

MC 057: Strange Bedfellows

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G.I. JOE #57

Strange Bedfellows

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Summary: On the hanger deck of the aircraft carrier U.S.S. Flagg, the Joes are analyzing the segments of the Terror-Drome they captured in Sierra Gordo. Hawk explains to Flint and Lady Jaye that many of the components "defy analysis". They don't know what they do exactly, but they've traced them back to Destro's weapons manufacturing company, MARS: Military Armaments Research Syndicate, headquartered in Scotland. Lady Jaye and Flint both show they know much about MARS. Hawk informs them that Destro had apparently not died in the collapse of The Pit -- he was spotted boarding a plane to Glasgow, Scotland this morning. Hawk wants Flint and Lady Jaye to meet Destro in Scotland and obtain the Terror-Drome plans "at any cost". They're to meet members of Britain's SAS (Special Air Service) once they arrive. They take off immediately via an EA-6B Prowler jet from the deck of the Flagg.

In Scotland, a mysterious man gets off his plane at Prestwick International Airport in Scotland, then heads into the restroom. He comes out, now obviously Destro, in his usual outfit and steel mask.

Flint and Lady Jaye's jet land in Scotland, where they are met by two SAS operatives: Smythe-Barret, a proper English officer nick-named "Jingles", and a quiet soldier named Sergeant Day. They all head off in a jeep to Castle Destro.

Meanwhile, at Castle Destro, Destro's taxi arrives. The driver wonders why he needs a detachment of Scots Guards, but Destro explains they're actually private troops in Scots Guard's uniforms. The Sergeant Major of the troops meets "laird Destro" at the gate and salutes. Destro asks for him to set up high tea in the arboretum, but he learns high tea is already in progress. Destro is upset, since high tea can only be served when the laird of the manor is presiding. But, he soon finds out why. Another man posing as Destro is already there. The imposter has the real Destro taken away by local police. Outside the castle, the Joes and SAS are observing the castle, and are surprised to see two Destro's -- one of whom is being arrested. They figure out that the one being arrested is the man who arrived this morning. Flint says that they could go through regular police channels to get him out, but that would take days. Lady Jaye says they don't have days... but she has an idea.

Later that night, Destro is sitting in jail when an old woman shows up, representing the "Little Lay Sisters of Mercy and Prison Reform". She's there to read some passages to him in hopes of reforming the criminal. Destro's in no mood for this, but once the guard leaves, it's revealed that the old woman is really Lady Jaye in disguise. Destro is surprised and confused, but Lady Jaye doesn't have time to explain. She shoves him to the ground and pulls the cell's mattress over them. She radios Flint that they're ready, and he blasts a hole in the cell's wall with a rocket launcher. They all escape and head off in their jeep. Later, Destro explains that he doesn't know what every component of the Terror-Drome does. Some parts are built by other companies and the assembly is done on Cobra Island, but since MARS is the main contractor, they're entitled to a complete set of plans. They're in a sealed container inside a safe in the castle. He tells the Joes that if they help him get back his title and castle, he'll give them the plans. "I've about had it with Cobra as it is!" Smythe-Barret worries that they can't get past the castle's defenses, but Destro knows a way...

Back at the airport, the SAS men help them move an old World War II era glider out of the Royal Air Force Museum's storage hangar. Flint and Sgt. Day drive the jeep, which is pulling the glider. Destro is piloting the aircraft with Lady Jaye and Smythe-Barret onboard. She worries that the glider is too old to stay airborne. Smythe-Barret assures he has faith in British manufactured goods. Destro counters that the parts actually came from Canada, but his father was one of the sub-contractors, so they shouldn't worry. Meanwhile, Flint and Day pull the glider along the highway they get up enough speed. The glider lifts off, just barely missing an oncoming tractor-trailer. Destro pilots the glider just above the tree-tops to avoid being detected by the castle's radar. Flint and Day's jeep approaches a roadblock on the road leading toward the castle. They smash through and try to avoid getting hit once the castle guards start firing everything they have at them. Inside, the Destro imposter orders the guards to secure the plans room. He goes inside to remove the plans for himself.

