



Return to Serenity

by Kathryn A. Sullivan

Author's Note: This story is set in the fall of 1993, a year after the MacGyver episode "The Stringer" and a year after the events in "Playing With Fire" in The Manifest #1.

His surroundings slowly solidified around him: a hitching post off to his right, a step up to a wooden walkway before his boots, and a whuffling presence behind him that must be his horse. On a deeper level, he recognized the elements and relaxed into the situation, wondering what friends he would find mirrored in Old West personas this time.

Since the general store was now before him, he stepped up onto the walkway and entered. The clerk, an unfamiliar dark-haired man, hurried up to him. "Can I help you with something, Mister — "

"Name's MacGyver — " he started.

"No, not again!" a voice yelped. Mac stared aghast as a grayish shape seemed to step out of him, then turned to face him. The unkempt beard and bushy mustache were almost hidden in the grayness beneath the battered cowboy hat, but, as the shape straightened to look him in the eye, Mac almost backed a step. The shape had his face!

Almost his face, Mac quickly corrected himself. The eyebrows were bushier, and the glaring eyes were narrower and had more crow's-feet around them than MacGyver remembered from his mirror. "Do I know you?" Mac started, but the shape wasn't listening.

"You're not taking over this dream again! My name's McIver, and you're going to listen to *me* for once!"

Mac snapped awake. Recognizing his living room about him and the couch beneath him, he stared at the ceiling and waited for his breathing to return to normal. What a weird dream. He'd chalk it up to one too many times of falling asleep watching Westerns, if it wasn't for the fact that he hadn't even had the TV on. And, with his latest projects, he had been far too busy to even watch a Western, let alone get enough sleep.

He was still staring upward when a small dark shape abruptly appeared in midair, hovered only a moment and then dropped to smack into his chest. He looked downward cautiously, half expecting some new "toy" of Murdoch's. Instead, what he found was far worse. Resting innocently on his chest was a wooden-handled pocket knife. Either the same pocket knife he had sent to Laura Wingate and which still should be in the Parapsychology Department at McGill University or one very close to it. He reached out slowly and turned the knife over, revealing the bullet embedded in the wood. "Aw, man ..."

Intent on the computer screen before her, Professor Laura Wingate reached out blindly as the phone rang and snagged it on the third ring. "This is — "

"Laura!" the voice on the other end interrupted.

"Mac!" Smiling as she leaned back from the screen, she unclipped the ornate earring resting against the receiver. Her gaze fell upon the carved storystick hanging on the nearest wall, a souvenir of their first meeting back when MacGyver was a field operative in an intelligence agency known as the DXS, and her smile widened. She hadn't heard from her friend since he had resigned from the Phoenix Foundation. "To what do I owe the pleasure?"

"Do you still have that pocket knife I sent you?"

Laura frowned. Mac's voice sounded strained. "Yeah, just a moment." Pushing her chair back from the computer, she wheeled over to her filing cabinet and opened a drawer. She lifted the lid of the wooden silk-lined box where the department kept objects suspected of being psychically active and hesitated. "Just a moment, Mac." She glanced again at the empty imprint in the silk where the knife had rested, then put the receiver down and started over toward the second desk in the large office.

Professor J.J. Stillman, the other faculty member of the Department of Parapsychology and owner of the second desk, chose that moment to enter, briefcase in hand. He caught up the motorcycle helmet from atop his filing cabinet. "Well, I'm outta here." Taller than his older colleague, he still might have been mistaken for a student, despite the tie he wore with his dark leather jacket.

Laura stopped in the center of the large office/classroom. "J.J., are you running any tests on the knife my friend sent me?"

The dark-haired man hesitated, confusion on his boyish face. "That apport from last year? No, why?"

"It's gone."

"You're sure? I don't think Celia would have — "

Laura merely gestured at the open drawer as she returned up the short flight of steps to her desk and the waiting receiver. "Mac, I don't know how to explain it — I know I saw it only last week — "

She heard a heartfelt sigh through the line. "It just turned up here, Laura."

"Turned up how, Mac?" She had a creeping feeling she already knew the answer. Across the office, J.J. raised his eyebrows and walked closer.

"Turned up as in dropping suddenly out of midair." MacGyver hesitated, and she was almost surprised at the sheepish note in his voice when he continued, "There've been a few other ... 'things' appearing. I'm sorry I didn't mention them sooner. Do you want me to come there or are you coming here?"

"Have these 'things' been appearing at the same location or just wherever you are?"

"Uh ... wherever I've been."

"You come here, then. And bring all of these 'things', you hear me?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"How soon will you be here?"

There was a pause from the other end. "I just need to finish wrapping up this project — probably by the end of the week."

Laura tried to think of the best words to convince her skeptical friend. "Mac, try and wrap it up faster. You might be in danger."

She half-expected him to laugh off the warning, but instead he replied, "Well, he did sound a bit upset. Talk to you later, Laura."

"He?" Laura repeated, but the connection had already been broken. She frowned at the receiver.

"He, who?" J.J. prodded.

Laura shook her head. "I guess we'll find out when Mac gets here." She eyed her colleague. Even after four years on the faculty, J.J. still managed to project an air of innocent bewilderment, which was excellent camouflage for his former occupation as a psychiatrist. Lately though, he seemed to think of himself as a detective — namely Sherlock Holmes — able to discern within moments everything about a person. She wondered what he would make of Mac, especially given MacGyver's former occupations of intelligence agent and, until recently, trouble-shooter for a research institute that negotiated peace treaties as readily as conducting environmental impact studies.

J.J. glanced at the imprint in the silk. "If an apport's involved, he'll be here sooner than he plans."

Laura pursed her lips thoughtfully as she slowly lowered the wooden lid and slid the drawer closed. Oh, she was definitely going to enjoy J.J.'s and Mac's meeting. But who, or what, could be sending MacGyver an apport? "If it was anyone else, I'd agree. But you can't push Mac. Not if he realizes he's being pushed. Don't get me wrong, once MacGyver knows the full story of whatever is wanted of him, he'll help. But dropping things on him is going to get his stubborn streak up."

Despite Laura's prediction, J.J. was surprised as the days of the week went by and her friend did not appear. But, since Laura was not bringing up her accurate reading of her friend, he did not comment on the fact that her long reddish hair had now returned to its natural black or on her rearranging of the tribal masks, wall hangings and the other cultural artifacts on the shelves around the large classroom/office. On Friday, he entered the office after his last class of the day and found a lanky, sandy-haired stranger napping on one of the couches. The man appeared to be a bit older than J.J., but could easily have passed as one of the university's non-traditional students, especially with his casual attire and longish hair. The purple and black travel bag at the foot of the couch, however, did not resemble either a backpack or a briefcase.

After a glance at the clock next to the office's double doors, J.J. calculated that Laura should be returning to the office within minutes. Deciding to leave the handling of her sleeping friend to her, he sat down at his desk to clear up the day's paperwork while he waited. He glanced again at the travel bag and, half-remembering Laura's instructions to her friend, took down a few pieces of equipment from the shelves around his desk and set them up. Then he returned to his paperwork.

Before too long, however, J.J. felt that he was being watched. Glancing quickly up at the empty doorway and then the clock beside it, he merely waved before returning his attention to the last paragraph of the student's paper. "Laura should be here in another minute. There's coffee by the sleep lab door, if you're interested."

There was no response. J.J. looked up as he finished marking the paper, but to all appearances the couch's occupant was sound asleep. And yet J.J. still felt that sensation of being watched. He glanced at the travel bag, suddenly aware of something different about its position. And hadn't it been closed the last he had looked?

Still watching the nylon bag, he eased his chair over to the instruments he had set out. What he saw there caught his attention immediately. The static electrical levels had jumped 23 per cent, while the temperature —

"Brrr. J.J., has maintenance turned on the air conditioning or has the dean decided to save money on heating?" Halfway down the steps inside the office doors, Laura stopped as he waved a warning and gestured at the travel bag. Catching sight of the couch and its waking occupant instead, she grinned broadly and continued on her way to her own desk. "J.J., I'd like you to meet MacGyver, an old friend of mine."

J.J. raised the hand not holding the printouts. "Hi. Laura said you 'fell' in on her when she was researching the creation myths of the tribes in Siberut?"

"From the sky," Laura clarified. "Spectacular landing. I'd say maybe a 4.8."

MacGyver rubbed his eyes, sleep grogginess still in his voice as he complained, "I told you, Laura, I jumped off a short cliff into the lake. I was being chased by — " he glanced at Laura's wide grin and an answering smile replaced his defensiveness — "never mind."

J.J. stifled his disappointment. He had been hoping for a brief glimpse into his colleague's sometimes mysterious past and now MacGyver was proving to be as evasive as Wingate. He glanced at the slim, casually dressed professor and could tell from the sparkle in her dark eyes that she knew he had been "fishing" as well.

The sandy-haired man swung his feet off the end of the blue rattan couch and sat up. He looked thoughtfully at the travel bag by his feet, and J.J. glanced hurriedly at the instruments. The temperature was slowly returning to normal, but the other readings were not.

Laura dropped her briefcase atop her desk and turned to face her friend. "So, Mac, are you going to explain who 'he' is?"

MacGyver was still frowning at the purple and black bag. "I could have sworn — "

"And you'd be right," J.J. agreed. "Laura, look at these."

As she started toward his desk and the sheaf of readings he was holding out, J.J. continued, "When I came in here, that bag was at the foot of the couch. Now, I didn't touch it, but it's moved. Laura, you felt the cold when you entered — "

Laura quickly scanned the printouts. "Did you sense a presence?" she asked softly, her back toward her friend.

J.J. nodded. She sighed and put the measurements down. "He's not going to like this."

"What? What cold?" MacGyver was on his feet. He stepped cautiously around the travel bag, almost as if he expected it to suddenly move and trip him, and J.J. wondered what it had been doing on his journey here. The blond looked at the instruments atop J.J.'s desk with a trained eye. "You've had a temperature drop, but a rise in static electricity — what's this? Ozone levels? Magnetic activity?" He turned to Laura. "Are you trying to tell me that a *ghost* has been dropping things on me?"

Laura smiled brightly at him. "Sure looks that way. We don't usually get such a strong reading from an apport, but you haven't told me yet how many 'things' you've brought with you." She leaned against the desk. "So, who's the mysterious 'he' who 'seemed a bit upset'? Have you seen anything more of him?"

He hesitated. "Well ..."

J.J. couldn't miss the man's reluctance. He decided to try a different approach from Laura's. "Have you been having trouble sleeping?"

MacGyver followed his glance at the couch. "No. No, not that. Had a late night wrapping things up and an early flight out." He took a deep breath, then glanced again at the printouts and seemed to draw strength from those. "I've been having a problem with mirrors."

"Mirrors?" Laura repeated, her eyebrows lifting.

"Yeah." He shrugged, still looking down at the recordings. "He looks sorta like me, Laura. But with a mustache and a cowboy hat ..."

Laura opened her mouth and closed it again when J.J. shook his head at her.

MacGyver continued, unaware of the exchange, "Anyhow, if the light's bad ... just for a second, I can see him, instead of me."

"And he's the one who gave you all of these ... 'things'?" J.J. asked, sensing that MacGyver was more comfortable with the nontechnical term.

"No, only one of them. Just the knife. The others — here, let me show you. They don't seem connected with him at all." Returning to the couch, he rummaged around in the opened bag and put three items atop the small table before the couches: a wooden-handled pocket knife, a circular Native American pendant on a cord, and another necklace that seemed mostly chain.

Laura made a small sound of surprise mixed with awe. "Definitely not the average apport. I've heard of stones, teeth, and jewels, but these — !" Using only the lightest touch of one fingertip, she checked both sides of the Native American pendant. J.J. could see where something — perhaps a large feather — had been removed, leaving only a fuzzy down feather several shades darker than her skin. "This looks a bit worse for wear."

MacGyver looked sheepish. "Yeah. The feather I used as a cotter pin to stop a bomb. But this — " Lifting up the other necklace, he held out a metal tube attached on both decorated ends to a chain. "I remember turning this into a dog whistle."

"A dog whistle?" J.J. repeated. "How — "

Laura waved him silent, and Mac continued. "And yet, when I found it in my pocket, it looked like this."

"It's not a dog whistle now," Laura commented. "What is it?"

"The king's amulet," Mac answered absently, turning the tube in his hands. He shook his head. "It's back the way it was when Arthur gave it to me."

"Arthur?" J.J. felt his jaw drop. "You don't mean ... as in 'King ...' As in the 'knights of the round table' King?"

Mac shrugged, looking embarrassed. "They said so. I wasn't too impressed with the knights — they took everything so seriously — "

J.J. stood up. "This is impossible. You've been given apports from three different time periods — "

"I think Standing Wolf might be from around the same time period as ... whatshisname," Mac inserted thoughtfully. "Maybe about thirty years difference."

" — three different cultures — " J.J. gestured at the tabletop. "What is the connection?"

"I think that's what Mac is here to find out," Laura said calmly. "Now, Mac, when you first sent me the knife, all you told me was that it had saved your life in a dream and when you woke up, it was on the floor beside you."

J.J. looked again at the bullet embedded in the wooden handle. He hadn't remembered hearing that portion. "Saved your life? Someone shot you in the dream?"

MacGyver nodded. "In the dream, Murdoc shot me — never mind, he's an old enemy — but the bullet hit the knife, as you see."

Laura lifted the knife thoughtfully. "I'd be curious to know if this knife saved the ghost's life as well."

J.J. shook his head in a vain attempt to get back on track. "Just tell us when you first encountered each object."

MacGyver and Laura exchanged glances, and Laura nodded firmly at her friend. Mac sighed dramatically. "Well, in order, in a dream, after I had been shot, and after I had been hit on the head by a flower box falling off a fire escape."

"Ow." J.J. winced in sympathy.

"Yeah, it takes a lot to get Mac's attention," Laura commented wryly. "He's got too strong a hold on reality."

