

Martin & James Visit the Witch
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Ramblings

Welcome All!

I've been thinking about these Martin & James stories and why I like the format of quick action with slow buildup of story and character over many stories. I think it's all because of MacGyver.

Don't get me wrong, the new MacGyver is great and I've thoroughly enjoyed watching them, but I'm talking about the original with Richard Dean Anderson. Those shows defined my youth and had a great influence on me. I remember when we got cable and a VCR, I was in high school and it was the summer between my sophomore junior years. So yes, kiddies, some of us still remember what it was like to have to be home at a certain time to watch something or you missed it. None of this on demand streaming or binging of thousands of shows.

The first season of MacGyver was a bit different than most of the rest in that they had a short vignette at the beginning. It started with Mac in the middle of a mission and went from there. No setup, no lengthy explanation of how he got there or what he was doing. During the couple minutes you would find out what was going on, usually by a voice over from Mac. These were some of the best parts of the show for me.

Martin & James are directly influenced by that. They are action and adventure. The questions of story and what else there

is will be hinted at. Will there be a longer novella or maybe even a novel? Yeah, I think so, at some point. I do have a novella planned, but it's still mostly action and fast paced. Mostly. :)

If you haven't watched MacGyver, old or new, do yourself a favor and check them out. I believe the first season of the original Mac is available on just about every streaming service. I've been impressed that the the new Mac has also had these little bits at the beginnings.

Until then, enjoy another Martin & James adventure. This one is a bit different, they aren't chasing anyone. In fact, they've just returned from a mission and brought back an item that they need to find out more information about.

The Witch

Ding linga ding.

James glanced at the clanging bell as he stepped into the shop behind Martin.

"Remember, James, this place can be less than safe. Keep your hands to yourself."

James, eyes wide, slowly nodded while scanning everything around him.

The shop was not just filled, it was so stuffed with an abundance of items that James thought his head would blow up trying to take it all in. His eyes darted from a shelf containing bottles of colored liquid, to another where the liquid moved, snake-like, in it's bottle, then jumped to another shelf that held figurines, mostly of animals. Above him, blown by the opening of the door, various items of metal and glass, swayed, throwing the light from hundreds of candles, causing the sparkles to dance and chase each other about the room. James gasped as he saw books, most with several layers of dust and covers that looked more ancient than the ones in Headquarters' library. He started to drift towards these piles when he heard a loud and sharp "Ah-hem" behind him. Freezing, he turned his head, a wavering smile growing on his round face.

"Honest, sir, I wasn't going to touch. Just look. Maybe real close." He gave his most perfect innocent look, hoping that Martin would believe him this time.

Martin, looking at the boy, wasn't fooled. He knew James was easily distracted and might pick something up. Not that he was being disrespectful or unmindful, no, he just couldn't help himself sometimes. That, Martin knew, was one reason to continue with the trainee program. These youngsters needed trained and disciplined if they were to take over protecting their homeland.

The two were interrupted by the tinkling sound of beads clashing together as a woman, even more ancient than the books James thought, stepped into the main room. Her dress hung limp to the floor and was drab and colorless. It might have been brown at some point in its existence, but was almost a solid, dirty grey now.

"Madame Washti, a pleasure as always." Martin bowed, sweeping his hat off, as he said this. Hurriedly mimicking his adviser, James bowed, though, forgetting his hat, saw it fall to the floor in front of his shoes. Flinging his arm a little too far to the side, hoping he could hide the fact that his hat had fallen off, he bumped a row of boxes that were lined on a tabletop. As the first box tumbled into the next, the old woman gasped, a high, airy sound. In an instant, Martin stepped over to stop the boxes and righted the ones that had already fallen.

"James," he said, drawing it out and letting James know of his displeasure.

"It wasn't my fault. I was trying to be polite. It's just..."

He was cut off by the old woman. "Let the boy be, Martin. There is no harm done." Her voice was airy, like her gasp had been.

