

The Epiphany Deception
Earth's Prophetic Destiny against the Guardian Cherub

Introduction

It was the third time in Earth's history that a thick darkness had descended over the spinning blue planet. This was not a gradual shadow that comes with the arrival of night, nor was it like the temporary blackness of a solar eclipse. This was a foreboding black silhouette that could be felt by every living soul. Each source of light, from the fiery sun to the soft glowing candle, flickered and gasped for one more breath. Then, as if a giant cosmic switch had been turned off, every source of illumination went black. This was not the first time this celestial event had occurred, but it would be the last.

Prologue

Part 1

Early Fall - 2 ½ Weeks before the Covenant is signed

Spiraling columns of cigar smoke floated eerily in the dimly lit library. The host of this late night gathering acknowledged his six invited guests as they sat around the large hardwood table in the center of the room. The thick walnut veneer had become almost black from years of smoke and sweat. The host methodically finished his small glass of 40 year old Port. He watched the crimson liquid being drained from the crystal glass and it reminded him of blood. He reached out and held the dark green vintage bottle in his hand. He narrowed his eyes as he studied the Portuguese label. This is a Port for Kings, he thought. He read the Portuguese words to his guest and then translated.

“Real Companhia Velha,” he paused, “Real Old Company, 40 year old Port from the Rio Douro region of Portugal.”

The emblem on the label caught his eye. To the right of an exalted golden crown was a saint standing tall. However, to the left of the golden crown was a fearsome horned dragon. The dragon was ready to strike and gain the victory over the saint. How symbolic, he mused. He knew he had reserved this rare vintage for the right moment.

“Friends, this fine Port has waited patiently for 40 years, but tonight we have opened this bottle and consumed its crimson soul.”

The lingering wisps of cigar smoke seemed to swirl in the library as if stirred by unseen movements. He met each gaze from his six guests and nodded to each one in turn. Slowly and with passion on every word, the host spoke one last time.

“Tonight, we pierce the soul of the earth and soon we will drink deep of her crimson flow.”

Chapter 1
“Operation Seam Ripper”
Doha, Qatar – Persian Gulf

The streets of Doha were deserted as the crescent moon disappeared behind a slow moving line of tattered clouds. The stillness of the pre-dawn hours left the impression that all was well in this little Arab Kingdom; however, nothing is as it first seems.

From a dingy second floor apartment above Al Acks Avenue, Master Sergeant Aaron Mathews peered through his night vision goggles. He dutifully scanned the street but he was not searching for enemy troops or dangerous weapons. His covert mission was to intercept communication drops from couriers of Islamic terrorist groups before that information reached the Al-Jazeera television station. The White House had tired of hearing the regular “glorified boastings” from Al Qaeda and other radical groups on the 6 p.m. newscast. The President wanted these dangerous and often coded communications intercepted and evaluated before they hit the Arabic airwaves. There had already been too many terrorist operational orders woven into the fabric of these religious proclamations. So, the President quietly ordered operation “Seam Ripper.”

Sergeant Mathews, along with two other Special Forces personnel, had been on this operation for eight days in Qatar. The luminescent landscape that he saw through his night viewer transported him into an eerie world of green shapes and subtle dark shadows. Once again the old scratchy movie of a boyhood matinee threaded itself into his invisible projector. He remembered his earlier dream of following in his father’s footsteps and becoming an expert military sniper. He had enlisted in the Army and was accepted in the Special Forces Group at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. He advanced quickly to the elite class of sniper and weapons specialist. However, his inability to hold his M24 Bolt action sniper rifle perfectly steady during final training had betrayed him. The screen flickered and the childhood movie now came into focus.

As a teenager, Aaron had a passion for photography. He had sweated hard one summer mowing yards and saving every dollar so he could have his own camera. His purchase of the Nikon launched him into his glories. He had an almost magic eye for detail and composition as well as being gifted with an amazing photographic memory. With just one glance, Aaron could recall an object’s orientation, along with its color, shape and any movement. His memory was as sharp as an actual photo. His first roll of developed film was billed to be a family exhibition and the official unveiling was duly attended by his mother and father along with his protesting little sister. The silverware scarred kitchen table was cleared and became the backdrop and with shaking hands that his mother attributed to excitement, Aaron reached into the envelope and proudly displayed his 24 masterpieces. To the amazement of the gallery, every single image was blurry. His mother quickly tossed out a life preserver. “O, this one is nice,” but it could not rescue him from the rising waves of salty tears. His little sister, who would normally have been the heartless art critic, sensed the sinking of his soul as she slid from her chair and nudged her way into his side. With just one softly spoken word, she buoyed Aaron’s dreams and determination. After high school, Aaron had enlisted in the Army and quickly advanced through his training. Regrettably, the slight nervous twitch that showed up in his hands prevented his aspirations of targeting the enemy in the crosshairs. However, the Army saw the value and potential of his unique set of skills and so his military career had begun. His photographic memory had served him well on many tours of duty, and it was this rare ability that convinced his commander to make Aaron the top choice for this covert mission.

Sergeant Mathews gently rubbed the back of his knotted neck as the temperature in the sparsely furnished apartment still hovered close to ninety degrees because he knew the value of persevering in a mission when most would begin to melt in their duty. The credits of his recollections were just finishing their familiar scrolling when the last word started its upward trek on the unseen screen – “ONWARD.”