MacGyver grimaced at her. "Whose side are you on?"

"First you send me a cryptic note and now, a whole year later, I find that you've been receiving more apports. Who do you think? The ghost's, of course. Poor thing must be frantic by now."

Mac seemed taken aback. "You're serious."

He turned to J.J. for support, but the other parapsychologist merely eyed him speculatively. "Hmm, if it's that hard, I'm not sure how well hypnosis will work."

"Nuh-uh, no hypnosis."

"We have to find out who is sending you these things, MacGyver," Laura said reasonably, "and why. Otherwise they'll just keep coming." She glanced at her colleague. "Directed dreaming?"

"It's a possibility," J.J. agreed slowly. He had the same reservations as to its effectiveness with her friend as he did about hypnosis, however.

"Why?" MacGyver jumped upon the idea. "You mean, there's a reason why these things are being sent?"

Laura sighed. "Mac, I told you when you first called me, apports often turn up in association with psychic quests. They usually only appear around powerful psychics, since it takes a great deal of energy for them to manifest. So, unless you're hiding some great ability — "

"Nope, not me," MacGyver was emphatic.

"Then someone is going to a great deal of trouble to ask for your help."

"But I helped them already!" He lifted the Native American pendant. "Standing Wolf showed me where to find the original map of the Lakota reservation and we were able to stop New Plains Electric from stringing high tension lines across sacred land." He put down one necklace and picked up the other. "Arthur asked me to stop Morgana from developing gunpowder — not that he knew what it was at the time, of course."

"Of course," Laura agreed. J.J. realized his mouth was open and shut it with an effort. He could tell Laura didn't know what was going on either, but she believed this MacGyver. Who was this guy, anyway? He spoke so matter-of-factly — almost apologetically — about being shot and stopping bombs that he sounded almost professional military or law enforcement. But stopping an electric company was more in line with an environmentalist. And where did the dog whistle come into this?

"Anyway, Merlin and I stopped her, rescued Cecilia — and I got shot at that point, so I still don't know if I managed to clear my ancestor's name or not." He stopped and looked at his audience. "I'm not crazy, J.J."

J.J. shut his open mouth again. Laura chuckled softly beside him. "We've heard much worse, Mac." She picked up the knife. "So, whom did you help with this?"

MacGyver turned, swinging his arms wide. "I thought myself. It was just a dream. I wasn't even me, I was some Civil War veteran — "

J.J. looked up when MacGyver didn't continue and saw the man staring at the darkened windows of the sleep lab. "Reflection," Laura whispered cryptically and got to her feet. J.J. felt the growing chill and hurried to his instruments.

"Do you see him, Laura?" MacGyver asked slowly, still watching the darkened window.

J.J. glanced at his colleague. Laura was more psychically sensitive than he was and had seen ghosts on several occasions. Counting on a positive answer, he knew exactly how MacGyver felt when Laura shook her head. "I see you, Mac. But that's okay; you're the one he wants to communicate with. What is he doing?"

MacGyver sagged, releasing his breath with a sigh. "He's gone. Probably wasn't there at all. Just my imagination."

J.J. returned his attention to his instruments and smiled. "Not unless your imagination can influence all these readings. I'd say something was there."

Laura turned back to the table. "And here, too."

J.J. joined them as Laura and MacGyver approached the table. The apports had moved. Now the knife rested atop the balled-up chain necklace while the circular pendant was a short distance away, its remaining feather pointed back at the knife.

Laura looked at her friend. "This mean anything to you?" At his wordless shrug, she shook her head. "One thing's for sure, we've got to find a way to communicate."

They discussed their options over carryout Chinese, due to Laura's reluctance to leave the apports in the office while they ate or to bring the objects along. "I see only two choices," J.J. said, pointing with his chopsticks for emphasis. "Hypnosis or directed dreaming."

"Three," MacGyver replied firmly, fishing out a chunk of tofu, "we leave it alone."

"You've tried that already, Mac," Laura disagreed. "And you've ended up with two more apports and a new reflection in mirrors. All the information we have in our database on apports indicates that it's dangerous to ignore them."

"Dangerous to whom?" Mac asked, his attention on the contents of his takeout box.

Laura decided to press the point. "To the receiver ... and to those close to him." Mac looked up, and Laura nodded. "We have to find out what is so important to this ... Civil War veteran that he is willing to waste so much energy to throw things at you." MacGyver winced, and she continued. "You said yourself that you couldn't find anything matching the events of your first dream using the resources of the Phoenix Foundation."

"Nothing here, either," chimed in Celia Powell, the department teaching assistant, from her position at Laura's terminal. "I logged into the USGS Geographic Names Service at the Yale Peabody Museum via Internet: no town or city called Serenity in Montana or any other Western or MidWestern state." The petite brunette squinted at the screen, then made a face and closed the search with a shake of her short cropped head. "I've also checked the roster of ghost towns — no Serenity."

"We can assume from the position of the apports that the three 'dreams' are definitely related," J.J. mused. Laura glanced at him, and J.J. shrugged slightly before continuing. "The positions of the chain necklace and the knife could mean that the Arthur dream and the Western one are directly connected, while there is some connection with the Native American dream. So, what elements are in all three dreams?"

Laura decided to play along. J.J. apparently was not going to push Mac into direct confrontation with the ghost, and she trusted her colleague's background in psychiatry. Maybe he was counting on Mac seeing for himself that there was no way they could work out the ghost's request without asking the spirit itself. "Mac, you were shot each time. Was it always the same place? The wound, I mean?"

MacGyver shook his head. "No. And I was shot for real when I met Standing Wolf, not in the dream."

"But you were shot in the Arthur and Western dreams?" J.J. queried. At the blond man's nod, he frowned thoughtfully. "Maybe that's an element from the ghost's background — that whole idea of gunpowder in the Middle Ages seems so unlikely. What are the other similarities?"

Mac put down his carton. "Wait a minute. The first dream was about control of water rights. The next ..." he pointed at the pendant — "the land was dying. You could feel it."

"And the third?" Laura prompted.

Mac nodded in growing understanding. "Morgana ruled a wasteland. Merlin said the land had been blighted by her experiments. That must be it."

"So, you have a ghost that's an environmentalist." Celia observed airily. "That still doesn't tell you what the problem is or where it is." She leaned back in her chair and opened her fortune cookie.

J.J. and Laura exchanged glances. J.J. lifted an eyebrow, and Laura shrugged in answer to his unasked question. "Mac," she started.

MacGyver fingered the circular design of the feathered pendant. "She's right. We *don't* know what the problem is. I guess the only way to find out what he wants is to talk to him."

"Of course I'm right," Celia answered smugly. "You going to eat that fortune cookie?"

Laura tossed the rejected packet Celia-ward, her attention more on the way MacGyver continued to finger the pendant. "Standing Wolf?" she asked.

MacGyver nodded. "He saved my life, Laura. If he's involved with this other spirit, then I owe it to him to listen."

"Right," J.J. began, "are we agreed then on — "

"Communication is the key?" Celia sputtered, reading the small slip of paper from MacGyver's fortune cookie. "This is one *pushy* ghost!"

"You got that right," Mac affirmed dryly.

Laura eyed her friend and was relieved to see that Celia's comment had sparked humor rather than his former stubbornness. "I'm sure it's just coincidence."

Mac rolled his eyes. "Yeah, right, like all of these other ... apports, huh?" He replaced the pendant atop the table. "So, what do we do?"

“This isn't exactly what I thought 'directed dreaming' meant," MacGyver complained a short time later. He struggled to get comfortable on the sleep lab bed but was careful, J.J. observed, not to dislodge the electrodes attached to his face and scalp. The parapsychologist waited until MacGyver settled, then attached a few more.

"We've gone a bit farther beyond what I helped the Foundation's dream research facility with," Laura explained calmly as she adjusted a monitor to a better viewing angle. "But you've still got the easy part."

All you have to do is sleep. *I'm* the one who has to attempt to match your brainwave patterns — and with your warped way of thinking, that could take all night!" She settled back into her chair and attached the remainder of her electrodes.

"Uh-huh. And the heart monitor and the — "

"Merely a precaution," J.J. soothed, although he could tell the man was not fearful, merely resigned. He added medical equipment to the list of items with which MacGyver was acquainted. Sometime he and Laura were going to have to have a *long* talk about her friend.

"Yeah, we almost lost J.J. once," Celia inserted, "when a stroke victim lost control of his dreams and — "

"Thank you, Celia," Laura interrupted smoothly. "I'm sure Mac will find it easier to sleep with that thought in mind."

"Oh," the teaching assistant caught on. "You won't have that problem with Laura," she reassured MacGyver. "She — "

"Celia," Laura warned again. "Is that Mac's pattern on the right-hand monitor?"

"Yes. Yours is coming up now on the left-hand. And the tone you have to match is — " she listened on the small headset, then carefully placed the set on Laura's head — "this."

"Good. Thank you. Now go help J.J. monitor. Still with me, Mac?"

MacGyver sighed as he stared at the ceiling. "I'm not sure this is going to work, Laura."

"Humor me. So, how many Western dreams have you had?"

"That I remember? Three now. I found the knife after the first one, but nothing happened with the second."

Watching from outside the sleep lab, J.J. raised his eyebrows at the faint indication of embarrassment on the monitors, but said nothing. He gestured at Laura through the sleep lab window to continue. MacGyver seemed to be calming as he talked.

Laura nodded, then returned her attention to her monitors. "You mentioned before that Standing Wolf saved your life when you were shot. How could he do that in a dream?"

"Larry Whitecloud said he met a spirit who showed him a vision of the future. Well, after I was shot, I met the same spirit, Standing Wolf, only before he showed me Whitecloud's vision, he removed the bullet. The necklace was part of his healing ceremony. When I woke up, the bullet had been removed and *someone* had patched me up. *And* the necklace was around my neck." Mac shrugged. "Now, maybe I just dreamed him from Larry Whitecloud's description, but I have my doubts."

J.J. looked questioningly at Celia, who was now standing watch over the instruments by his desk. She raised one thumb up. "Our friend is back," he announced softly into the headset.

Laura glanced at MacGyver, then back at her monitors. "Okay, Mac, I want you to think about the last time you were in that Western dream. When you enter REM sleep — "

"The dream stage," MacGyver added sleepily.

"Then I will try to match my brainwave pattern to yours and enter your dream. You don't have to do anything but picture being back there, back in the Old West."

J.J. only half-listened as Laura spoke. His monitors reported the same findings as Laura's brainwave pattern monitors: MacGyver was falling asleep, and at a pace which suggested the man might have been more sleep deprived than he had thought.

"Stage one sleep," Laura's voice said in his headset, "and he's already starting to enter stage two."

J.J. could feel the temperature drop as Laura reported on MacGyver's progress through the normal sleep cycles: stage three, stage four, back to stage three, stage two —

"Get ready," he warned. "His pulse rate suggests REM sleep might start any second."

"Beginning biofeedback."

J.J. watched as Laura relaxed, her dark eyes intent on the two brainwave patterns on the monitors. He glanced quickly at Celia and could tell from her nervousness that the apport-sender's presence was still being registered by the equipment. Returning his attention to his own monitors, he saw that MacGyver was indeed already in the dream stage of sleep. Laura had closed her eyes, and her pulse and breathing rate was almost a match for MacGyver's. There was nothing more J.J. could do but watch and wait.

MacGyver's pulse suddenly shot up, and J.J. looked up to see him sit up with a startled sound. "MacGyver?"

The man looked at him with eyes that at first did not see him, then shook his head as if to clear it. "Well, that didn't work."

"Laura?" J.J. glanced at Laura's readings. She was still at MacGyver's previous readings. "Laura, can you hear me?" he called into the headset.

“C an anyone hear me?" Laura turned slowly, studying the buildings lining the dusty street. One moment the street had been filled with busy passersby and riders and in the next, they had all vanished. Even the horses at the hitching posts were gone. The town seemed deserted. "MacGyver?"

In quick succession, she checked the saloon and the general store. Both empty. But the playing cards scattered atop the tables at the saloon and a slowly rocking chair at the general store suggested that the inhabitants had been there only a short while before. She frowned down at her jeans and African print vest. Her attire had not changed to fit in with the dream; that was a bad sign. Perhaps *she* was now controlling the dream. Laura shook her head. First she had to find MacGyver, then she could get some answers.

In the livery stable, a horsey murmur led her back through the gloom to a stall where a man was currying empty air. The profile was very familiar. "Mac! There you are!"

The man froze in mid-motion, then slowly turned toward her. Laura squinted at the face beneath the cowboy hat and bushy mustache. "You're not MacGyver."

"No, ma'am." The man turned back to his currying. "Neither are you."

Laura smiled. The voice wasn't MacGyver's either, but the pleasant politeness reminded her strongly of her friend. "You *do* look like him, though," she said, thinking to herself that the cavalry blue trousers with the yellow stripe and the non-matching brown shirt with a blue bandanna might not be quite MacGyver's style.

"That a fact." The man went through the motions of stepping to the other side of whatever he was currying and resuming his work.

With that clear a view, Laura could confirm her first impression. The face could almost be MacGyver's, but the features were slightly blurred in the way family members sometimes resemble each other. "Tell me, is there really a horse there?"

Startled, the man looked at her, then back at the space before him. A slight smile quirked the mustache. "Sometimes." A murmur came from the empty space, and his sleeve jerked as if something tugged at it.

Laura raised her eyebrow. Something was definitely wrong with this dream. Still, she had found the spirit MacGyver had described. Now if she could only find Mac. "My name's Laura Wingate. I'm — "

The man tipped his hat. "I'm right pleased to make the acquaintance of so charming a lady. Name's Mclver."

Laura paused at the compliment. "Ye-ah. I'm a friend of MacGyver's. In fact, I was supposed to meet him here."

Anger flashed swiftly across his face, and Mclver resumed his currying. "That a fact."