James, taking comfort from that voice, was confused as he felt the hair along the back of his neck stand up. Gulping, he smiled at the woman. "Th-thank you, ma'am."

"Do not let it happen again, young man." Her gaze didn't waver from James. Trying to gulp, James discovered his mouth had dried up.

The woman held the boy's eyes a moment longer and James had the impression she was calculating, like he was a beef cattle she wanted to carve up. When she looked at Martin, he let out a small whoosh of held breath, glad to no longer be under that stare.

"Besides, Martin," the woman said, pausing as she regarded the tall man, "he isn't the first little boy to cause havoc in my shop."

James thought Martin blushed, but he wasn't sure as the man quickly sat down, turning away from the boy. The old lady took a seat on the opposite side of the table, folding her hands serenely on the tabletop.

"What, Martin, have you brought for me today?" she asked, her soft voice sliding through the room like the breeze had earlier.

James stepped forward, hoping once again to see the object

they had brought, but a ticking sound drew his attention. On a shelf was what seemed to be a statue of a tree. On one of the limbs was a bird. Even though it was a statue, this bird was moving along the branch, it's claws making the 'tick' sound with each step.

Martin, glancing briefly at the boy, turned back to the old woman while reaching inside his trench-coat. Pulling out a handkerchief wrapped around something, he placed it in the center of the table leaving the handkerchief in place. The old woman eyed the package, but made no move to touch it.

James looked over his shoulder to see the adults staring at the handkerchief. Leave it to Martin to have the most exciting thing ever and to leave it wrapped up and not talk about it. James had wanted to shout and tell everyone back at the bunker what they had found, but Martin made him swear a pinkie promise not to say anything. Hearing a tick, James forgot about the object to look back at the amazing statue with the moving bird.

"Madame Washti," Martin began, "I was hoping you could help me identify something I found." He stopped, waiting for some acknowledgment from the old woman.

She sat for a space of time that seemed to drag on for hours. Martin didn't move, letting her regard the object and waiting for her to speak. James suddenly felt like he was moving through quicksand. The air took on a thick quality, like the commissary oatmeal. In an instant that felt like forever, the

feeling was gone. James gasped slightly, catching his breath.

"I inquired with Carnacki.." Martin began, but was interrupted.

"Bah! That shyster, do not mention his name in my shop," the woman said, waving her hand dismissively. She continued staring at the object and didn't see the slight smile crinkle the edge of Martin's lips.

At the table, the woman slowly moved to pull small vials from pockets in her dress. Placing these before her, she dumped some of the contents of each out into small piles. After mixing the piles in several different ways, she bent and blew the mixture towards the object. Flashes of light burst around the object as the dust and other particles struck it. Regarding this, the old woman frowned, staring intently as the dust settled and the flashes diminished.

James, becoming bored with watching whatever was going on at the table, turned again to the bird statue. His eyes widened when he realized that the bird had not only moved, but it had changed branches. He wondered how it could do that and reached to grasp the porcelain animal. Before his fingers neared the statue, Madame Washti stood next to him, scowling, as she stopped his hand. James jumped back, bumping a table and knocking some canisters that fell and rolled toward the table edge. Without apparent movement, Madame Washti stood next to the table, the falling canisters in hand, still scowling at James.

"That is not for you to touch," she scolded, her words barking out like a hammer blow. Setting the canisters down without looking, her intense stare never left James.

Feeling uncomfortable, James blushed and after a few moments looked down at his feet as he scuffed the ground. Remembering his manners, he looked up to apologize and stopped with his mouth hanging open. Madame Washti, in the few moments he had looked down, had returned to her seat across from Martin. Looking at his mentor, James saw a smile playing on his lips.

"James, you were told not to touch anything. I think you should obey as the Maitresse has directed." His look lingered on James before turning back to the woman.

Confused, James turned back to the statue of the bird, only to widen his eyes in surprise once again. The bird had not only moved, but was now on a totally different tree. Resisting the urge to reach out again, James moved away from the strange item, briefly glancing at the table.

