Putting on the Armor By Robert Tackett

It occurred one hideously hot night in July of 2005. An incident, a nightmare, a revelation that will forever be burned in my psyche.

 I had been doing my normal daily routine while assigned to the MFO 48. Multi-Force Observers, Contingent 48. We were a group from multiple countries, assigned to act as liaisons between Egypt and Israel. To keep the peace and ensure no shenanigans occurred. My unit was stationed at South Camp, just outside a small tourist town called Sharm El-Sheikh. And it was so hot! Dry heat was the worst, even the breath you breathed would burn your throat. We needed something in front of our faces to cool down the hot air we breathed. My normal routine consisted of conducting morning sick call at our local Troop Medical Center, followed by a company and then a battalion briefing, Then, going to the gym or the beach for an hour or so. Then lunch. Lunch we ate in the British ran chowhall, awesome food every single day! A daily briefing conference call to the Battalion Surgeon after lunch. And I usually closed up shop at the aid station by three or four pm. Then the evenings were mine!

 I usually had time for a swim, snorkel or scuba diving session. But sometimes, I went to the gym to practice my martial arts. I had an easy, peasy deployment so far.

This particular night would set the tone and cement my belief in the Good Lord. Little would I know that just a few days later, we would be hit with the largest, surprise terrorist attack, Egypt had ever seen. Now do not get it twisted, I am a sinner. I have no idea why I have been spared and given so many chances to live when I had deliberately chosen to take the wrong path and challenge death himself, so many times.

It was getting late, I had already showered in the hot, dry evening. No one would ever think to go to sleep at night without showering first! The very thought of sweat and dust from the day getting into your bed was gross and disgusting , and very unhygienic! I went to bed around 9pm, as I regularly did. I fell asleep as soon as I told myself to. I had this uncanny knack for falling asleep instantly and also waking up instantly, fully aware of my surroundings. As soon as my eyes open, I am instantly aware of my surroundings, the same as if I had not even been sleeping. Well rested, ready to react, to defend, to fight. I think of it as a gift.

I do not dream. I do not even remember the last time I dreamt. Many people tell me I do dream, I must dream, right? We dream to decompress and we dream to have our subconscious find solutions that our waking minds cannot. We dream for many reasons. Yet, here I am. If I do dream, I do not remember it in the least. I believe that the reason I do not dream is to keep me safe from the memories of all the horrible things, I have experienced in my long life, here on earth. The images of the battle torn dead, the mangled bodies, the faces of the children…the children.

This night would be different. This night, if it was a dream, it would be the most realistic dream ever in the history of dreams! I was laying in bed, with a cool sheet over my body, drifting off. When suddenly I felt an extremely evil presence close by. My martial arts training has taught me to be hyperaware of negative energy around oneself. You, yourself, can understand what I am trying to explain. If you are sitting in a room with your back to the door and someone who is mad comes in behind you, you can tell right away because you feel that negative energy without ever seeing the person. We all have this ability to some extent. Some more than others.

I felt the evil outside my hootch coming nearer. My light was not on, yet I had ambient glow from the hallway lights, enough to see in the dark. I froze in fear! What was this evil? I wondered to myself. As I lay there, I could feel it moving along the wall towards the doorway at the front of the hootch. I couldn’t move. I felt it come through the door and began down the hallway in my direction. I knew, without a doubt, it was looking for me, searching me out. Me? Why me? My mind screamed out in silence.

As it came abreast of my door, it’s shadow blocked out the light and my room went dark! Darker than anything I can remember. I was frozen in place. This dark evil had some sort of power over my body. It wouldn’t allow me to move. To scream out in sheer terror! Oh, how I wanted to. I was helpless. Then like smoke, it wafted underneath my door and reformed inside my room. I could almost discern it’s form. It was blacker than the darkest shadow, towering over me like death. My room grew instantly cold. As if I was in a frozen tundra. No sound could be heard. Not the normal sounds of an active military base, nothing. I was alone in my cold, quiet room and I wouldn’t have been surprised if this had been the devil himself, come for my sinner’s soul.

I tried to speak. My throat tightened, frozen, no sound could be made. I tried to get out of bed, my body was paralyzed in fear. I was helpless. Then the evil thing glided to my bed and sat down on it, near my feet. I felt the small bed shift as it’s weight caused me to slide closer, almost touching the evil creature! I screamed out in my mind for help! My voice useless! “Help me, Jesus”! I begged! “Don’t let it take me”! I pleaded. I could feel tears welling up in my eyes. My throat was constricted, barely able to breathe. A weight was upon my chest, I was done for.

My mind calmed for just a moment, it was all I needed. I remembered a long time ago, sometime when I was a young child living in Lemoore, California, I was in Sunday School at the Mary Immaculate Queen school and one of the sisters was speaking about The Armor of God. I vividly remember her saying when we felt distressed, we should imagine ourselves putting on the Lord’s Armor. It would protect us from evil. I brushed it off at the time as just another way to get us to come to the light, to come to the Lord. I wasn’t having any of that, I thought to myself at the time.

Now here I was, in a fight for my life, for my very soul, I was sure of it. I imagined armor, beautiful armor. Armor like from King Arthur’s day.

I was so cold! I was frozen! I could not move a muscle! Yet here I was thinking of God’s Armor, in my head. The evil creature’s hand reaching for me. In my mind’s eye, I imagined the chest piece, bright shiny and silver, front and back slamming over me, like a child’s cartoon. Gauntlets and boots encasing my hands and feet. The cold, dark hand paused. I continued to imagine the helmet, sliding down over my own head. The creature’s hand pulled back. A beautiful shield and sword sprung into my hands, raised up to defend and counterattack!

I screamed at the top of my mind’s voice, “I wear the Armor of God”! And the deep darkness was gone in an instant. My prayer answered. Normal shadows and the natural light from the night were easily seen. I could move again. No longer frozen in fear, in despair. I sat up and looked around the room. The only thing I could see was my combat body armor and helmet sitting in the corner of my small room on top of my M2 Blackhawk aid bag. No sign of what I had just experienced. No sign of an evil demon. No sign of the dark presence. I was safe! I was free!

 Now, many years have passed since that life altering day in the dusty desert of a faraway country. But I do remember that when things get bad, very bad, I remember to calm my soul and imagine putting on The Armor of God.

Now, I do not tell this story to many people. I have only spoken of it a few times with my own children and one or two of my very close friends who would understand. Others will never believe as I do. Who could believe such an outlandish tale of good versus evil? Others will never see the world as I do. And I understand that enlightenment is not for everyone. As for me and my family, we have our Armor.