Realization dawned belatedly and Laura sighed. "He woke up, didn't he? No wonder this dream is so odd! You — you're maintaining these bits, aren't you? Why? What do you want?"

Mclver stopped currying and walked around the invisible horse toward her. The anger in his eyes made her back a step from the stall. "I want him to listen! Dad-blamed skittish — Every time I try to tell him, he takes control of the dream — *my* dream! — and changes everything!"

"If you'd tell me — " Laura tried.

Mclver shook his head, his anger gone as quickly as it had appeared. "He's kin — distant, but kin. There's a promise involved, a sacred trust I can't betray."

Laura sighed. "I'll try to respect your wishes in this, but Mac's going to need my help to talk to you. I might find out anyway."

Mclver tilted his head in the way MacGyver usually did. "Might. Might not. Just bring him here. Make him listen."

She shrugged. "I'll do my best. Making him listen will be another story. The hard part is keeping MacGyver's attention."

Mclver chuckled. "Some have said that about me, too." He raised his head, listening to something she couldn't hear. "You'd best go back. Folks are getting a mite worried about you."

"But — " she started when she suddenly saw past his shoulder. A gray transparent horse shook its mane and whickered at them. But beyond the horse, back in the shadows, was a wolf. A solid-seeming wolf, which opened its jaws in a wolf grin at her.

“**L**aura?" J.J. watched as the readings began to change. "Stay put, MacGyver. She's coming out of it." He abandoned the medical monitors and went to Laura's side as she roused. "Hey, Laura, you had us worried there for a few seconds. You okay?"

Laura blinked and focused on him. "Only a few seconds? It felt like I was there at least a half an hour."

"That's right," J.J. agreed, remembering his last experiences with directed dreaming. "Dream time is different. Where were you? Did you meet him?"

Laura nodded, then turned toward her friend. "You stood me up, MacGyver! What happened?"

The sandy-haired man spread his hands. "I don't — I *was* there, then I woke up."

"Well, we've got to find a way to keep you there long enough for him to talk to you. He won't tell me the problem. Says you're kin, and that makes you the only one he can tell."

"We're related?" MacGyver seemed stunned.

"We could always hit him over the head," Celia suggested from the lab doorway. "Hey, it's what worked on him before," she added as two heads turned in her direction. "Of course, I wouldn't recommend using a flower pot, but hey, we've got enough artifacts in this office alone to keep him in dreamland as long as you need."

J.J. and Laura exchanged long-suffering looks. MacGyver, however, didn't appear to have heard. "Laura, did he say his name? Was it ... M'lver?"

"Close. Mclver, I think he said. You know him?"

"Not him, but the name's close enough. My ancestor from Arthur's time was M'lver. That's probably why the amulet and the knife were put together." Lost in thought, he started to get up to pace, but was brought up short by the electrodes still connecting him to the monitors. He sat back down on the edge of the bed. "Laura, I want you to describe everything you saw — everything he said."

Laura obeyed, and J.J. decided that now was a good time to bring the apports and some of his more portable sensing equipment into the lab. Freed from equipment-watching duty, Celia went back to Laura's terminal and keyed in queries at a furious pace. He had everything moved just as Laura finished with a description of the wolf. J.J. wondered why she seemed to feel that that image was important when she asked, "Do you think it was sent by Standing Wolf?"

His colleague's instincts were once again accurate. In the startled look MacGyver directed at Laura, J.J. read enough to revise his estimation of the ghost shaman upward. MacGyver wasn't about to admit it, but *he* obviously thought the link between the wolf and Standing Wolf was stronger than a familiar and a shaman. J.J. shelved that thought away for further musing as MacGyver laid back on the bed with a grim, "Let's try it again."

Laura glanced back through the lab window at him, and J.J. merely raised one shoulder in response. "Okay, Mac," she agreed. "Just keep in mind that he's a lot like you. Now picture the town about you ..."

Once again MacGyver fell asleep with an ease that made J.J. uneasy. He and Laura waited as MacGyver's brainwave patterns charted his descent through the various sleep stages. "Coming back to stage two," Laura noted. "Starting biofeedback — "

"Wait," J.J. stopped her. "Just wait one moment."

"Why?" Laura queried. "Look, he's just entered REM — "

"And he's out again," J.J. finished.

Laura looked at her monitors and mumbled something he couldn't catch on his headset. "Pardon?" he asked.

" — he said he would try! Look, let's give it one more cycle, okay?"

They waited while the patterns swung back from the deep sleep of stage four up to stage two and REM sleep. "It's not working," Laura said finally. "He's barely *in* REM sleep before he's out again. What happened?"

J.J. scanned the readings and sighed. "I was afraid of this. This ghost has probably been haunting your friend right into a self-induced REM sleep deprivation. I think, Laura, your friend fears the loss of control. Hypnosis, dreams — "

"Commitments," Laura inserted.

J.J., realizing that he hadn't seen any rings on MacGyver's hands, suddenly understood. Laura smiled at him. "J.J., you're right. So, none of our usual techniques will work. How do we get those two to communicate?"

J.J. looked innocently at the ceiling. "There's always Celia's suggestion."

There was a satisfied "Ha!" from the direction of Laura's terminal. J.J. sighed and reminded himself that he hadn't spoken loudly enough for the teaching assistant to hear his remark to Laura. "What has your 'tinkering with the warp engines' brought up this time, Celia?"

"Him! The ghost, I mean. There's a McIver — I can't make out his first name — listed in Union records as serving with Sherman. Then he — must be the same person but no first name listed — turns up with the 9th Cavalry in Texas."

"And then?"

She sighed. "And then he vanishes. Can't even find a death record. And I was hoping this new genealogical directory would have it. I'll have to check the paper records at the library tomorrow."

J.J. glanced at his watch. If he wasn't monitoring two people, he would have said it was long past time to call it a night. He surveyed his other pieces of equipment and corrected himself. If he wasn't monitoring people *and* didn't have a ghost close enough to register, he would have said it. "Go on home," he told Celia. "Laura?" he said into the headset.

"Tell you what," she answered sleepily, "when Mac wakes up, give him a crash course on how to match brainwave patterns and have him try to enter *my* dreams. I'll stay here tonight."

"Our ghostly friend is still around," J.J. warned, discounting her first suggestion. They both knew how much training it had taken them to use this level of directed dreaming.

"Good. Maybe he'll drop this 'kin only' deal and tell us what we can do to help him." She yawned. "You doing okay, J.J.?"

"I'll watch the monitors. You be careful."

MacGyver found himself in darkness. "Laura?" He started forward, then stopped as he found himself facing a full-length mirror. His reflection shimmered, and his reflected clothing was suddenly that of the late 1860s: a mixture of cavalry uniform and civilian casualness. The face beneath the turned-up brim of the cowboy hat was a stranger's. The figure reached out and his hand emerged from the mirror's surface. "Wait! Come back!" the cowboy demanded as darkness again closed over the mirror. MacGyver slept on.

The pen fell from his hand and clattered onto the floor. J.J.'s head snapped up and he peered at the monitors. Time to get some caffeine. He rubbed his eyes wearily, half-remembering blurred dream images from the brief seconds they had been closed. One, that of a Native American with long black hair and a buckskin shirt, stood out most vividly. He walked over to the coffee pot and poured himself a cup, then glanced at the sleep lab window and almost dropped the cup. The Native American from his dream was looking back at him from the window.

J.J. looked behind himself at the empty office, then turned back to the window. He could see his reflection dimly, and could look through the window and see Laura and MacGyver still asleep. He rubbed his eyes again. No new reflections appeared in the window. He examined the level of coffee remaining. "I'd better make a second pot."

The circular pendant was in her hand, but Laura didn't remember picking it up. She suddenly realized that the missing feather had been replaced, the white patch at the base of the gray and black feather blazing against her dark skin.

The wolf sat and grinned at her, then abruptly vanished.

"I am honored," a voice said from behind her.

Laura turned and found herself facing a Native American with long black hair, wearing a decorated buckskin shirt and fringed breeches. She resisted the urge to comment on the stereotype, looking past it to the man. He was taller than her, but shorter than MacGyver or J.J. The lines of his face marked his age as anywhere between 45 and 60, but his dark eyes were ageless. "You're Standing Wolf?"

The man inclined his head. "Twice honored. That you bring this — " he pointed at the pendant — "with you and that you know my name. My fame must be spreading. First a white man and now you know of me." He beamed.

Laura warmed at his smile. Mac seemed to know the nicest ghosts. "MacGyver brought this to me. He needs to know why McIver is trying to contact him." She turned, looking about them. They seemed to be in a cave, or some type of enclosed space — the details blurred and shifted if she tried to look too closely. There was no sign of MacGyver. She turned back to Standing Wolf. "Can you help?"

He shrugged, a string of beads and feathers appearing and disappearing in his loose hair. "Ay-a. We all must help for them to succeed. Before the danger increases. Come, I will show you what you need to see."

She followed him deeper into the cave. As they walked it was no longer a cave, but a building. A military installation, judging from the signs Laura could dimly distinguish on the walls. And yet, she still had an impression that this installation was underground.

They stopped at last in a large room. Laura squinted at a figure in the center of the room. "That's a chemical warfare suit." She looked closer at the shapes lining the walls. "Those are artillery shells. Standing Wolf — "

Her companion was gone. Instead, a white and gray wolf nosed at the base of the closest row and suddenly backed away, shaking its head and sneezing as if to dislodge an unpleasant scent. Laura watched as a red-glowing cloud oozed forward after the wolf and suddenly realized that those weren't just artillery shells. They were nerve gas containers! She backed away, frantically running through a mental list of nerve and mustard gases and symptoms of exposure. She suddenly found it hard to breathe. Difficulty in breathing was the first symptom of the nerve agent GB, reported the clinical side of her brain, followed by cramps, drooling, vomiting, and death within minutes due to respiratory failure as the victim loses control over all muscles, voluntary and involuntary.

She backed into a solid body and turned to find Standing Wolf behind her. The weapons storage had vanished from around them, and she took a deep breath as she realized from the night sky above that they were outside.

"Where are we? How did we get outside?"

"I took a short cut," Standing Wolf said with a smile. He looked off to his right, and Laura saw a large mountainous shape, dark against the starry night sky, looming in the near distance. Her attempts to make out any details were abandoned as soon as she realized that the red cloud was oozing down the sides in several streams.

Standing Wolf is not great at telling you the straight story," MacGyver explained the next morning. "He likes to put things in symbols and let you figure things out for yourself." He sprang up from his perch on the bottom of the flight of steps leading up to Laura's desk and began to pace back and forth in the area in front of the couches, from the farther steps leading to her desk to the steps to J.J.'s desk and back.

Laura lowered her coffee cup, relieved to find that she was not the only one dissatisfied with the shaman. "So you don't think there's a leak in the weapons storage facility."

Mac paused in his pacing long enough to allow Celia off Laura's steps. The teaching assistant placed a large box of doughnuts on the table in front of the couches and, settling herself on the couch next to Laura, opened the lid with a flourish.

Laura and J.J. were still watching MacGyver, whose path now went from the farther steps to the sleep lab. "Not if he also showed you the outside," MacGyver continued. "He might be trying to tell us that there will be problems with the incineration process."

"Incineration?" Celia asked, passing the doughnut box to Laura.

"Something Mac started to tell us when you came in," Laura said absently before noticing the doughnuts. She hesitated between a plain glazed and a walnut frosted.

J.J. leaned over and snagged a cherry filled before replying. "The U.S. Army has decided on incineration to destroy most of its old chemical weapons." He stepped unhurriedly out of Mac's path and retreated to the coffee pot. "But I thought that only two facilities were in operation right now, the JACADS in the Pacific and now the Tooele Army Depot near Salt Lake City."

MacGyver nodded. "The weapons are stockpiled at eight sites around the country and one in the Pacific, where they will — by the terms of the Chemical Weapons agreement — be destroyed within the next seven years. I don't remember Montana being one of the sites."

Laura hated to raise the point. "Are we even sure this place is in Montana? McIver did say you changed things."

Celia looked relieved. "No wonder we can't find any computerized records of Serenity — not if where it was is now next to an Army storage facility."

MacGyver stopped and thought a moment, his brown eyes looking unseeingly at the wall next to him filled with J.J.'s equipment-laden shelves. Finally he shook his head. "I'm sure it's Montana."

"Easy enough for you to check," Laura commented, waving her doughnut, "with your connections."

MacGyver hesitated. "I don't work for the Phoenix Foundation anymore."

Laura wasn't about to relent. "But I bet you do freelance. And something like this would definitely interest the Foundation." Out of the corner of her eye, she noticed J.J.'s reaction to the name and smiled to herself. She had noticed her colleague's growing puzzlement of MacGyver's wide range of knowledge. J.J. had contacts within the U.S. Army from his psychiatry days; he would know of the Phoenix Foundation from them.

MacGyver sighed. "Yeah, if we had something to go on. What am I supposed to tell them — there *may* be a tenth site in Montana that *may* have problems with an incinerator that *may* have been constructed ahead of schedule? They're going to want more proof than a few visions. They're going to want something they can document."

"Well, you can tell them that you're going to investigate it — just as soon as they give you the location in Montana."

"And if they don't have the location?"

"You're going to have to have a talk with your ancestor."

MacGyver winced. "I'll call the Foundation." He gave her his best impersonation of a hurt puppy dog as he turned toward the phone on Laura's desk.

J.J. leaned over the back of the couch. "You're mean, Laura."

"You knew that."

"Yep." J.J. tilted his head at her friend. "So did he. Guess he prefers being pushed around by you than by the ghost."

Laura stifled a grin. Trust J.J. "You sensed me weakening there, huh?"

"Just a bit."

Celia sighed. "Me, too. Such sad brown eyes ..." She fell silent, and Laura and J.J. turned in unison to look at her as she gazed after MacGyver. She suddenly shook herself. "Oh well, he's too old. So," she continued brightly, "want me to see if the library has listings of the land-deed records for Montana?"

