

A
DEADLY
LIGHT

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to:

CHARLES WILLIAM AYER, SR.

1927-2003

Father, Mentor, Hero

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KANDAHAR PROVINCE, AFGHANISTAN

THE MAN ON THE HORSE RODE SILENTLY, his two guides chattering aimlessly in their native dialect as they led him to the hideout of the most wanted man in the world. He was dressed in native garb, but a quick glance at his face revealed that he had wandered far from home.

The hilly countryside around Kandahar was far more beautiful than he had expected, but hot. Off in the distance through the shimmering air he could see the terrain sloping down to the Anghandab River Valley and he couldn't help but compare it to the cold and gray of his native country. But then he put those thoughts out of his mind. His country was, of course, the most beautiful on Earth and its people superior. It was their destiny to lead the world. Any nation that foolishly believed otherwise would be dealt with in time.

It was, in fact, the first trip that Colonel Kang Dae Kim had ever taken outside the Korean peninsula and it might very well be the last, although one could never know. The Dear Leader was brilliant and infallible, of course, but he could be quixotic at times. But this was what he had been training for his entire life, and he was determined not only to do his duty but to justify the great expense that his leadership had incurred to make him what he was.

His horse snorted and started to tug impatiently at the reins. They must be approaching their destination, thought Colonel Kim. Good. It had been a long journey and he was tired, thirsty and hungry. But first, he knew, there would be business.

His horse stopped and the guides pulled up beside him.

“We have arrived,” said the one who seemed to be the leader. He spoke in Dari, which Colonel Kim spoke and understood perfectly. He was also completely fluent in Pashto, Persian, Urdu, a handful of dialects and, of course, Arabic.

The hostile sun bore down on him as he dismounted. He looked around, puzzled. He saw no encampment, no tents. In fact, he saw no signs of any human habitation. He felt a flash of concern, but not fear. These two young men would be no match for him under any circumstances; and he also knew that if he wasn't delivered safely to his upcoming meeting these men would not live to see the sun set.

“I'll show you the way,” said the guide.

They walked up a rocky, dry hill and then veered to the right down a steep, narrow path. There he was led through a small opening between two huge boulders. They walked about thirty feet down a dark, curving passageway and then turned right through another small opening that he never would have noticed on his own.

He was stunned to find himself standing in a large, cool, well lit space that felt more like a living room than a cave. It was irregularly shaped but must have been at least forty feet square. Exquisite carpets covered the hard packed earth and it was richly furnished with chairs, sofas and tables. A copy of the day's edition of *The Times of London* rested on one of the tables. There were numerous other openings around the space and he was sure that they led to other rooms. From one of them he heard the faint hum of what he assumed was a generator.

No wonder the entire Western world had been trying and failing for twenty years to find the man who sat before him. They could look another twenty and still fail.

Ali Aqbar bin Omar looked perhaps a little older and thinner than he had expected, but that had only been guesswork on his part since not a single photograph of the man was known to exist. Anyway, age and plastic surgery had rendered him unrecognizable to all but an intimate few. He could walk the streets of London, as he often did, and go completely unnoticed. Kim was impressed with the sheer

size of the man and the palpable force of his physical presence. He barked out some orders to the guides in clear, faultless Arabic and they fled.

“Welcome to Afghanistan, Colonel Kim,” he said, a friendly smile on his face. He spoke in the excellent Queen’s English that he had mastered so thoroughly during his five years at Eton followed by four at Oxford. He had loved his years in England, but that hadn’t stopped him from attempting to blow up the Mayfair Hotel while the Prince of Wales had been attending a dinner there. The attempt had failed, but he had been a young man then. Many, many successes had followed and he was now an infamous legend the world over. Osama bin Laden had been a small time thug by comparison and Al Qaeda a ragtag, ill trained regiment compared to his Pan Arabian Expeditionary Force. While Western leaders were braying about their hunting down of bin Laden and the dismantling of Al Qaeda, they were keeping publicly silent about bin Omar and the PAEF. Privately, they whispered fearfully among themselves.

“It is an honor to meet you, sir,” said Colonel Kim in equally faultless English, bowing slightly as he was handed a cool, refreshing lassi by a silent servant. He knew that this man was merely a monkey riding on the shoulders of the only true, world historical giant, the Dear Leader, but at the moment that was neither here nor there.