Madame Washti was waving her hands above the object while murmuring under her breath. Martin, leaning forward, hat pushed back on his head, watched the proceedings with grave intensity. Quickly bored with the scene, James turned, surveying all in the room. His eyes alighted on a collection of swords. He stepped closer, the chanting fading from his consciousness. The swords were all spectacular. As he studied one then the other, he imagined great wars being fought, brave men fighting to protect

their family and country.

One sword in particular caught his eye. It wasn't flashy or colorful like most of the rest. In fact, it was dull looking, as if it had been left outside for a long time. There was something about it though, something that drew James in. Quickly looking over his shoulder, he saw that Madame Washti was still chanting while dropping colored liquid from eye droppers onto the object Martin had brought her. His mentor looked like he hadn't moved position at all. Forgetting about the adults, James eyed the plain sword again, getting closer for a better look. It seemed the weapon called to him, enticing him. He so wanted to touch it, hold it, swing it like a warrior. Staring, unblinking, at the sword, James slowly reached out and grasped the handle.

As soon as he touched the item, there was a flash of light. It felt, to James, like his hand was sucked onto the handle of the sword. He tried to let go and couldn't, becoming panicked as it felt like his hand was being pressed tightly and he was unable to let go. Behind him, he heard the bang as a chair hit the ground and Martin jumped up. At the same instant, Madame Washti appeared next to him, glowering.

"Stupid boy! You were told, you were told!" She started waving her hands and chanting, almost yelling.

James felt the sword rising, but there was nothing touching the sword but his own hand. His stomach clenched in fear. "Help, sir, please, it's got me!" His frantic efforts to remove his

hand availed him little as the sword continued rising. Beside him, Madame Washti chanted, her words tumbling out like brittle glass striking a floor.

Martin had appeared on his other side, grasping the boys shoulder, straining to hold him as the sword continued to pull in the opposite direction. Struggling, James grasped Martin's coat, his knuckles whitening from the strain.

"Hang on, James," Martin said as his eyes darted to the woman. "We must do something," he barked.

"It is the stupid boy's fault. He was told," she hissed back.

Martin glanced at the sword, then James, taking in the boys scared face. "We must stop this now!"

Madame Washti stopped chanting, her eyes locked on Martin. "Martin, you know what we must do to stop this. It must be done, the sword cannot be allowed to escape."

"No!" Martin roared. James, scared from the magic sword lifting him up, widened his eyes in surprise at the intense anger from his mentor. He had never seen Martin so angry. Renewing his efforts, he struggled to let go of the sword.

"Please, get me down, I don't want to do this, I'm sorry, I'm sorry." The boy continued his frightened babbling as his eyes moved continuously between the sword, Martin and the old lady.

"James," Martin said, moving to look directly into the

frightened boys eyes. Seeing the fear those eyes held, he resolved to save him. "James," he repeated and the boy finally snapped his eyes to look at Martin.

"Listen to me closely. We will get you out of this." He flicked his eyes at Madame Washti who was still chanting. "I will not..." Martin stopped, distracted by a growing light in the room.

The boy and man both looked toward the table where the light was emanating. The object that had been sitting there was now hovering, hovering and rising as they watched. They looked at each other, surprise evident on their faces.

"Martin, the totem..." the ancient woman wheezed, her voice seeming to drift on the wind from far away. Neither Martin nor James looked her way.

"Hang on, James," Martin said as he let go of the boy and leaped towards the table.

"Yes, sir," James' voice wavered, "not like I have a choice," he finished. Fear etched his face as he looked up at the sword that continued to tug him higher. When he looked back, he saw Martin holding the object above his head. Beside him, Madame Washti had her hand on his shoulder, head bowed. They were both mumbling, though James couldn't make out what they were saying. Both were chanting, their voice flowing together, one moment shrieking then the next a whisper. The item Martin held was giving off it's own keening that was pulsing with the

light.