"Please," Laura said hurriedly. She looked after the TA as the young woman left. "Sometimes I wonder about her."

J.J. choked back his reply as MacGyver returned with his report. "The Foundation hasn't heard of a site outside of the nine I know of — and the Army is just starting the test phase at Tooele — it's not planned to be fully operational until 1994. Until then, no outside agencies allowed."

"Uh-oh," J.J. replied. "Sounds like a touchy situation."

"Well, after the National Academy of Sciences released its report this summer on the alternatives to incineration, activist groups have been watching all of the sites."

"Even touchier," J.J. agreed.

"So it's entirely possible that there *may* be another site, out of the public eye," Laura argued.

"And how are we supposed to find it — play Ouija board with a map of Montana and hope that — " MacGyver froze as they all heard a solid "thwunk." "Aw, man ..."

Laura got to her feet. "My desk — Celia left the maps there when she brought the doughnuts."

"Well," J.J. commented, as they gathered at the desktop, "he's nothing if not persistent." The pocket knife's blade had been opened and it now stood point-down through the photocopy of the 1865 map of Montana, pinning the rest of the stack to the blotter.

MacGyver caught up the phone and pressed "redial." "I'll check and see if the Foundation knows of anything at that — " He stopped, the receiver at his ear.

Laura looked up from checking underneath the blotter in time to see an odd expression cross his face. "Mac?"

MacGyver looked curiously at the receiver. "I just heard a voice saying 'Look up — "' He froze, looking toward the sleep lab window.

Laura followed the direction of his stare. "J.J.!" she whispered fiercely.

J.J. looked up. "Hey, didn't we leave the lights on in there? What? Laura? Do you see something?"

Laura followed MacGyver down the steps toward the window of the darkened sleep lab, keeping her eyes on the dim figure that waited within the glass. He seemed to have cleaned up for the occasion, the brown shirt no longer sweat-stained, the blue bandanna crisp. Even the hat looked cleaner. "Took your time about seeing me," Mclver commented as they approached. He tipped his battered hat. "Good to see you again, Miss Laura."

"Good to see you, too, Mclver," Laura responded.

MacGyver looked from one to the other. "What — Is he saying something, Laura?"

Mclver whipped the hat from his head and beat it against his leg. "Dagnabit! He is the stubbornest — "

"He says you're stubborn," Laura relayed.

"Looks like he's saying more than that," MacGyver replied as Mclver slammed his hat back on his head and glared at his distant relation, talking all the while.

" — bad enough he had to change my first warning, but when I tried again, he — " the ghost sputtered — "he had to bring his ladyfriends into it!"

"Something about bringing your girlfriends into his last warning," Laura transmitted with a straight face.

"Hey, I've got problems in my life, too!" MacGyver protested. He looked closer. "Laura, he's fading."

"All right, calm down, the both of you!" Laura ordered. She looked swiftly around for the apports, caught up the circular pendant, and pressed it into MacGyver's hand. "Sit down and try to relax."

"But he — "

"Do it!" She turned to the ghost, who was indeed barely visible. "You calm down, too. You're not going to help matters by fading out before you tell him the problem."

"Tell him? How am I going to tell him? He can't hear me!"

"We're working on it."

She turned back to MacGyver. "Can you still see him?"

MacGyver shrugged. "Kinda."

"Okay. Relax. Will yourself to see him. Don't deny him."

Mac grinned. "Hey, you see him, too. Kinda hard to believe we're *both* crazy." He glanced at Mclver. "Sorry. Hi. I hear we're related?"

Mclver crossed his arms and studied him.

"Don't say something I'll refuse to repeat," Laura warned the spirit. She turned to her colleague. "J.J.?"

He raised his hands in denial. "Don't look at me. You're the one who's been able to see the ghosts, remember? The kid's father on the bridge? The witch-burning judge?"

"Don't remind me. I almost got burned at the stake." She thought a moment, realizing that MacGyver would reject any attempt at stabilizing the link through hypnosis. "J.J., bring me the map and the other apport."

He obeyed, adding softly as he handed her the items, "You're doing fine. Give them a way where they'll both feel they're in control and they'll work together."

She nodded and headed back. Placing the map on one of the tables before the window, she handed MacGyver the chain necklace. "Here, put this on. It can't hurt," she added as he eyed it dubiously. He nodded and obeyed, then put the pendant necklace on as well.

Mclver nodded approvingly. She glanced at him as she opened the road atlas J.J. had thoughtfully included with the map. "I don't know if you can see this from there," she started, then stopped as Mclver stepped out of the window and moved closer to the counter. He was more transparent than he had been in the glass, but at least he was visible. And, from a quick look aside, she could tell MacGyver could still see him as well.

She quickly scanned the road atlas, looking for the corresponding point from the 1865 map. She deliberately kept still as MacGyver joined her, but noticed that he was keeping her between himself and Mclver. Mac quickly compared the two maps, then stabbed a long finger at a point in an unlabelled spot in the mountains. "There. That seems to be the place." He looked closer at the road map, a puzzled note in his voice. "It seems to be in between the Gallatin National Forest and the Absaroka Beartooth Wilderness. But, there's no rail line — I remember a railroad — no Stoney Creek, not even the spring."

"Two towns with 'spring' in the name nearby, though," Laura commented. "It's pretty close to Yellowstone for what we think it is." She wondered why MacGyver was so surprised. Had the dreams seemed that real? If so, she was going to have to grill him for more details; there was no telling what item — overlooked by him — might be important.

She glanced up at Mclver and found that he seemed to be equally taken aback. His surprise was to be expected, though. Most ghosts weren't aware of the passage of time or changes after their deaths.

Mclver shook his head, muttering, "Bozeman. Not the Bozer brothers ..."

She cleared her throat and got their attention. "Umm, you wanted to tell him something?" she reminded Mclver.

The mustache twitched in a scowl. "No offense, Miss Laura, but I gave my word. I can't be saying it to you."

She groaned. "It's the kin thing again," she explained to MacGyver. "He can't tell me to tell you since I'm not family."

A similar scowl appeared on Mac's face. "Well, you can just go find someone else to help you, then."

They looked so much alike at that moment that Laura wanted to laugh. She opted for a different approach to defuse the situation. "Okay, let's put that aside for now. From what Standing Wolf showed me last night, we think we're dealing with a chemical weapons incinerator. Is that right?"

"If you mean cannon shells filled with poison, then I reckon we're talking about the same things," Mclver replied slowly. He tilted his head. "Standing Wolf spoke to you?"

Laura blinked. "Well?" MacGyver asked.

Laura shook her head. "Slight differences in terms, but it sounds like we agree." She turned back to the veteran. "Yes, Standing Wolf spoke to me." She was beginning to feel insulted. Why was Mclver surprised? Did he think that no other spirits could talk to her because she "wasn't family"? She decided to use that emotion. "Didn't you know? Don't you spirits talk to each other?"

"Uh, Laura?" J.J. tried.

Mclver hesitated, and Laura decided to go all out. "Pardon my asking, but what brings you into this? This sounds like a simple enough problem — MacGyver would probably be in on this if he still worked for the Foundation — "

"I was when the dreams started," MacGyver reminded her.

" — but why you? What is so important that you have to throw things at Mac to get his attention and manifest yourself — no mean feat in terms of psychic energy — in order to talk to him? Is there a leak of these poisons?"

"Some, but it's under control for now." Mclver seemed relieved to have a question he could answer.

"Whose control?"

"What? *Is* there a leak?" MacGyver inserted.

"Laura!" J.J. insisted.

"Excuse me," she murmured and turned away from the counter. She was grinning as she neared J.J.'s desk, but she carefully kept her back turned to MacGyver. "So, are they talking to each other yet?"

J.J. looked past her. "I can only see MacGyver. He looks like he's talking, but — No, he still doesn't seem to be able to hear."

"Damn. I was hoping I would be annoying enough that Mclver would try harder."

J.J. smiled. "You had me fooled."

"J.J., I'm surprised at you." She grinned, then shrugged. "That means the block is on Mac's side still."

"You mean, MacGyver can't hear because he doesn't want to hear?"

"You tell me; you're the one who told me he fears loss of control." She looked back at MacGyver and Mclver and saw that there were definitely still communication problems. She sighed. "I hate wasting a good mad. Mclver's good, though. I couldn't shake him into telling his secret."

"Maybe it's gold," J.J. suggested. He lifted one of the books Celia had retrieved from the library. "The 1860s and '70s were times of gold strikes in the Montana Territory." They looked at each other uneasily, and Laura could see her colleague also remembered the smoke ghost they had found guarding a gold hoard. They had barely escaped with their lives on that case.

Laura shuddered. "I hope not. He doesn't strike me as a crazed prospector type, though." She studied the ghost. "Looks like we'll have to check out that site."

"We'll?" J.J. repeated.

"Hey, you've met Standing Wolf, too. Want him in your dreams for the next two years?"

"Two years?" J.J. struggled to bring his voice back down. "Uh, no, if it's all the same to you."

"Well, that's how long it took Mac to bring me all the apports — it will probably take that long before he and Mclver can talk together. So, think you can cover my classes okay?"

"I probably should come along as the only person *not* under ghostly influence," J.J. muttered, glancing toward the sleep lab window, "but I have a feeling MacGyver will feel outnumbered as it is."

She grinned at his rueful nod, then straightened her vest and went back to the one-sided conversation.

Only it had deteriorated into no conversation at all. Mustache and eyebrows scowling fiercely, Mclver stood with crossed arms while MacGyver was in the process of moving all the maps up to her desk. "I need to use your phone," he explained absently. "I'm sure I've been there before — but I don't think it was an Army facility, at least, not then. I wish I could remember ..." He caught up her phone, still beeping plaintively from when he had dropped it, broke the connection, then redialed.

Laura walked over to the stiff-backed ghost. "He still can't hear you?" she asked gently.

"Nope."

She shrugged off the rebuff. "Well, at least we've got him headed in the right direction."
"Yep."

She stifled a smile. If ever two people were more alike ... She sighed dramatically. "Maybe we'd get better results if we hit him over the head?"

The mustache twitched.

"Ah, you smiled. I saw you!" She leaned against the counter. "C'mon, I would have thought that any relative of *his* would have had at least five different plans after yelling at him failed." She nodded in Mac's direction. "What about the phone? It worked before."

"I've been trying," Mclver muttered through his mustache.

She drummed her fingers against the counter in thought, then started up the steps to join MacGyver at her desk. He looked up at her approach, placing one hand over the mouthpiece of the receiver. "It's all set. I'm booked on an afternoon flight and —"

"What about *my* ticket?" Laura interrupted.

MacGyver shook his head. "I —"

"— work better alone," she completed. "Yes, Mac, I know, and ordinarily I'd agree with you. But you need me to come with you." She glanced from one to the other, Mclver having followed her up the steps. "Unless you *want* to waste time playing charades ..."

MacGyver uncovered the mouthpiece. "Uh, Pete, can you make that *two* tickets?"

Laura's phone was ringing as J.J., refreshed from a trip home for a quick nap and a shower, re-entered the office in the early evening. He had only planned to stop in the office long enough to record his impressions of the previous night's events before he forgot the finer details, so he hoped whatever student was calling didn't have a long list of problems with an assignment. He frowned at Laura's humming terminal as he lifted the receiver.

Laura and MacGyver had left for the airport before he had gone home, and he distinctly remembered Laura closing up her files. Celia might have turned the computer back on, but it wasn't like the teaching assistant to lock up the office and leave computers on.

"I'm trying to reach MacGyver," a harried voice stated from the receiver before he had a chance to speak.

"This is Professor Stillman," J.J. responded. "I'm afraid MacGyver has left already." And that was another curiosity about the fellow, he added mentally, no first name. Still, 'J.J.' wasn't a true first name either.

"Sorry, wrong phrasing," the voice apologized. "A number of things have come up and I need to reach MacGyver. Does Professor Wingate have a mobile phone?"

"No, I'm afraid not." J.J. was distracted by movement in the darkened sleep lab window. The Native American — Standing Wolf, he corrected himself — stood there.

A sigh came over the line. "I'll have to try Bozeman. Look, this is Peter Thornton. If MacGyver tries to contact you —"

Standing Wolf gestured as J.J. peered at the faint image. The spirit seemed to be pointing at something behind J.J.

" — warn him — " Thornton continued.

J.J. started to turn in the direction Standing Wolf indicated and something bit the side of his neck. Suddenly weak-kneed, he fell forward, clutching at the chair but only succeeded in overturning it. He distantly heard the clatter of the falling chair and the voice on the receiver.

" — that we've had a response to his — Professor Stillman?"

He twisted enough as he hit the floor to dimly see the man who had injected him. Another shape was bending over the keyboard to Laura's computer. Then reality shut down.

The cowboy reached out of the mirror toward him, and MacGyver snapped awake. He re-oriented himself, glancing around the plane's interior while his breathing slowed. In the seat beside him, Laura was still reading the articles Celia had tracked down for her. He looked closer and, recognizing the page, decided he had probably only dropped into sleep for a second or two. "Those rows of storage bunkers could almost look like mountains," he suggested.

"If you were very, very short," Laura replied, rolling her eyes in his direction.

"They're pyramid-shaped," he persisted.

"Only if you look at them from the front. If you're suggesting that these are what I saw in my dream, then I'd have to say," she held up the picture, turned it in several directions, squinted, "no." She sighed and tapped the magazine picture. "But these are the storage bunkers at Tooele; they're long and mostly underground because they've got the room for that in the desert. Maybe the bunkers where we're heading are built above ground." She turned the page and nodded, jabbing at a picture of two men in hazardous material suits standing at the end of two long rows of 155 mm artillery projectiles. "This I remember from the dream." She read part of the caption aloud, "A mere whiff of the deadly poison is designed to kill a human being within a minute'."

"You can do a lot in a minute," he reassured her, "and I'll make sure we'll have more time than that."

“Just a minute, he's coming 'round."

