondered. “I mean, these people are stealing on the edge technology, maybe they’re using it too?”

“Or maybe they really just vanished?” Dawson, who until now had remained silent, chipped in. “I was never a believer of the whole triangle legend, but...” she pulled the book from her pocket that she’d taken from the dead body on the island. “I guess this is from that downed plane we found...” She handed it to Mac. “I found a skeleton; it must have been the pilot. Bermuda didn’t bring him anything for sure.”

MacGyver opened the faded leather binding to look at the browned and fragile pages. What he saw was intriguing, and gave more questions than answers, about the plane, and the book’s original owner. “This doesn’t explain anything about the downed plane’s crew,” he informed with a frown. “And it brings up a very old mystery...”

Pete and Dawson were both intrigued and sat forwards. Jack Dalton apparently remained uninterested as he gulped down coffee and cookies in the corner, crumbs flying everywhere and sticking in his moustache.

“This isn’t a pilot’s log,” MacGyver continued. “It’s a captain’s log. It’s George Worley’s...” he paused, and when no one commented continued. “He was the commanding officer on the *U.S.S. Cyclops*.”

Dawson instantly recognized the name. “My God, people have wondered for years what happened to her! She’s part of the whole “Triangle” mystery!”

Mac nodded. “The log doesn’t give any answers. Worley stopped making entries the day she vanished, but it does confirm she still had engine trouble, and that she was low in the water.”

“So you think that’s why she sank, and not anything supernatural?” Pete concluded. “And as the body was on the island, she must have gone down close to here. You know, this would be something Phoenix would love to investigate!”

Finally, Jack awoke from his food induced stupor. “Oh no! Count me out, No sir, I am so not getting involved in anything else out here. In fact, every time I get involved

with anything to do with Phoenix, I lose my plane!" He stopped, rammed in a cookie and then looked at MacGyver who was smiling. "Mac, don't you dare!"

"C'mon, Jack, don't you want to know what really happened out here? Maybe we could even find the remains of the wreck!" MacGyver was genuinely interested. If there was anything he loved, it was solving puzzles, and this was a big one.

Jack stubbornly turned away, scowling as a junior officer from the bridge entered the room. "Excuse me," he apologized, "but there's a message for Mr. MacGyver." He handed over a white folded paper and waited. "Shall I send a reply, Sir?"

Mac opened the paper and read it, then looked back up with a smile. "Reply that I'd love to, and I'll be there soon."

The officer nodded and retreated.

"Sorry, Pete, that's from an old friend of mine, Paul Moran," Mac apologized. "He wants me to shoot over to the U.K. for a party he's throwing. We've been through a lot together, especially climbing. I can't refuse."

Pete nodded. "I remember Paul. Looks like you're off to England instead of another Bermuda stay then. We can always put this on the backburner until you return."

Mac smiled. "I'd like that." He glanced at Dalton. "Maybe I'll even be able to convince Jack by then!"

Jack scowled. "Buddy, don't bet on it, even I'm not that crazy..!"

The End

