

PRAISE FOR BRETT ARMSTRONG

This dystopian science fiction is a heart-stopping adventure from start to finish!

IND'TALE MAGAZINE

What a rollercoaster ride! Armstrong has written a story filled with intrigue and danger. I enjoyed the way that the story kept me guessing what was going to happen next

GOODREADS REVIEW

It finally happened. I officially like dystopia. This book has brought me to the truth that this genre can be very entertaining while weaving God's word in the story.

GOODREADS REVIEW

*“O God! Thy arm was here, and not to us, but to Thy arm alone,
ascribe we all.” – William Shakespeare, Henry V, Act IV, scene 8,
line 111*

*This book is dedicated the glory of God without Whom there are no
words worthy of writing and to my wife, Shelly, who inspires me to
pursue my dreams and the beauty of true love.*

Tomorrow's Edge Trilogy Two

VEILED SUN

BRETT ARMSTRONG



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Second Edition

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I cannot reiterate enough my incredible thanks to all of the readers over the years who have shown such love and support for this book and the *Tomorrow's Edge* series. *Veiled Sun* was a long overdue labor of love when it first released and it did right on the cusp of the COVID-19 pandemic's start. During the pandemic I was barely a writer, much less an author, but there were still so many moments where readers shared something about it that made me feel like the effort and story were 100% worth it. The pandemic was a dark time for everyone, but as an author, the support I received during that time helped make it a bit brighter.

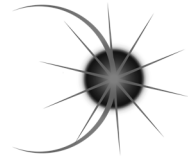
I must thank the original publisher, Stephanie Griffin, for publishing this story. Likewise, I will always struggle to reach a display of sufficient gratitude to my publisher, Linda Fulkerson and Expanse Books, for taking on the *Tomorrow's Edge* series. This book in particular was special to me and having the chance to bring it afresh to the readers who have been with *Tomorrow's Edge* from the beginning is a blessing.

I'd like to thank my editors for helping me sharpen the manuscript. *Veiled Sun* has some ambitious themes and getting those to shine through while keeping a taut pace and interesting story is something I happily embraced their help to accomplish.

My family's limitless support and patience and encouragement make every writing endeavor possible. Especially during the times when writing this really wrecked me and they were there to help me hold together.

Most of all the grace of God daily to have the phenomenal privilege to write the words He places on my heart, however imperfectly, and give glimpses through them of the Way, the Truth, and the Life and His unfailing love and wisdom.

PROLOGUE



“Let us be eager to leave behind what is familiar for what is true.”
—Francis Chan

June 15, 2039

IAN MCINTYRE SAT QUIETLY in the padded booth of the restaurant, staring out the tall, rectangular window to his left. Nothing outside drew particular interest. It was just what he did to keep from scanning the crowd in the diner. His hands were placed neatly before him, overlapping to keep from anxious fidgeting. His mobile device was disassembled in his pocket.

Looking out the window gave his eyes something to hold on to while he waited for the inevitable. Four years ago, today, Ian’s son, Alverson, had gotten word to him that he would be leaving the country on an assignment for the CIA. Alverson hadn’t expected to come back, alive. He had uncovered the truth about the initiative Ian had begun—Project Alexandria. It was supposed to provide ubiquitous access to all human knowledge to the entire world.

Everything man had ever known would be kept in Project Alexandria and soon only in Project Alexandria. The backers of

the project hadn't shared his noble intentions. Though this truth was a death sentence, Alverson had passed it on. And though he had been a grown man, with children who were grown themselves, Ian mourned for him as though he were the little boy who pushed his toy cars around on the living room couch and pretended to be James Bond. How could he not?

Ian's fingers, unbidden, drummed on the table for several seconds before he realized what he was doing and stopped himself.

Where is she?

Evelyn Lily was many things, especially to him, but late was not something she permitted to be attached to her name. More troubling given the nature of their meeting. Project Alexandria belonged to her as well, though he shouldered the blame for the project becoming the monstrosity the federal government was making it. Ian wanted it to bring light to dark lands, to share the Gospel with all men, but he had compromised. The Gospel would be only an element of Project Alexandria's content. The lighthouse morphed to library. In the years since taking over leadership of the endeavor, Dr. Victor Almundson, had transformed it still further, turning it into a tool of deception and domination. The doctor preferred the terms "security" and "uniformity" in speeches.