J.J. blearily opened his eyes and stared up at the dim figures surrounding him. His mouth was dry -- aftereffect of some drug, one part of his mind recognized — and he could feel a tight squeeze around his upper arm — identified belatedly as a blood pressure cuff as his vision cleared and he recognized the paramedic/fire department uniform on one of the figures.

He blinked and slowly recognized Celia as another of the figures. "You look awful," she observed with a frown.

"Thanks so much," he replied hoarsely. He struggled to sit up and the paramedic helped him silently as Celia continued.

"I was worried. We couldn't get you to respond at all. That nice Mr. Thornton explained that they were probably planning to question you ,"

"Thornton?" he interrupted. "I was talking to a Peter Thornton right before I — " He faltered, glancing at the empty window of the sleep lab.

"He called us," one of the two people in Security T-shirts inserted helpfully. "Said he heard you being attacked."

"And they called me," Celia added, smoothly taking back the conversation. "Anyhow, Thornton suggested what the paramedic should use and it worked."

J.J. fastened his gaze on the large "Security" on the closer T-shirt, still feeling detached from his body as the paramedic rechecked his vital signs. "Did you catch them?"

"No. There was no one around when we entered the office — just you on the floor."

"They must have left when they heard you coming. There were two of them — I didn't see them until — " he lifted a hand to his neck, remembering.

The paramedic checked the spot. "Definite sign that something was injected there."

"Fast-acting, whatever it was," J.J. said ruefully. "I had enough time to see someone behind me and another one at the terminal, and then I was out."

The Security woman by the door nodded, lifting her walkie-talkie. "We'll recheck the building. The other patrols will watch for any suspicious strangers on campus. You'll stop by the office later so we can make out the report? You, too," she added to the paramedic. At their nods, the team departed.

"You'll feel out of it for awhile," the paramedic observed, putting away his equipment, "so don't try to do anything strenuous."

"Not a problem," Celia commented with a bright smile as the paramedic left. She looked down the hallway, then closed the office door. "So, do you think this is connected with what MacGyver was investigating? Mr. Thornton did. Now, why would the head of a privately funded research institute with concerns in environmental studies, conservation efforts, and diplomatic relations know so much about espionage?" He must have looked blankly at her, because she then added, "Phoenix Foundation. It has a Gopher site."

J.J. shook his head. Either he was still drugged or Celia was making less sense than usual. "I'll need to talk to Thornton. Laura needs to be warned."

Celia raised a hand. "Mr. Thornton says he'll handle that. He *does* want to talk to you, when you're making sense." She frowned, studying him. "You still look awful."

"I feel worse. How did they know to come here? Why?" He rubbed the side of his neck, convinced he could feel a welt rising there.

"Well, I *had* been using Gopher a lot. I might have hit a site they're watching." She righted the chair before Laura's terminal, studying the keyboard. "They could have tracked this terminal down by its IP address." She slid into the chair, her fingers moving briskly over the keyboard. "They'd have to be pretty good to do that ... Uh-oh."

J.J. straightened. Celia *never* used that tone of voice unless it was a major disaster , and Celia classified very few things as a disaster. "What 'uh-oh'? Is there something wrong with the database?" He felt a sinking feeling in his stomach. Years of work, all their cases, research on psychic and paranormal

occurrences in various cultures of the world , anything happening to that database would indeed classify as a major disaster.

Celia stared at the screen, her face paling then flushing with anger. She slowly looked at J.J. "We've got a virus."

"A virus?" J.J. repeated. "How can you tell?"

The teaching assistant looked disgustedly at him. "I ran a mem command and found problems in the memory. I didn't trigger it, if that's what you're implying."

"I'm sorry, I didn't mean to imply anything. Can you fix it?"

"Hey, I'm good, but I'm not going to risk this database. If they broke in here just to put a virus in, that virus is probably big trouble." The TA snatched up the phone beside the terminal. "I'm calling in the big guns." She punched in a number. "Corey, Celia. Got a challenge for you, Mr. LaForge."

The clocks at Gallatin Field in Bozeman said 9:20 pm by the time they disembarked, but, what with time zone changes, plane changes, and several interrupted naps during layovers and flights, it felt later. Even so, MacGyver snapped wide awake when he read the message waiting for him at the car rental desk. Laura peered at the slip of paper. "Company. Call me. Pete.' Well, he's being a bit cryptic." She hitched her thumb toward the nearest phone. "Shall we call in?"

Mac shook his head, carefully looking around without seeming obvious. "We'll find another, just in case we're being watched here. C'mon."

"You got all that from that message? I'm impressed."

Mac glanced at the exit to the parking lot, then turned and started deeper into the terminal, Laura at his heels. She caught up with him when he stopped to choose the next direction. "Spy stuff," she commented, adjusting her grip on her bag. "I thought you gave it up when you left the DXS."

MacGyver explained patiently, stifling a growing concern. "Pete's ex-DXS, yes, just like I am, but he wouldn't expect me to remember code words from that long ago. And Pete wouldn't leave a message for me unless something serious had happened."

"So ... the message is exactly that. We should expect company — bad company — and call him for more details. Well, why not call back there? Best way to get lost is in a crowd."

Mac spotted another phone sign and started for it. "Someone could have been waiting for us at the rental desk or bugged the phones there. I just want to chose one at random — "

"And be totally unpredictable. Okay, I can get with that program. Is this bank of phones far enough away? I'll stand guard."

MacGyver grinned at her and dialed. The phone was snatched up quickly at the other end as if Pete had been waiting for his call. Knowing Pete, MacGyver thought he probably had. "Mac! Thank goodness you called. We've got problems."

“I hate problems like this," Celia complained.

J.J., finding that the dry taste in his mouth had vanished after the sixth cup of coffee, could agree with her. He leaned back on the couch and studied the ceiling, probing tentatively at the blank in his memory.

Had the intruders been able to interrogate him? Or had Security reached the office before they had had a chance to start?

The campus computer wizard, highly recommended by Corey, merely tsked as he worked at the keyboard. "It's not that big a deal, as long as you make backups. You *did* run a backup recently, didn't you?" When Celia remained silent, he looked at her, then nodded. "O-kay, it *is* a big deal."

"Celia — " J.J. inquired.

"Look, it was late last night and we had that spook around, and there wasn't time!" She crossed her arms and scowled at the infected terminal. "Who *were* those guys?"

All in all, MacGyver thought Laura was handling the news about the raid on her department rather well. She hadn't said a word as they crossed the parking lot, and her brisk stride seemed to indicate that any would-be mugger would be a fool to cross her — the anger was there, just waiting to be released. It was still there as they found the rental car — a Jeep Grand Cherokee — the Foundation had reserved for them.

Laura glanced past him at the terminal. "So, what's the plan? It's too dark to hunt this place up now."

MacGyver stowed his bag in the back seat and checked that the items he had requested — two Army standard issue chemical weapons protection kits, the same that workers at the Tooele Chemical Disposal Facility considered part of their uniform — were hidden inside. He showed the green canvas bags silently to Laura as she reluctantly tore her gaze away from the sight of the nearby mountains long enough to toss her own bag inside. She raised her eyebrows as he also uncovered maps of the area with details the Foundation thought important and two small cameras — one regular and one with nightvision — as well. "Good people," she commented softly.

He smiled, knowing that the maps and cameras had to be Pete's touch. "The best." He brought the maps with him into the driver's seat. "The plan? Try and get some rest and then start looking for this place as soon as it's light." He started the engine, and released a mental sigh of relief when the engine caught and nothing else happened.

Laura didn't seem to notice his momentary hesitation, intent instead on buckling in, locating and turning on the maplight and opening the maps. "Same old routine, huh, Mac? Check as much of the site possible beforehand, then break in at the best possible time at night." She sighed. "I wish we could stop at Montana State University and look at their resources, but I'm afraid we'd find the same thing that Celia did going in through Gopher — nothing in the computerized records and anything on paper either stolen or destroyed in some convenient fire."

MacGyver checked out of old habit for anyone following them as he pulled out of the parking lot. A dark green Ford changed lanes to take the same exit. "The Foundation added more detail on the survey map."

"Got it." She studied the marked area closely. "Not many roads at all — I can't see them transporting what Standing Wolf showed me on some of these dirt trails."

"Depends on how long ago the site was constructed. If you have enough time, you can hide almost anything. There was a fire in that national forest in 1988 — that could be when they brought in the construction equipment. The new growth would have covered any signs by now. I figure we'll probably have to leave the Jeep at some point and walk."

"Lugging those green bags as well. How heavy are they?"

"Light. You can either strap it to your waist or carry it over your shoulder. But I do recommend bringing it. It contains either the Army's standard issue chemical weapons protection kit, or the Foundation's version of it. An M9 gas mask and three small Mark I self-injecting canister kits designed to treat the effects of

nerve gas. Tooele has three types of nerve gas, and so might this site." He grinned lopsidedly at her. "I didn't want to take the chance we couldn't 'find' any spare kits."

"Thank you! You know, between Standing Wolf's visions and McIver's cryptic comments, I'm getting more than a little worried about what we might find out there."

"That's assuming our guide will show up."

"Hey, McIver promised to guide us past any possible guards. If nothing else, he *is* a man of his word."

He scowled at the reminder. "I just wish I knew what his big secret is."

"You and me both." Hearing her tone of voice, Mac glanced away from the road briefly and caught her studying him. "J.J. thinks it might be gold," she admitted finally.

"McIver's secret?" He thought about the suggestion, examining what he remembered of his dreams. Gold strikes had been mentioned in both, but he didn't remember much importance being placed on them. He finally shook his head. "I hope not. I've had enough of treasure hunts."

Laura straightened. "Then how about a food hunt? That grocery looks like it's open."

Mac checked the rearview mirror for any possible "tails." "You're hungry now? It must be at least midnight Toronto time."

She closed the maps. "I'm thinking about later; I'll bet you didn't plan on bringing any food along."

"We can travel lighter if we don't carry anything — "

" — and just scavenge along the way, yes, I know, Mac. Ordinarily I'd agree, but I'm not going to snack on anything growing near where I suspect a chemical dump."

"Good point."

“**A**nd *he* said," the man in the next row over in the grocery store parking lot disagreed loudly with his companions, "that Yellowstone had been invaded by UN troops, and you can tell they're still there."

Mac strained to hear the reply, but it was drowned out by the rattle and squeaks as the three men climbed into their pickup and drove off. He glanced at Laura, who raised her eyebrows in a "did I hear that right?" manner. He nodded ruefully and unlocked the car.

Laura slid her small sack of groceries into the back seat. "And I had originally thought you and Pete were being paranoid ..."

MacGyver studied a dark green Ford parked in the next row as he put his sack of groceries on the floor behind his seat. He was only vaguely aware of Laura saying something, his attention more on the area around them as he slid behind the wheel, buckled in and started the engine. He only relaxed when they exited the lot and the Ford stayed in place.

Laura leaned back. "I know this is hard for you, Mac, but maybe if you let go and accept McIver for what he is rather than analyzing him, he'll be able to tell you his big secret himself."

MacGyver scrambled to pick up the thread of the conversation, thankful that she couldn't see his face in the dark. "You're serious about this — you really think that I'm the reason why I can't hear him?" He shook his head. "So that's why J.J. kept trying to teach me some new meditation exercise."

Laura made an amused sound, but her voice was serious as she continued. "We've seen similar situations — in fact in one case everyone in the family could see and hear their family ghost — all except for the wife. She kept insisting that everything the spirit broke — and that everyone including J.J. and myself could see the ghost was throwing about — was either being broken by her son or her father-in-law, who was confined to a wheelchair. I'm just glad you can see Mclver; it's a good first step."

He thought about that for a few stoplights, then finally asked, "What happened? To that family?" He glanced over when there was no reply and saw that Laura was asleep. He went back to thinking and planning as the city slipped by outside the car.

Wisps of smoke drifted around her as her attention focused on the small fire in the center of the smoothed circle of earth. She was seated crosslegged on the ground, and drumbeats echoed through her bones. Standing Wolf knelt before the person next to her, ritually painting her neighbor's face with smooth, even strokes. He came to her, and she sat still as he placed a bowl between them. Smoke rose from the burning herbs within. His lips moved soundlessly in a chant that she could almost place from the ceremonies she had attended, and he fanned the smoke over her with gentle waves of a redtail feather. She closed her eyes, letting herself be drawn into the drumbeats, using the pulse to center herself.

“Inside the mountain," Laura muttered softly. MacGyver glanced at her to see if she was talking in her sleep and saw that she was studying the mountains around them. They had long ago left Bozeman but were still on Route 191, heading for Livingston. Her voice had a groggy edge to it, indicating that she hadn't been awake long as she continued, "I keep remembering that I had the impression when I was following Standing Wolf that I was underground or in a cave."

"Or a gold mine?" he suggested. In the light from the instrument panel he could see little but her profile but he could feel her scowl. "Okay, we'll find out soon enough. Want to stop for a proper rest?" He continued quickly, "I know, the original plan was that we'd stop somewhere until first light, but, after thinking about what Pete had said, I wonder if it's a good idea for us to stay in one place too long."

"What else did Pete say?"

He took a deep breath. "It's more what he didn't say, like how those people managed to track down the Phoenix employee that was making inquiries about chemical storage sites. And how they got to your computer so fast."

Laura reopened the maps and turned on the maplight. "There are several campsites along I-89. We can drive until we really need to stop and check out some of those spots. I have to admit, I'm not looking forward to the possibility of both Standing Wolf and Mclver nagging me in my dreams." She hesitated briefly and he wondered if she had had any dreams in the brief time she had been asleep. "Do you smell that?"

"What?"

"Tobacco ... and ... something." She sounded puzzled.

He sniffed, but could only detect the oranges in the grocery sack. "Probably left over from the previous renter."

"Hm," she agreed. "Anyway, you may be able to shut those two spirits out, but now that they know I'm around, they'll concentrate on me. You holding up okay?"