It was the inspiration of that one little word that had raised his spirits many times through the years. He often wondered what possessed his little sister to breathe that word of hope into his drowning soul at that kitchen table. The projector went dim, and the word faded, but not its power.

From his lofty vantage, he visually searched the few pre-dawn vendors as they pushed their carts along the sidewalk. He was mentally comparing the greenish images of each individual that passed in front of the glass entrance of the Al-Jazeera television station. He was analyzing each movement of their body, each fold of their garment and any motion that had an unnatural flow to it. Two more carts rumbled by the entrance with their masters laboring to control the direction of their wooden beasts as they lumbered over the cracks in the sidewalk. To the right of his peripheral vision, images of a fast-paced individual moved into his field of view. He watched the young man like a falcon studying the movements of its soon-to-be meal. Hands darted into the folds of a robe. Elbows bent in unnatural angles. Shoulder and neck both inched forward. The man's greenish robe caught a gust of an early morning breeze and puffed open. Mathews was in the habit of comparing his unnamed guests to certain animals. These movements and outlines teased his mind as he systematically matched this shadowy figure to a familiar creature. His gaze followed the suspect even though he walked past the large glass doors of the television station.

"This one is easy," he snickered. As he continued to watch, the mental match was complete and he spoke softly, "I will call you Mr. Killdeer."

Suddenly his brain stopped. Like the seizing of a hard drive in a computer, the disciplined soldier's mind flashed, "internal error." Something was not right. His head rocketed back to examine the front door of the station and out of the corner of his night scope, he caught a glimpse of a small boy darting off. He zeroed his focus in on the lower corners of the door frame. "Gotcha!" He spotted just a small corner of a light-colored package that was tucked into the half concealed corner of the entrance.

He spoke quickly into his microphone. "GO!" The two specialists, dressed in Arab garb, opened the downstairs door and quickly achieved the mission. He breathed a sigh of relief and murmured, "That was close." He remembered chasing a few killdeer birds as a youth. The clever little bird would always flick its neck and puff its wings to attract your attention and lead you away from the clandestine nest. He had almost fallen for that little fowl trick. Mathews recalled the parting words of his commander to his covert team, "Every tactical operation of these terrorists, regardless of the plan, is shrouded in deception and layered with distractions. This is why these bastards are so effective."

"Not tonight, Mr. Killdeer. Not tonight," he whispered as he waited for the small parcel to arrive.

The package contained a single video tape and had no markings on it except for one Arabic word handwritten on the dingy white label, "Allah."

Sergeant Mathews dutifully downloaded the contents of the apprehended video to the laptop and prepared it to be transmitted.

Five nautical miles off the eastern coast of Qatar, the USS Essex patiently trolled the waters of the Persian Gulf as Captain Jon Tulle ordered a full stop and then queried the communications operator to see if the transmission lock had been established from "ripper." Captain Tulle loved this ship; aptly nicknamed the "Iron Gator." This 44,000 ton amphibious assault ship was well acquainted with these turbulent waters of the Persian Gulf as she had been a key player in many multinational exercises in the Gulf with Kuwait, Oman and Qatar being just part of her neighborhood. Captain Tulle loved the sea and was one of the Navy's finest commanders, and his background in naval communications and covert missions suited him well for his ship to be the operations base for "Seam Ripper."

"Captain, we have a lock on the seam ripper transmission". The communications operator fine tuned a few more knobs and then waited for Sergeant Mathews to beam the data to the Essex.

Mathews waited, almost impatiently for the two-hour video to finish downloading to the computer before he could start the transmission.

"Why do they use a two-hour video tape for a 20-minute sermon?" Mathews sneered. The two Army specialists just shook their heads. "Crazy fools!" Mathews saw the video had almost finished and after more than an hour and a half of unused blank tape, felt like stopping the tape and starting the data transmission to the Essex. Staring at the blank screen had allowed him to remember the stiff knot

growing in the back of his neck, so he decided to stop the tape and moved his finger to the pause button. The faded images of that little killdeer distracting him as a boy from finding the obvious nest rumbled through his mind and he lifted his finger off the pause button and waited another few seconds for the tape to fully finish.

“Damn, I’m good!” shouted Mathews. The two other specialists turned to see the cause of the victory cry. The last 10 seconds of the two-hour video had three images quickly jump onto the screen. They were almost a blur as they flickered by, but when the tape was slowed down the images became clear. Mathews attached a short memo about the three images to the already bloated digital file. He then entered the code and the transmission started from the TSSR system that sat atop the roof of the apartment. This squatty looking microwave communications system began to hum as the data fired off from the small transmission dish. The Satellite Support Radio worked perfectly, and back on the USS Essex, the operator gave a thumbs-up to Captain Tulle. “Transmission completely received, sir.”

Captain Tulle smiled and gave the order for his lady to steer due east to greet the morning sun as it peeked just above the silent, watery horizon. Eight hours later, a message was sent to the “Ripper” that the video had been analyzed and concluded to be a typical morale booster for the misguided. There were no detectable codes, so under the cloak of darkness, the package was re-dropped the next evening at the Al-Jazeera television station. As for the three symbols at the tail end of the tape, the meanings were inconclusive. The next day the “sermon” was broadcast world-wide and it was beamed to the central United States using the EchoStar 1 satellite. The empty section of tape had been edited out and the symbols now immediately followed the impassioned religious speech. It did not go unnoticed.

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