Feeling a change in the vibration of the sword, James looked up. The sword jerked and jittered as if it was in pain, yanking James' arm back and forth, but at least he wasn't being pulled higher. Struggling to let go, James' feet struck a pile of books and papers as the sword started erratically flying around, like a bird in a cage he thought.

A beam of light shot from the object that Martin held, striking the sword. Immediately, the sword stopped all movement, except for a vibration, like a tuning fork.

"Sir, it's shaking. I can feel the vibrations up my whole arm," James said, eyes never leaving the sword.

"That's good, James. I think we have it now." James heard Martin's voice below him, though he didn't look down. Madame Washti's mumbling chant also drifted up.

Without warning, the sword shot toward Martin and the totem he held, dragging James along. As the sword headed straight for the upheld item, Madame Washti raised her voice, shrieking above the piercing howl from the possessed weapon. The instant of collision was lost in a wash of light and sound. Martin, destroying the table as he was flung into it, lost his hold on the magic object. Sitting up and blinking, Martin attempted to scan the room for James. The boy was lying amidst broken glass and twisted metal. Shoving everything aside, Martin lifted the boy.

"James. Say something, James," he implored, looking down at the little, still body.

A scraping sound drew his attention to see Madame Washti pulling herself up, a box falling off of her as she did so. Turning his attention back to the boy, Martin detected some eye flutter.

"James," he said, his words sharper.

Eyes shooting open, a look of stunned horror crossed James face before he saw Martin.

"Sir," James said, words soft and slow, "can we please stick to guns from now on?" His eyes drifted closed as Martin chuckled.

"Yes, James, that we can."

The boys eyes flew open again, his eyes widened looking at the man. "Sir! At least we figured out what the object was for!"

"Humph," came the disgusted reply from across the room as Madame Washti surveyed her jumbled shop.

Now that you've read this....

So James couldn't keep himself out of trouble. It seems Martin may have done something similar when he was but a wee lad. Just how old is Madame Washti?

If this is the first Martin & James story you have read, I encourage you to visit my website.

[Http://sa-schneider.com](http://sa-schneider.com)

You can find the other stories that are out right now - The Moss-Trooper, The Evil Mosquito Scientist, The Crazy Weatherman and possibly a few others.

Thanks again for reading, I look forward to sharing more stories with you.

Excerpt: Martin & James vs the Masked Moss-Trooper

Below is an excerpt from the first released Martin & James story. They are chasing a masked assassin and must capture him before he escapes on a speeding train.

Stopping suddenly, the tall man didn't notice when the boy bumped into him. A small dust cloud rose around the boy as, rubbing his nose, he took a step back and looked up into the narrow face, the piercing eyes still looking all around. "James, the current moment is not appropriate for levity." Confused, the boy had forgotten the giggle of several moments ago, though the man had not. Forgetting his confusion, the boy saw the man's mustache quivering, causing him to stifle yet another laugh and instead something that sounded like 'Snork' came out.

Clearing his throat, the boy puffed out his chest and threw his head back. This caused his baker boy cap to fly off, but was ignored for the moment. "Yes sir," he said, looking around as if he was spying on slews of evil doers. The man glared at the boy, but decided to not say anything as the boy took an overly dramatic stance while peering around.

Again the whistle sounded it's long wail. The boy said it sounded like another banshee, earning an even sterner glare.

"James, we must locate Vincent and we must endeavor to do so before he can board this train!" The man, Martin, stated. The boy thought every word sounded like an order from some general

on a battlefield, but he kept a straight face, with only a small giggle, easily covered up by the sound of rushing feet as people hurried to climb on board. Throughout the station, people swarmed, saying good-bye to loved ones with hugs being given all around. The man and boy struggled to see through the crowd.

An insistent beeping joined the racket. Reaching into a coat pocket, Martin pulled out a device that looked like a small, mangled bike frame. Pulling and twisting, in moments he had assembled a mini dish sitting on a platform with a wire trailing to an apparatus that looked like a flight helmet. Handing the dish to his small companion, who immediately started moving it slowly around while watching a red, blinking light on the back, Martin pulled the helmet on.