"I'm fine," he said, pushing any thought of sleep away. As long as Mclver was around to haunt his dreams as well, he was better off staying awake.

"Ye-ah," she answered. "Don't think I haven't noticed you dozing off and then snapping awake. It's getting worse, isn't it? Do you remember any of your dreams?"

"Dreams?" MacGyver strained to remember. "No, nothing."

"Either we wrap this up soon or I'm going to have a *long* talk with your ancestor. Sleep deprivation isn't good for you, Mac."

"I know," he agreed, remembering his last encounter with Murdoc. He had been running short on sleep during that assignment with the Phoenix Foundation. However, he wasn't experiencing the same symptoms of sleep deprivation now as he had then. "I had plenty of sleep last night in the lab."

"But no REM sleep, Mac. Now, current literature has determined that REM deprivation doesn't lead to gross psychological changes, but still — "

" — REM sleep is important for long-term memory, I know."

"Sorry, lecture mode off."

"No. Hey, I'm sorry. It's just that I don't think Standing Wolf will let us take too long in doing whatever he and McIver want done."

"So you feel it, too."

"What?"

"A sense of urgency. That there's a reason why McIver is pushing so hard now instead of two years ago."

They finally stopped at one campsite that was far enough off-road to reassure MacGyver's "worst case of paranoia," as Laura labelled it. Even then, he did his best to hide the Jeep from casual view. Back on the road again at first light, they soon turned off I-89 onto a two-lane road, crossing the Yellowstone River and nearing the national forest.

“Have you heard anything from Laura?"

J.J. stared bleary-eyed at the receiver. *How* had Thornton managed to track down his home phone number? And why was he calling at this hour of the morning? His voice didn't sound as if he had heard bad news. "No, not a word. Why, do you expect results already?"

"I never know what to expect with MacGyver," the older man replied cryptically. "How's your computer?"

"My computer wasn't touched. It tested out okay. Laura's is now clean as well, and I was told that it was a very tough, very nasty virus." He shuddered to think what would have happened to the database if Celia hadn't detected the virus's presence.

"Must be the same one they used here, too. I'll be in touch, then. Oh, and check your office phone for bugs." The connection was broken, leaving J.J. very wide awake.

Before too long they had reached the point where they had to go off road to reach McIver's knife-pointed location. "Good thing you got the model with good suspension," Laura grumbled, clutching both the dashboard and the seat as the Jeep bounced. She shifted her grip as he steered the Jeep between two fairly large trees on an incline.

MacGyver concentrated on his driving as Laura struggled to reopen the maps. "We might have to walk if this stretch gets any worse."

She grabbed at a map before it slid off the seat. "Yeah. I don't see any back road heading to where we're going."

Soon after, however, they intersected an unpaved road. Mac and Laura looked at each other. "It's not on any of the maps," Laura pointed out, looking back through her collection.

"It's heading in the direction we want."

"If we meet anyone, *you* get to do all the talking."

"Deal," he agreed and turned the Jeep onto the trail.

The driving was bumpy, but much smoother on the trail. "Now remember," Mac said finally, reminding himself as much as Laura, "all we have to do is prove that this site is there. With that alone the Foundation can start to raise questions about why it's there and whether it's affecting the environment. If we can prove there are leaks, so much the better, but Pete said not to be too concerned about risking our necks on that. In fact, he was going to look into having the Foundation have a flyover testing the air emissions just as soon as we report back."

"Uh, haven't you forgotten somebody? From what you've told me, I can see this satisfying Standing Wolf, but what about Mclver?"

"You don't think this is what Mclver was sending me dreams about?"

She shook her head. "I don't think so. What's the big family secret about this? He seemed surprised that Standing Wolf told us about this, too." She sighed. "I'm having trouble figuring out where Standing Wolf fits in. You said you met him at a Lakota reservation. The Lakota are a branch of the Sioux and out here there's the Oglala Sioux and the Assiniboin Sioux, just for starters. You found a dead wolf in the cave with you when you woke up — that could mean Standing Wolf was buried there, but maybe not."

"And then there's this little detail. We keep seeing Mclver dressed as if he had just left the Army, say 1865 or 1867. The Battle of Little Big Horn took place east of here in 1876 — where was Mclver then?"

"Lots of questions," MacGyver agreed. He caught a flicker of movement ahead and braked in time to avoid driving the Jeep through the transparent form of Mclver. The spirit directed them off the road.

"He's getting pretty good at charades," Laura commented as MacGyver maneuvered the Jeep far enough away from the trail so that it wouldn't easily be seen. After they got out and convened at the back seat, Laura pushed a few granola bars into her pockets and shoved the grocery sack in his direction. Glancing at the afternoon sun, he pocketed a few bars as well, then caught up the remaining chemical protection kit. Laura, who had examined the contents of hers during the drive, fastened hers under her coat. He handed her the normal camera to pocket as well. "Got the apports?" she asked once again. He sighed and patted his black leather jacket where the two necklaces hung under his shirt and pulled the pocket knife partway out of his pocket. Wondering once again why she was so insistent about the objects, he checked and pocketed the nightsight camera.

Laura handed him nightvision goggles. "You're not to take them apart, lose them or make any other modifications," she instructed tersely, tucking a second pair inside her black and brown patchwork jacket. "They're J.J.'s and he wants them back intact. Two pairs set our department budget back a bit, but they're invaluable for investigating so-called haunted houses." She shrugged at his quizzical look. "I know you tend to travel lightly, but I like to have some preparations made."

MacGyver checked one last time on the position of the Jeep as they joined the spirit near the trail and reassured himself that it was hidden as well as something that size could be.

"He says there's a guard further up the trail," Laura relayed. "He'll show us the safe way around him."

MacGyver squinted at the semi-transparent figure. Like them, Mclver had a coat on against the chill fall weather, but the spirit couldn't actually need it. Or could it? Still, the light-colored coat and hat would make him easier to follow once the shadows began to deepen. And, MacGyver was pleased to discover, his ancestor was very good at moving clandestinely. Not that it would probably matter for a ghost, he reminded himself. Still, it would have been irritating to follow someone who walked through the trees and brush rather around them as Mclver was doing.

MacGyver glanced at Laura as they quietly moved through the forest. She was still as woodswise as when he had first met her in Siberut, back in his DXS days. Reminded of those days, he tried to pinpoint where the guard might be stationed amid the trees and bushes, knowing that that location would be important on their return to the Jeep. Finally he was rewarded with a faint glimpse of camouflage through the brush far to their right. He studied the location, struck by a strange sense of *deja vu* as he attempted to memorize its placement in relation to the road and the Jeep.

Mclver and Laura had stopped to confer, and MacGyver quickly joined them. "Where's the entrance?" he asked softly.

"Mclver says he's going to show us a safer way in — "

MacGyver shook his head. "I *need* to see the entrance."

"Why?"

"I don't know. This area seems somehow familiar, as if I've been here before — " He stopped as Mclver started speaking soundlessly. There was a very sarcastic twist to the man's mustache, and from the way he folded his arms as he finished, MacGyver had a definite feeling he already knew where he had seen this area before.

Laura looked from one to the other. "Uh, you want me to translate that?"

"Never mind. I'm sorry," he said to his ancestor. "I didn't know at the time." The mustache rippled with an unheard snort, and the ghost started forward, muttering as he did so. MacGyver let him get a short distance ahead before asking, "I'm not like that, am I?"

Laura tugged an imaginary hat down over her eyes. "Yup." She grinned, then followed Mclver.

MacGyver sighed. "You couldn't lie, and spare my feelings?"

They stopped long before they reached the edge of the clearing, but where they had an unimpeded view of the long single-story building at the foot of a cliff face. "It's just a bunkhouse," Laura commented. It looked to be in good repair, although very rustic. A plume of smoke rose from the stovepipe, and there was movement behind the windows. Two men dressed in hunting gear came out and walked slowly down the long porch.

"It's the hideout," MacGyver breathed in wonder.

She glanced aside at him. "From the second dream? The one where 'nothing happened'?"

"I didn't know, okay?"

"Wasted all that time rescuing his ladyfriends," Mclver muttered irritably, "when I had important things to tell him."

"Well, tell *me* then," the parapsychologist replied. "I don't see what this ," she gestured at the bunkhouse , "has to do with anything."

"It's not the bunkhouse," the two said together — Mclver with exasperation and MacGyver with the pleased note of discovery. "The bunkhouse is only the cover, the facade," MacGyver continued, oblivious to Mclver's reaction. "What we are looking for is in the cliff-face behind."

"The hole-in-the-wall gang," Mclver agreed, glancing continuously at Mac, who was now scanning the cliff-face, "got their name from the cave. Any posse showed up, the gang would retreat to the cave until the posse gave up and went away."

"He says the hole-in-the-wall gang has a cave," Laura passed on.

"And well-hidden, too," MacGyver agreed. "Show us — wait — " He held out his hand and, thus reminded, Laura handed him the regular camera. They ducked down as more men — one in a Park Ranger uniform — emerged from the bunkhouse. Some went to the far side of the building and drove off in a battered pickup while others remained on the porch. After snapping a few pictures, MacGyver turned toward the ghost. "Okay, can you show us the cave entrance?"

Mclver glanced toward the cliff-face and shook his head. "Too busy right now. Best wait until nightfall."

MacGyver glanced again at the cliff-face as she relayed the message, but he followed as the spirit led them back into concealment. He started checking his pockets. "Have you got any string?" he asked. "Or thread?"

"What are you planning?" she asked with amusement as she began to check her own pockets.

"Oh, just a few things to delay any pursuers when we leave tonight." He gratefully accepted the small amount of fishing line she discovered left over from a camping trip, and the tag with elastic the airline had insisted on attaching to her carry-on bag. He had a small tangle of string from his own pockets.

"Can I help?" she asked, waving the book of matches she had picked up somewhere and had forgotten she had in her pocket.

Mac smiled. "Sure. It will be just like Siberut."

They set a small series of triplines — to swing branches into pursuers' faces, trip their feet or distract them by flinging small rocks elsewhere — along their planned route back to the Jeep. Mclver seemed to think along the same way as Mac, Laura noted. The spirit began to suggest some traps as well. After noticing the amount of traffic along the trail, MacGyver — with Mclver on the trail to warn them of any approaching vehicles — moved the Jeep deeper off-road. Which meant they then had to move some of the triplines.

The activity outside the bunkhouse had quieted down when they returned after sunset. Laura was relieved to note that Mac looked rested — although he had napped away the rest of the afternoon, she hadn't been too sure how well Mclver had listened when she warned the spirit against intruding into their dreams.

MacGyver snapped a few pictures of the bunkhouse with the cliff-face behind it with the nightstight camera, handing Laura the normal camera to pocket. Mclver waited until they had finished, then led them along the edge of the clearing to a point where they had a clear view of the back of the building and of the cliff-face. Laura squinted through the shadows, then finally slipped on the nightvision goggles.

"Looks well-guarded," MacGyver murmured. He aimed the nightstight camera as Laura finally found the cave entrance. Netting and other camouflage disguised a good portion of it from normal sight and infrared, but, estimating from what she could see left unhidden, she thought it was large enough for a truck to enter.

"That camera have a telephoto lens as well? I don't see anyone."

The camera clicked softly. "Small flare from a lighter just inside the entrance. And the windows in the back of the bunkhouse have no shades." He lowered the camera and donned his goggles. "No telling what type of electronic sensors they could have as well. You said you had a safer way to get inside?" he asked without looking at Mclver.

"Yes — " Mclver hesitated, and Laura glanced at the spirit, instantly suspicious. Mclver looked as if he had been caught in something, and Laura suddenly knew what he was going to say.

"Oh no, you don't," she interrupted. "I'm not staying here."

"What? What's he saying?"

"He hasn't said anything yet, but he looks the same way you did when we were trailing that soldier who claimed to be clairvoyant." She didn't know if MacGyver would remember her first assignment with the Phoenix Foundation, although she understood that *he* had recommended consulting with the then one-person Parapsychology Department, but she remembered his one instance of overprotectiveness.

"Oh." MacGyver turned and lifted up his goggles long enough to study them both, then returned his goggled gaze to the cliff-face. "That look. Well, let me know when you've finished frying him to a crisp and we can move on. Don't take too long, though. They might have patrols."

Mclver looked disgustedly at his relative. "Please understand, Miss Laura. I promised."

Laura suddenly wished that MacGyver couldn't hear *her*. Mclver wasn't trying to protect her from whatever was inside that cave; he was still intent on passing on the "family secret." Although how he thought he could do so without her,

"I was right, though, that time," MacGyver mused thoughtfully.

Laura stared at his profile, surprised. "You were not." Had he forgotten that if she hadn't followed him after alerting Peter Thornton, he would have been dead? She almost missed the slight nudge of Mac's head toward Mclver. "Oh, yeah, *that* time."

"Seems to me like we've already done what we came for," Mac continued reasonably. "We know the site exists. Pete can take it from there. I'm just curious as to *who* is running this little hideout. And, with Mclver's help, it shouldn't take too long to answer that. Just do exactly as you did last time." Out of Mclver's sight, he held up three fingers.

Laura nodded slowly, struggling with the conflicting plans. Mac wanted her to wait three minutes and then follow, while Mclver didn't want her along and probably wasn't going to bring MacGyver into the installation. She had told Mclver she would try to respect his wishes, and it was time to keep her word. Maybe. "Right. Like last time. I'll just wait right here."

Mclver was so visibly relieved that Laura couldn't bear to look at him directly. "Thank you, Miss Laura," he said, tipping his hat. Mac's eyebrows were just about visible above the goggles as he edged slowly after the ghost.

"Oh, Mac," Laura reminded softly. "Remember the dreams."

Raising the goggles, MacGyver turned to look back at her, clearly puzzled.

"Try not to get shot this time."

His answering expression was pained. "Yeah, I'll keep that in mind."

Laura glanced at her watch as they moved out of sight. Three minutes to go.