“The pleasure is mutual, Colonel,” said bin Omar. “I

assume that you have been receiving the requisite funding for your projects?”

“Yes we have, Sir,” said Colonel Kim, “and the Dear Leader asked me to convey his sincerest gratitude.”

“And I hope you are not finding the Iranians too troublesome.”

“Not at all,” said Kim, not completely truthfully. The Iranians could be arrogant bastards. “They are finding our nuclear technology extremely helpful and have been very generous financially in return.”

In fact, Ali Aqbar bin Omar, although he detested the Iranians, was almost completely dependent on them for funding. His own father, Sultan Omar al Fariq, had succeeded in almost completely shutting off any direct flow of funds from the Russians and his other rich sponsors in the West. Without the financial support of the Iranians and the Chinese, his much feared PAEF would be, for all intents and purposes, out of business.

“So everything remains on schedule then?” said bin Omar.

“Yes, sir,” said Kim, “I see no significant obstacles.”

They spent the next few hours transacting some details of their business until all was settled. Then cocktails were served. Bin Omar consumed several large tumblers of Glenmorangie Scotch, while Kim treated himself to a small glass of Maker’s Mark bourbon. He had been trained

to appreciate fine liquors, provided from the Dear Leader's own private stock, so that he would be able to handle them if the occasion ever presented itself. He told himself that it was a decadent Western habit that he had mastered merely in order to perform his duties, but public duties can become private passions, and he cherished Maker's Mark.

They enjoyed a long, lavish dinner that had seemingly appeared out of nowhere, and then, after coffee and informal conversation, Kim had been shown to his sleeping quarters. It was a small but well furnished room with a comfortable looking bed, which was made to look even more comfortable and welcoming by the presence of a token of bin Omar's hospitality: a young, beautiful, completely naked young woman. She couldn't have been more than sixteen, thought Kim, but her voluptuous body and seductive smile overwhelmed him with desire. It was rumored that bin Omar himself was more partial to young boys, a habit that Kim found both abhorrent as well as mystifying, especially in the presence of such delectable feminine beauty.

They made love, if he could call it that, three times that night. He had been well instructed in the ways of women and sex as part of his training but, despite her youth, the girl had been passionate and compliant in ways he'd found novel. His training partners had all been fellow Koreans, some sex slaves from the South but mostly fellow countrywomen from the North. They had all been exquisitely beautiful and

deeply satisfying, but the concept of “love” remained to him an abstract term, a word from a vocabulary quiz. He had to admit, though, that the young Afghani girl lying beside him had elicited feelings from him that he had never felt before. Perhaps joy? Fulfillment? He could hardly say. He eventually fell deeply, peacefully asleep.

When he awoke in the morning she was gone. He knew that by now she was probably dead, lying in a dry stream bed with her throat slit, perhaps already being consumed by hungry local scavengers. There was nothing to be done about it. Having sex with him had made her unclean in the eyes of her clan; if he had refused her she would have been judged a shameful failure and been dispatched anyway. He wanted to think that she had probably known that. But in any event, he had more important things to think about. Remorse had not been part of his training.

He and bin Omar finalized their plans over a satisfying breakfast of fresh fruit, yogurt made from goat’s milk and cold rice, served with steaming, shockingly strong coffee. When they were finished they stood up and shook hands.

“*Salaam aleikum,*” said bin Omar. “I look forward to our next meeting.” They were the first words that he had uttered to Kim in Arabic.

“*Salaam aleikum,*” said Kim. “As do I.”

“A thousand points of light,” said bin Omar.

“A thousand points of light,” Kim replied.

They exchanged a brief, almost imperceptible nod of understanding and then the two guides from the day before led him out of the cave.



It was a long, hot, tiring ride that took most of the day, but they finally got to a point that Kim knew was only a couple of miles from the place where a truck would pick him up and bring him back into Pakistan. He stopped as if to rest and the guides pulled up beside him.

“Do you need water?” asked the leader.

“No, thank you,” replied Kim, “I just have to go and relieve myself.”

He dismounted from his horse and began to walk off toward a nearby boulder. The two guides turned their backs to him to wait politely. After walking a few steps Kim silently turned back toward the two guides, slid a pistol from his voluminous robe and put a single bullet into the back of each man’s head.

Like the young girl, they too had probably known their fate. They are so much like my countrymen, thought Kim: They do their duty and they never complain.