Back outside, Flint and Day are just barely avoiding enemy fire. Destro pilots the glider over the castle walls. The others are upset that there's no plausible landing zone inside the castle grounds. Destro says he never intended to land, and proceeds to crash the plane into the arboretum. Flint uses a rocket launcher to blast open the castle's doors, and the

jeep drives inside. Destro, Smythe-Barret and Lady Jaye head for the plan room at the top of the stairs, while Flint and Day give them some cover fire. The doors to the plan room are blast-proof. The only way to get them down is to ram through with the jeep. Flint and Day do just that, and the Destro imposter runs out once the doors are smashed, holding onto the Terror-Drome plans. The real Destro tackles the imposter, and after a fistfight, Destro gets the upper hand. He removes the imposter's mask to reveal... "Major Bludd! Is this more of Serpentor's convoluted plotting?"

Leaving Bludd unconscious on the floor, Destro turns his attention back to the Joes and the SAS. Destro's Sergeant Major asks, "What about this lot? Shall we shoot 'em?"

"No, no, Sergeant Major..." He hands the plans to Lady Jaye. "The problem with making a pact with a pretty lady is that one is obligated to honor it." He then kisses her hand. Flint doesn't look too happy, but the deal is honored, and the Joes have the plans to Cobra's Terror-Drome

Review: "Strange Bedfellows" is a nice change of pace from the rest of the series. It remains part of the series' main storyline, but can be enjoyed on its own. We get to see Destro's home, and get to expand on the interesting character of Destro himself. He makes the decision to have nothing more to do with Cobra. Of course, he eventually becomes involved with Cobra, but he stays independent for some time. The story is fast-paced enough and doesn't even really suffer because of the over-used plot device of the evil imposter, complete with a fight at the end during which we lose track of who's real and who's the imposter. Larry Hama's witty dialogue also adds some subtle touches of humor.

This is the first time we see Flint and Lady Jaye alone on a mission together, though they were together from the very beginning in the cartoon series. They don't exactly have a relationship in this issue, but they're getting there, evidenced by Flint's jealousy at the end of the issue. As for Lady Jaye, this may be the only place where we see her use espionage skills when she poses as a little old lady to free Destro. Her filecard explains that she's a master of disguise and various languages, but the series rarely pays attention to that. The addition of Smythe-Barret and Sgt. Day isn't that significant, but it lets Larry Hama play with some other characters. Sgt. Day is a generic soldier, while Smythe-Barret is a decidedly stereotypical British officer. Larry Hama shows that he likes the character of Destro, and here we see more of Destro's strange on-and-off sense of honor. He continues to make little sense that Destro has some sense of honor, yet sells weapons to the most dangerous people on earth. Even so, that contradiction is what makes Destro an interesting character.

There are a few criticisms that can be thrown at the plot. Major Bludd seems to be able to replace Destro a little too easily. Maybe he could have bluffed his guards, but wouldn't the local police do some investigating to ascertain who the real Destro was? They could check their fingerprints, or better yet: just take off their masks! The other problem is the fact that we never learn the truth about who hired Major Bludd. We assume Destro's guess that it was Serpentor is correct, but we never really find out. Major Bludd just stopped appearing in the series many issues ago, and he isn't seen again for years after this issue!

The issue includes the first appearance of the "Sergeant Major" of Destro's guard. He will later appear as one of Destro's Iron Grenadiers. Mainframe also makes his first appearance but only in one panel on the first page. His first major appearance is in the next issue.

"Strange Bedfellows" is a good, fast-paced story with plenty for fans of Destro, Flint and Lady Jaye.

First Appearances:

- G.I. Joe team: Mainframe (in one panel only; unnamed)
- Recurring Characters: Destro's Sergeant Major
- Geography: Castle Destro

Reprinted in:

- The Transformers (UK) #204-207 (February 11th - March 4th, 1989). A Marvel UK series that began reprinting Action Force stories after the end of that series. These issues reprint this story in four parts, alongside original stories. All references to "G.I. Joe" were changed to "Action Force".
- Classic G.I. JOE: Volume 6 (December 2009). A trade paperback collection from IDW Publishing. Includes issues #51-60.