Once they had traveled a short distance from the cliff-face, McIver started up a gentler slope of the mountain. "Why do I have this feeling I should have brought some rope?" MacGyver muttered as he followed, feeling exposed on the sparsely wooded incline. He was grateful for the nightvision goggles. With those, the occasional outcropping, rock or determined tree was more a help than a hinderance as available starlight was amplified 20,000 times. He looked back in the direction of the cliff-face, noting the small landslides dotting the slope, and tried to estimate how long the installation inside must be from the entrance to where they now were. *At least a city block long. No wonder Laura said it was big.* He didn't see Laura yet, when he glanced back the way they had come, but he didn't doubt that she would be able to follow the small pointers he had left to mark the trail.

McIver waited beside a large outcropping with a peculiarly twisted short tree at its base. He held out a hand to stop him when MacGyver would have continued onward, then carefully mouthed the words, *wait and watch.* MacGyver nodded. Maybe they could communicate without Laura. McIver nodded once back in reply, then pointed back down the way they had come.

Laura glanced back at her watch. The three minutes were up. Time to go after the two Macs. She looked toward the cave entrance and stayed in place, staring. "Now what's *he* doing?"

Standing Wolf stood by the cave entrance. He gestured for her to come.

Laura closed her eyes then opened them. Standing Wolf was still there, fringed buckskins and all. "I don't believe this," she groaned.

MacGyver scanned the slope below them again, then glanced back at McIver. The ghost had his eyes closed and seemed to be concentrating. Mac studied his watch. If McIver didn't hurry up, Laura would be coming into view any minute now, and they would have a sulky ghost on their hands again. He caught a brief flicker of something downslope and started to hide, only to stop and stare.

McIver was scrambling up the incline toward him, clutching something underneath his coat. Only MacGyver glanced aside and saw his relative still standing next to him, eyes closed. Mac took a deep breath. *Okay, it's a vision, like Standing Wolf's. Wait and watch, remember.* He looked down again.

McIver was coming closer up the slope. Two figures ran into view at the bottom and were joined by another, who pointed up the mountainside and raised his gun. The other two raised rifles. McIver swerved suddenly, and Mac realized that the gang was shooting, although he couldn't hear any sound.

The gang started up the slope, still firing soundlessly. McIver had just passed MacGyver and his ghostly self when he froze, and MacGyver knew the man had been hit. He crumbled and fell beside the outcropping, only he seemed to fall *through* the ground.

The gang members, scattered in their approach up the mountainside, faded into transparency and vanished. MacGyver turned toward McIver, who opened his eyes, smiled apologetically, and disappeared. Shaking his head, MacGyver moved toward the outcropping.

The tree at its base was peculiar-looking, MacGyver discovered, because it was growing out of the side of a deep crevice. The crevice opening was partially blocked with tree branches — more so than it probably had been a hundred years ago, Mac figured — but he was able to clear an opening wide enough to glance inside. At the bottom was a crumbled figure. An arm stirred weakly as he watched.

"Hang on ," he started, then stopped as he saw another McIver leaning against the wall, watching. *Re-enactment again. Wonder how he can stand to watch what happened to him?* It looked as if he was expected down there. Mac checked his pockets. "Knew I should have brought some rope," he muttered.

Laura crouched against the cliff-face, hoping that no one was looking out the bunkhouse windows at that moment. She scanned the portion of the entrance she could see and mentally revised her estimate of its width upward. *Drive a truck through, hah. Try a semi.* She glanced inside long enough to register the absence of guards and the location of possible hiding spots, then took a deep breath. *Right, then. Here's hoping I haven't already triggered every alarm in the place.*

She slipped inside, hurrying into the sheltering concealment of a stack of crates labelled "Property of U.S." From there, crouching on the uneven rock floor, she studied the warehouse-sized area, noting the hanging overhead lights, the unfinished rock walls, and the scattered islands of crates and barrels. In the shadow behind several dark blue drums she saw the sway of long black hair and a hand beckoning her on. *He'd better have a good explanation ...* She sprinted for the drums, keeping in the back of her mind the fact that ghosts could sometimes influence electronic equipment. If they felt like it.

She reached the drums just as a guard emerged from the shadows at the back of the cave. Edging around the drums and watching as the guard continued toward the entrance, she bumped into a very solid back. Before she had time to react or notice anything other than long black hair, her elbow was caught in a strong grasp.

"Wait," an unfamiliar male voice whispered, and Laura heard a distant squeak of a chair from the direction of the entrance. She caught a faint whiff of tobacco and cedar. "Now, let's go!"

The grip on her elbow was gone, but she followed her guide to the next hiding place behind a forklift. He was young — late teens or early twenties although something about him said "sophomore" rather than "freshman" to her academic eye — Native American and proud of it with that hair, while the dark jeans and black shirt suggested he had planned for this invasion as she and Mac had. He nodded to her in greeting, then unfolded his tall, skinny frame up to check over the top of the forklift.

She decided to check the direction they seemed to be heading. There was a large set of double doors toward the back of the cave, one side of which was open. She glanced at the crates alongside the back wall. Although "Property of the U.S." was stenciled on their sides, the next word was smudged enough to be unreadable. And, despite the labels, this did *not* feel like a normal military installation.

Her guide dropped down beside her. "Greg," he introduced himself. "You must be the other vision quester Grandfather told me about?"

"Grandfather?" Laura interrupted. "As in actual relative or term of respect for elder?"

"Elder ... and mentor." Greg nodded approvingly. "He said you would understand."

"Well, there's a lot I don't. I'm Laura Wingate, by the way. Did Standing Wolf bother to mention that?" Greg smiled. "No, but that's not his way. He did say that you would know how to reach the place we must be."

"He did, huh?" She remembered the faint scent of cedar and tobacco, often used in Native American purification ceremonies. There were several possible explanations as to why that particular combination would cling to this young man's clothing, but, given his apparent age and the shell necklace just visible within his shirt collar, her bet was on only one. "What's he teaching you? How to speak as cryptically as he does?"

He merely grinned and edged toward the door. Laura mentally sighed. *I did not come here to follow a shaman-in-training into a military installation.* But she did anyway.

“I hate heights,” he muttered softly. Clinging to the scant hand- and footholds in the wall of the crevice, MacGyver glanced downward briefly to check on his progress. One Mclver was still leaning against the wall to Mac's right while another inched his way painfully across the broken ground toward his later self. From the dark patch of blood left on the ground where the replayed Mclver had landed, the bullet wound was obviously serious — and it was equally apparent that some bones had been broken in the fall. His right leg flopped uselessly behind him as he dragged himself forward. He kept glancing back up at the opening as if he expected the gang to locate him.

His own fingers slipped slightly, and MacGyver returned his attention to the rock wall. A combination of the leather laces from the sides of his jacket, several branches and a liberal use of duct tape had enabled him to swing to an adequate handhold from the crevice opening. Although it should have been impossible to see anything inside the mountain, with the nightvision goggles it was possible not only to see, but to climb. Granted, the six inch tube in front of his face was troublesome, but at least he hadn't had to make the climb with his penlight clamped between his teeth.

He reached the bottom just as the crawling Mclver reached the wall. MacGyver split his attention between him and the motionless leaning spirit as the injured Mclver carefully pulled a bundle from inside his coat and placed it into an opening in the wall. With many a glance upward, he piled rock fragments in front of the opening until, satisfied with the result, he pulled himself up to sit, his back against the wall. Then he faded out.

The remaining Mclver looked up at last and met Mac's gaze. He started speaking soundlessly. MacGyver hated to interrupt, the man looked so weary. "I'm sorry, I still can't hear you."

Mclver's mustache sagged as he grimaced in frustration and looked skyward with a "give me strength" expression. He tugged his hat back into place and pointed at the hiding place in the wall.

"Okay, you hid something there and you want me to get it." Mac moved to the approximate spot and, finding the shielding fragments, removed them. Inside the opening was a small bag of dark brown leather no bigger than the palm of his hand. The leather was soft, decorated with the remains of quillwork, and he could feel objects inside the bag, all different shapes and varying degrees of hardness. "This is it? What's inside?"

He started to untie the bag but stopped as Mclver shook his head violently, waving at him to desist. "What? What is it? What am I supposed to do with it?"

Mclver started speaking furiously, then stopped and looked disgustedly at him. He pointed firmly at MacGyver, then cupped his hands behind his ears.

"I *am* listening! I'm just ... not hearing you." He glanced at the ground, but found no help there; the rock was too hard for writing. He rummaged in his pockets. "You don't happen to have a pencil and paper on you?" *I'll bet Laura brought pen and paper with her ...* "Look, just try speaking slowly and I'll try to follow along. You ... couldn't get rid of that mustache, could you? It makes it hard to lip-read. Just a thought," he hastily added as Mclver recoiled with an offended look. While Mclver glared at him, Mac risked a look up at the crevice opening. Where was Laura when he needed her?

Standing Wolf had to be helping them, Laura decided. Unless Greg was somehow more trained than his age suggested. There was no other explanation for how they could have managed to get this far into a military installation without being challenged. They had almost been spotted by the guards at least twice, but each time something else had distracted them, pulled them away from stumbling upon the two. She was surprised at how well she had remembered the directions from her dream, especially since she knew she hadn't been paying attention to that aspect when she had followed Standing Wolf.

She stared through the thick glass into the room of stacked canisters and rows of 155 mm artillery projectiles. Almost as an afterthought, she remembered the camera in her pocket. She pulled it out and began snapping pictures — both of the room full of death and the control room she now stood within.

Greg sighed beside her. "I'm here, there must be some reason why Grandfather wants me here, but I don't see what it is. What *am* I looking at, Laura?"

"Death on a large scale," she said bleakly. "A single drop — no bigger than a pinhead — from one of those containers could kill either of us instantly. Just one of those projectiles, detonated, could kill all animal life within ten miles."

"Oh," he replied in a small voice and Laura could understand. There were a *lot* of containers. He sighed. "I still don't see what I'm supposed to do. You and your friend will try to stop them."

"Well, there's something here that obviously neither of us are seeing. What do you see with a shaman's eyes?"

Greg brightened. "You *are* good." He stared at the barrels as she resumed picture-taking. "There's something around a few of those, but it's just a faint glow ..." The trainee shaman shook his head and turned to examine the control panels scattered around them. He made a surprised sound.

"What?" she asked, finishing with a last shot of the double door airlock leading to the canister storage room.

"Well, that panel over there — " he pointed without looking — "seems to be monitoring the conditions inside the storage room."

Laura looked over at the panel. "Emergency airflow.' 'Outside vents?'" She felt her skin crawl as she realized the implications of that last. Standing Wolf hadn't been warning her of chemical leaks with his last image of the red cloud crawling down the mountain slope. These people were prepared to *deliberately* release the chemical poisons to the outside. Depending on the chemical agent used, they might be trapping themselves inside the complex when they released the poisons, but fanatics could put up with a little inconvenience.

She shook herself. "See any lists or labels for what's stored in there? Mustard gas? Nerve gas?"

Greg flipped through clipboards hanging on one side of the window. "Ah, here's a map." He frowned. "Must be in code. Some stacks are labelled GB and others VX. No other initials."

Laura felt the chill deepen as she remembered the articles on nerve poisons she had read on the plane. "That's no code. Those are the two newest nerve agents. They work almost instantly." She recalled the articles she had read on the plane. "GB is designed to kill when inhaled. It disperses in a cloud that dissipates in just a few hours. VX settles on the ground with a consistency like motor oil; it kills not only by being inhaled but by skin contact and it's lethal for weeks. But these are stored in liquid form. How do they expect to convert it to gas?" She looked back into the storage room but saw nothing to answer her question. She snapped a picture of the incriminating panel as she tried to think of what to do. "I'm the wrong person for this. Mac — even Celia — could rig these controls to — " She shook her head. "We've got to get Mac here. Unless you could — "

Greg studied the controls and shook his head. "Not me, either. Unless — " He moved to the panel beside the airlock and pried it open. "It looks like this is the only entrance to that room. I could maybe rig this so that they couldn't open the doors without a lot of repair first."

Laura smiled. "Hey, I can do damage like that, too. Need some help?"

“C'mon, Laura," Mac muttered as he jiggled the small bundle in his hand and stared up at the opening. "I could use some help here." He could only hope that she hadn't been caught. If only they had dared risk bringing communication gear like what she and J.J. had had in the lab. Then at least he'd know she was all right.

He sighed and turned to look at his relative. McIver scowled back at him from his position against the wall. "You were able to make yourself heard over the phone," he tried, "so what's so different about vibrating air molecules?"

McIver pointed at Mac's head, and the blond sighed. "Yeah, it's all in my head." Lack of skill at charades was obviously hereditary. So far all they had been able to establish was that the bundle did *not* contain gold, although Mac still wasn't allowed to open it and see what it did contain. Scanning the floor for a patch of sand or dirt that he could use for writing, he walked right past the gesturing McIver and suddenly saw it.

The body leaned against the wall, the hat tipped forward over the face as if death had overtaken him in his sleep. The clothing was still intact, although the body itself, judging from the handbones protruding from the sleeves, was a skeleton.

McIver sighed gustily and pushed his hat back as MacGyver, stricken, turned toward the spirit. "You never left here. I'm sorry." McIver hesitantly reached out and patted him reassuringly on the shoulder. Mac only felt the slightest suggestion of cold from the light contact.

That small gesture affected him more than seeing the body. He *had* to find some way to communicate. Blinking rapidly, he pulled out his roll of duct tape and started cutting small strips with the scissors attachment of his Swiss army knife. Working rapidly, he stuck the strips to the flattest part of the crevice wall he could find, forming crude letters of the alphabet.

He stood back, frowning. The tape probably wouldn't stick long — some letters were already falling off the wall — but it didn't need to stay up forever. And the tape showed up better in his goggled vision than scratching in the dirt would have. "There," he said, urging the spirit forward, "you can point to the letters and I can read what you want to say."