Inside, he was greeted with an image, though fuzzy, of his chief.

"Yes, chief," he said.

"Well, do you have him? Stop beating around the bush, my boy," the stern looking man said.

Without even blinking, Martin answered, "No, sir. We are trailing him, but since he destroyed our car, we have been unable to apprehend him."

"Well, hurry it up then, I don't have all day. It is vital that he be apprehended. We have been one step behind him for much too long. So quit standing around like it's tea time, do your job!" The little man in the image, slammed his hand down

and everything went dark. Feeling a tugging, Martin removed the helmet to regard James.

"There!" the boy yelled, pointing to a man about to board the train.

The man, one hand gripping the rail to haul himself aboard, jerked his head, looking back at the pointing boy. His face was covered in a mask that looked like part leering demon and part wild animal. The eyes behind the mask widened, looking at the two now hurrying through the surging crowd. Cries of outrage erupted as the tall man shoved past people already pushing to get on, his limp giving him a drunken quality. The boy was left behind, struggling to catch up and collapse the instrument he still carried, and was knocked about as angered passengers once again pushed to get aboard.

As James reached the steps, he was grabbed and hauled on board, just as the train gave a lurch and the wheels started turning slowly, dragging the behemoth down the tracks.

"Damn," Martin swore under his breath. He knew it would be harder to capture Vincent while on the moving train, but at least they knew he was definitely here. Entering the passenger car, he drew the boy along, hurrying down the aisle and receiving stern stares from passengers attempting to get situated. Trying to rectify the situation, James tipped his hat in apology to many, but was constantly getting yanked forward before he could smile and complete the kind overtures.

Stopping, Martin waved his hand, trying to clear smoke and dust that still lingered in the car. Mimicking the movement, James also waved his hand, enthusiastically flapping it back and forth while coughing from smoke inhalation. Others, standing and seated, turned to glance at the newcomers. Giving the man and boy a cursory once over, they turned back to their conversations, ignoring the two.

You can get this story for free at the link below:

[Http://sa-schneider.com](http://sa-schneider.com)

It is also available at Wattpad and through the Biblioboard app.

Excerpt: The Vindicators: Billie's Origin

This is very exciting for me. Below you will find an excerpt from another series of stories I will be releasing soon. This is a group of young people that get thrust into the world of superheroes. It may not have been what they planned for their life, but sometimes life has other plans. The full story, along with a couple others, will be coming soon. If you like this bit, let me know. Believe me, every bit of encouragement helps immensely, so drop a line and let me know what you think:

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Now onto the good stuff:

"Fletch, do you think we'll find some evidence tomorrow?"

Fletcher shrugged. "Dunno. Someone says they saw something, that's enough to get us out in this god forsaken country."

"Man, if I ever saw a UFO, I mean a REAL UFO, I would crap my pants."

"Yeah, you probably would, ya' damn pansy ass," Fletcher said

The first man, Wally, tossed a handful of mud at Fletcher, eliciting a deep guffaw. Scooping food out of their bowls, they sat hunched over, quiet, eating. Wally shifted position, moving his cramped butt on the log. Scraping the last of his stew from his bowl, he scooted forward, ladling out another spoonful.

"You like this stuff? Seriously? I mean, I don't eat at the Ritz, but geez, this stuff is just a step above dog food." Fletcher said, peering into the bowl.

"Hey man, it's not too bad. Besides, it's what we've got, right?" Wally brushed his dripping bangs, sending drops of water into his bowl. "Just think, if we find some solid evidence, we will be living like kings, man. Lobster every night. Am I right?" His eyes gleamed, from the water or firelight was unclear, as he looked at the second man.

A grunt was the only reply he received.

On the opposite side of the fire, a third figure observed the two men banter. The rain didn't seem to bother this figure, huddled under a rain poncho and over-sized flat brimmed hat. Nothing could be seen except a pair of eyes, watching the other two.