McIver looked from the letters to him with an unreadable expression. He pointed at letters. D-I-D-N-O-T-W-A-N-T-Y-O-U-T-O-S-E-E-N-O-F-U-S-S-N-O-F-A-N-C-Y-F-U-N-E-R-A-L
"No fuss, no fancy funeral. Okay." MacGyver nodded. He hefted the bag. "What's this?"

M-E-D-I-C-I-N-E-B-U-N-D-L-E-T-H-I-S-T-O-O-S-L-O-W McIver stalked away, muttering soundlessly.

MacGyver sighed. What he needed was a ghost phone.

He thought about what he had on hand. The chemical weapons protection kit, the nightvision goggles — He pulled those off and shone his penlight on it. A headstrap harness, a set of binoculars that converged to form a six-inch tube with lenses, containing a diode that emitted infrared light. The headstrap harness could be useful, but Laura would be furious.

He emptied his pockets and stopped as he came to the ancient knife. It seemed to tingle against his skin and, as he glanced toward McIver, he noticed that the spirit was muttering again. A certain pattern of shapes came to mind, and Mac rejected the idea for only a moment. "Oh well, it's all in my head anyway." He pulled out his roll of duct tape.

Laura glanced around the corner and pulled back into the intersecting corridor. "We can't get by *that* many," she told Greg. "We have to find another way out of here."

"Grandfather will distract them," Greg replied confidently.

"Huh. I thought the whole point of a quest was proving what you could do without your mentor's interference."

"Grandfather constantly interferes."

She caught sight of a familiar buckskinned figure back the way they had come, two doors down from the control room entrance. "Looks like Grandfather has other ideas than just leaving us yet. Come on."

“The idea is," MacGyver explained to himself and his relative as he worked, "since these items are supposed to help you keep in contact with me, they might also help you contact me." He checked the connections, ignoring the pacing spirit. Large blade inside tube from chain necklace — heavily taped to stay put and not cut him — awl taped to circular pendant — ditto. He tied the leather thong around his head and adjusted his new headset so that the circular pendant hung over his ear. He fingered the tube by his jaw and tried not to think of how improbable it looked. "There, can you hear me now?"

"Hear you?" an irritated voice protested in his ear. "I've never had any problems hearing you!"

MacGyver smiled widely in relief. "Yeah, well, I don't have any problems now, either. So why don't you fill me in on the details?"

“I have a problem with a door marked 'Danger. Weak Ceiling'," Laura complained as they closed the offending door behind them. "And where did Standing Wolf go to now? He did come in here, right?"

Greg flicked the light switch on before Laura could protest and two floodlights at the back of the room came on a second after the overhead light. "Oh wow, talk about expanding," Laura commented.

The back wall of the room was the mountain itself. Holes were punched into the rock at several points, and, to judge from the pickaxes and jackhammers leaning against the wall, the base was growing deeper into the mountain.

"I think we're expected to dig our way out, Laura." Greg pointed at the closer of the six-foot openings. A wolf poked its snout out of the opening, grinned at them, then turned tail and vanished.

Laura fished a pair of safety glasses and a flashlight out of boxes by the door. "Ever handle a jackhammer before? Now's your chance to learn."

“That there's a medicine bundle," McIver explained. "Sometimes they're passed on from generation to generation, growing more and more powerful. This one belonged to a friend of mine, and I promised to get it back when the Bozer brothers stole it — thinking it was full of gold or something. The trail led to the hole-in-the-wall gang; I reckon the Bozers ran into the gang and bragged at the wrong time."

"Sounds like the Bozer brothers," MacGyver agreed, remembering the pair from his dreams.

McIver snorted. "Well, as you saw, I wasn't able to get it back to my friend. And it's powerful, it's partly the reason why I was able to contact you. It's taken me a long time to learn to use it, but if I could use it, so could others. I couldn't let it fall into *their* hands." He jerked his thumb toward the other occupants of the mountain. "I've had a looksee around their place. That poison is leaking; I've been able to keep it

from causing mischief, but what those people are planning to do," He shuddered and shook his head. "I couldn't risk it."

"Well, I appreciate the warning about this site; it definitely should be looked into. But what makes you think that they would have found that?"

Mclver stomped back to the wall and flung himself against it. "Because they're digging *this way*."

As if on cue, a small hole appeared in the wall four feet past him. Mclver stared at it, his expression a strange mixture of outrage and surprise. The hole widened, and a beam of light shone through. "Laura, look at this," an unfamiliar voice said.

"Laura?" Mac couldn't believe his ears. "What are you doing in there?"

"Mac? Wait a minute. C'mon, Greg, let's get this open."

He could hear the bite of pickaxes and soon, in a shower of rock and dust, there was an opening large enough for Laura to enter. Coughing from the dust as she stepped through, she shone her flashlight around the crevice. "Whew. I'll bet if they had realized this was here, they wouldn't have stopped when they did."

"I stopped them," Mclver grumbled.

"Ah, so that's why the jackhammer wouldn't work. Mac, this is Greg. Greg, MacGyver and Mclver, if you can see him."

MacGyver turned to see a young Native American, his clothing and hair gray with rock dust, straighten after stepping through the opening. He nodded gravely to MacGyver after a startled glance at his head and, like Laura, shone the large flashlight he carried about the crevice.

The light from the flashlights did not go well with the goggles. Pushing those up, Mac looked into the opening and saw a short tunnel leading back to a brightly lit room. No wonder Mclver had been so persistent at contacting him.

He returned his attention to the crevice and noticed that Greg had found the empty hiding place. The young man fingered one of the fragments of rock that had sealed the opening, then rose to his feet and turned his flashlight upon Mclver. "Are you the thief?" he demanded.

"No, he is a good and true friend." Standing Wolf emerged from the shadows behind Laura to face Greg. "He guarded past life itself and summoned others to continue."

Mclver squinted at the shaman. "Who are you?"

Standing Wolf smiled sadly at the other spirit. "You do not know me, my friend?"

Laura studied the spirits closely, feeling the hairs on the back of her neck rise. "Mclver, this is Standing Wolf."

The veteran shook his head. "I'm not doubting you, Miss Laura, but this is not Standing Wolf!"

The shaman smiled ... and changed, growing younger — even younger than Greg. His buckskins changed to a loose blue shirt and leggings and his long hair was braided into two plaits.

Mclver's face lit up. "*That's* the Standing Wolf I know." He went up to the spirit. "I'm sorry I couldn't return your grandfather's medicine bundle to you. I tried, I got it away from them, but I just couldn't get it

to you." He studied the young shaman, his face a mixture of sadness and joy. "I was so afraid that you would die from your wounds before I could get it back to you."

"I survived, with your friends' help. We were all much saddened when you did not return."

MacGyver cleared his throat as he approached Greg. "I think you're looking for this." He held out a small brown leather bundle.

Greg looked surprised. He reached for the bundle.

Laura, glancing back and forth between the two pairs, watched as the spirits vanished. For an instant, she saw glowing outlines of the veteran and the shaman around their living representatives just as the bundle changed hands, then the spirits and the power she had sensed were gone, and the crevice was lit only by the flashlights she and Greg had taken from the installation.

Greg looked from the bundle to MacGyver. "Did you just feel — "

An alarm blasted from the opening leading to the installation. "Canister leak," a tinny voice announced over a distant loudspeaker, almost drowned out by the alarm. "Canister leak."

MacGyver and Laura exchanged glances. "He said he had it controlled!"

"Yes, but he isn't here now!"

"But I am," a new voice announced. They turned toward the opening to see a guard in the tunnel pointing a rifle at them. "I thought I saw you two intruders by the control room. Now, why don't you all come right back this way." He swung the rifle straight at MacGyver. "I can't miss at this range."

MacGyver shrugged and raised his hands. Laura and Greg followed suit. The guard backed up a bit into the tunnel, still keeping MacGyver in his sights, when he suddenly swung the rifle far to the right to point at the older Standing Wolf. "Where did you come from?"

MacGyver gestured at Laura and shoved Greg with him against the wall and out of the guard's vision. Rattled, the guard shot at the spirit, who merely raised an eyebrow. Standing Wolf winked out, but the sound of the shot echoed. Close upon the last echo came an ominous rumbling from overhead. Glancing upward, the guard paled and scrambled back through the tunnel just as a fall of rocks cascaded where he had been standing. Within moments the opening was sealed.

"Mac!" Laura turned her light against the wall, where small stones and dust were still sliding down and caught Mac and Greg in its beam, backing away from the weakened side. The beam also revealed a curious dark huddle at the base of the wall, just as it was buried under a second rockfall. She froze, watching as dust gently drifted down. MacGyver had been leaning there, she remembered. She was suddenly certain she had just seen the burial of his remains.

Greg's shoulders slumped as he saw the sealed opening. "We're not going out that way."

"Nope," Mac agreed. He pointed up. "We're going out that-a-way."

Greg swung his light in the direction MacGyver indicated and squinted. "What is *that*?"

"It's what's going to let you climb out of this crevice," Laura argued. She waited while Greg shrugged and started toward the best handholds before backing up to MacGyver. "Sheesh, Mac, I've seen you whip up some weird contraptions, but that trapeze doesn't look at all safe." She grinned. "Should be fun."

He grinned back at her.

She looked closely at him. "And what is that on your head?"

MacGyver sighed and pulled off what she belatedly recognized as pieces of the apports. "Long story."

"I'll bet. Worked, though, huh?" At his answering sheepish expression, she shook her finger at him before turning to start up the wall. "Remember, you owe me full details!"

MacGyver and Laura edged cautiously down the slope, Greg having departed in another direction after helping Laura out of the crevice opening. Mac hoped the young man's night vision was good; he knew *he* would have had a difficult time just descending the slope without the nightvision goggles.

They could hear an alarm blaring from the direction of the cliff-face, but there didn't seem to be any sounds of pursuit yet. When they were within sight of the cliff-face, MacGyver climbed a suitable tree to scan the complex's entrance. None of those milling about the entrance seemed to be wearing nightvision goggles, although some wore gas masks, while others did not. "Uh-oh," he reported. "Definitely time to move. A very dusty guard just came out, and he's pointing back toward the crevice."

"I hope no one found the Jeep," Laura worried as he started down the tree. "Come to think of it," she added as he dropped from the last branch, "I hope *you* can remember where you moved it."

"We'll find it. Now keep close to me and watch out for the triplines!"

The voice on the speaker phone was more resigned than disbelieving. "And the base was completely deserted when you returned."

"Yeah," Mac said disgustedly. "Everything gone — and the interior of the bunkhouse looked like it hadn't been touched in decades. Only things they hadn't cleared out were the canisters, and I gather that that was because the airlock was jammed." He looked aside at Laura.

She buffed her nails against her shoulder. "Hey, I'm good at destruction."

"I can vouch for that," J.J. agreed.

"If we had given them any more time, though," MacGyver resumed, "they would have cleaned that room out as well." He sighed and paced away from Laura's desk. "C'mon, Pete, you know all this. I'm sure someone on the team was giving you direct-line feeds when they entered." He was tired of repeating himself, Laura knew. As they both were. They had spent most of the morning trying to find someone in authority to move until the Foundation was able to step in, and by the time the raid on the base had been organized, it was too late. When the blaming and counterblaming had begun, she had convinced Mac to return with her to the university.

"Yeah," Peter Thornton agreed. "It was a good thing you both took pictures; those are enabling us to keep our side of the investigation open. The Army brass are going quietly mad trying to explain how the canisters got there — those that are still talking to me, that is. Are you sure there isn't anything else you haven't told me?"

"Nothing more I can say, Pete." Mac glanced aside at Laura. By mutual agreement, they were leaving out any mention of Standing Wolf and his apprentice. Greg had gone his way on the mountainside, while they had headed for the Jeep and the nearest phone. Still, Laura could sympathize with Peter.

"Well, I'm no expert on the military," she commented, "but it didn't *fee/* like a regular base. I mean, all the guards wore uniforms, but I don't remember any insignia."

"That area is also known for paramilitary groups." Peter sighed. "Did you know that they had rigged vents to release nerve gas on the outside in case they were ever found?"

"I know," Laura whispered, remembering both her dream and the control panel.

Mac and J.J. both glanced supportively at her as Peter went on, unhearing. "I'm glad we didn't have to face that kind of standoff. Fortunately, all the outside vents had been covered by landslides."

A startled expression crossed MacGyver's face. He mouthed "McIver?"

Laura nodded as Peter continued, "The techs say that they have never seen so much frayed and shorted-out wiring as they did in walls around that room and the one your pictures show to be the control room."

Laura raised her eyebrows. McIver had been one busy little ghost. Landslides, frayed wiring which probably had all shorted out at the same moment, a protective Medicine shield holding in leaking poisons, jackhammers out of operation, to have all those little details going on at the same time he was contacting MacGyver *and* throwing things at his descendant spoke of intense planning. She wouldn't have been surprised to learn that her and Greg's little contribution hadn't been necessary to block the airlock and the removal of the canisters. And who knew what else McIver had been doing to "discourage" the residents of "the hole in the wall"? She wouldn't have put it past him to have done some "ghostly hauntings" schtick as well.

"Maybe that's why whoever it was decided to clear out," Peter finished, unconsciously echoing her thoughts. "But they sure left us a mess to clean up. Still, it's better than having those canisters in their hands — whoever they were. Good work, everyone."

MacGyver glanced at J.J. and Laura before responding, "Thanks, Pete."

"So, Mac, does this mean you might consider working for the Foundation again?" Even Laura could detect the undertone of pleading in Peter's voice.

MacGyver grinned. "I'll think about it, Pete. Right now I've got a lot of sleep to catch up on. Doctor's orders," he added, glancing aside at J.J., who pointed at the time. "And a hockey game to catch. I'll be in touch, Pete."

It was only long after the goodbyes had been said and the office door had closed behind MacGyver that J.J. suddenly snapped his fingers. "Damn. I still didn't find out about the dog whistle."