"You guys are both idiots." The voice was higher, female, young.

"Like you aren't, girlie? Seems to me you're sitting in this rain just the same as us," Fletcher said. He had stopped shoveling food into his mouth and regarded the girl across the flames of the campfire.

"Fletcher, we may both be sitting in this rain, but I guarantee I'm not an idiot."

"Yeah, well, how do you figure?" said the man that was not Fletcher.

The girl shifted, possibly to turn her head to regard this man, possibly to relieve cramped muscles. "First, Wally, I have this hat." She nodded her head slightly, causing a stream of water to run onto her poncho. "This hat has protected me from the sun all day and now, surprise, it also protects me from getting rain down the back of my neck. Unlike you gentlemen, who have rain plastering their hair to their heads."

The two men looked chagrined, shuffling their feet as well as they could in the mud.

"And then there's the footwear," the girl continued. "I have top of the line boots, designed for hiking in rugged terrain. And they're water proof. That's why I can squat in this mud, yet me feet stay dry."

Wally pulled his tennis shoe clad feet out of the firelight and into the shadows. He heard the girl snort at this.

"Finally, instead of those crappy, cheap rain suits you're wearing, I have this completely waterproof poncho that I can also use as a tent. Think twice before any fat jokes, and remember, I'm dry."

The girl's eyes seemed to glow fiercely from beneath the brim of her hat. The two men looked at each other, but neither met her gaze.

"Okay, yeah, you know, we're sorry, we just didn't think we'd need all that stuff you told us about. Besides, we had to have all our camera and recording gear." Wally looked at her

imploringly.

Unflinching, the girl glared back for several long moments, neither breaking the contact. Finally, letting out a whoosh of held breath, the girl looked into the darkness beyond their circle of light.

"You're right, I'm sorry. It's just frustrating. You guys hire me to get you in and out of these mountains safely, and then you don't listen to me. If you get hurt or something, I'm the one that's going to have to drag your sorry ass out of here."

Wally's face lit up in a beaming smile while Fletcher went back to shoveling stew into his mouth.

"See, you do care," Wally said, "if you'll drag our asses out of here, I mean."

Shaking her head, the girl stretched out, scooping some stew into a bowl that she produced from under her poncho.

"So, do you think we'll find any evidence of that UFO?" Wally asked.

She shrugged. "Who knows, maybe. I might not have seen any UFO's, but hey, they could be real, right? I've seen some crazy shit out here, so little green men wouldn't be too surprising."

"Actually, they're grey," Wally said.

She shrugged again. "Whatever. That's your department. I'm just here to make sure you get back out."

"So tell us, why do you do this, girlie. You're young, you

could be doing much better things than spending it in the dirt, getting bumps from skeeter bites. What makes you come out here?" Fletcher kept shoveling stew into his mouth, though his eyes were regarding her intently.

"I swear, you call me girlie one more time and I will leave you. I'd love to see you find your way home inside of a month. It's Billie, got it?"

"Sure, whatever, Billie. Who the hell names their baby girl Billie? Were your parents wack jobs?" Fletcher asked, scooping another spoonful of stew into his mouth.

"You know, I just don't get it. How can you get in front of that camera and not make people want to vomit?"

"Heh, you got spunk, gir... Billie, I'll give you that. So fess up, why you do this?"

There was silence for several minutes, broken only by the drip of water on leaves and the crackle of the logs in the fire.

"I kind of have to, I guess." She gestured around her. "This, out here, calls to me. It's where I belong," Billie said, before pausing for several moments again. "You guys are looking for UFO's. What if I told you I may not know anything about UFO's, but I've seen Bigfoot?"

Startled, both men were staring at the young girl, all thoughts of food forgotten.

"You, really? Oh, this I gotta hear," said Wally.

"Okay, but no snickering or any of your other pansy shit,

got me. I'll tell you, but if you tell anyone else I will deny it." After making sure they were paying attention, she added, "Then I'll find you and kill you in your sleep. Got it?"