Ian tried to cover up the nervous tapping by cracking his knuckles. He winced. Not a wise choice at his age. Joints cracked and creaked quite well already, no need for him to aggravate his old bones. Absently he stroked his graying stubble of a beard and started to stand, too anxious to sit still for his late friend.

Before he got up, a slender woman with brunette hair a few shades lighter than his own and streaked with silver, sat down in front of him. He eased back into his seat. Evelyn had just caught him. He started to say just as much, but his eyes began to report subtle differences. Distinctions between the woman before him and the one he expected. A sigh escaped his lips. "Hello, Rosalyn. Your sister isn't coming, is she?"

A smile, made sad by the somber gleam in her eyes, told everything. Still, Rosalyn replied, "No, she's not. It's not safe for either of you anymore."

"I'm here aren't I?" he countered, but there was no accusation in his voice. Evelyn had invited him to go into hiding with her, and he had flatly refused. Who could hold it against her when she tried to save her own life?

"Yes, you are," Rosalyn confirmed, slumping a little as she said it. She was wearing a rather nondescript outfit, hardly bespeaking the fact that she owned the restaurant they were in. Apparently, she was apprehensive just being seen with him.

A wry smile worked its way onto his lips, wondering how big the target on his back must have become. This wasn't the first time someone had wished him dead, but it was the first time his country's government was the wisher. It seemed his service during the Cloud Wars wasn't worth remembering.

"She hasn't gone, yet," Rosalyn intoned, her expression imploring. Of the two sisters her temperament was much milder, more subdued. Rosalyn practiced, while Evelyn was passionate. Ian had to avert his gaze, pained by the look in her eyes. She reached out and held his hand.

"You haven't either," Ian observed, clearing his throat.

A faint streak of rouge touched Rosalyn's high cheeks. Her eyes darted away for a moment and then returned to his, a new intensity, determination, within them. "Yes, well, no one is out to get me. I'm just a restaurateur."

It was difficult for Ian to perceive Rosalyn as a simple restaurateur. Even if he hadn't noticed there was something more going on behind those glossy blue eyes, he knew she was more. "That wasn't how things looked during the Cloud Wars. As I recall, you were as valued for the cause as your sister. More." His eyebrows raised to accentuate the point.

"Years ago," she replied, voice low. "I've been running this restaurant far longer than any of my other activities."

There had been some inflection on the "other". He didn't

press the point even if he thought she was being naïve about her safety. They both knew with Alverson gone, Ian was vulnerable. Dr. Almundson was a true monster. His background in psychology likely played heavily into that fact. He knew how people thought and used it against them.

“You still haven’t ordered anything yet,” Rosalyn observed, her gentle voice breaking into his thoughts. She had such a tenderness about her, which was a marvel to Ian.

“Ah, then I suppose I ought to then,” he answered. “Wouldn’t want to upset the establishment’s owner.”

She smiled in response, a warm, sincere expression. Ian badly needed to see it. “I have a feeling the owner will be forgiving toward you,” she answered, a conspiratorial edge overtaking her smile.

“All the same,” Ian replied, pulling back from the all-too-easy banter and eyeing the menu. “I should order. A few errands to run today,” he finished weakly.

Without batting an eye, she asked, “What will you be having?”

“Is there anything I haven’t tried yet?” he asked, genuinely curious. Rosalyn had a habit of trying out new things on him and her sister before they made the menu.

“Hm, on there, no,” she answered, verifying with a glance at the menu. “I have something new I’ve been toying with, kind of spicy though.”

He appraised her expression for a moment and said, “I’m up for an adventure.”

Looking pleased, she stood. “Coming right up.”

As she walked away, he did his best to not let his eyes follow her. Keeping a certain distance from her had become a necessity. Painful as it might have been, he couldn’t have her by his side if things went poorly.

Lord, help me. You know my heart's intentions were good. I should have been bolder ... not compromised. Help me undo this disaster!

There was no great light shining down around him as he

finished his silent prayer. No voice, not even a whisper. Just the casual bustle of the café. Once more, he took to staring out the window. A minute or two later, a waitress brought his plate of steaming food, heavy with exotic spiced scents.

"Thank you," Ian acknowledged. Saying a brief prayer of thanks, he gripped his fork tight and dug in. A few moments later, a figure approached him.

Looking up he saw a teenage girl, local, barely of modern working age. It was the waitress who had just brought his food. Her ID tag read, "Kendra." She had an expectant look in her eyes and was holding a mobile out. The holoprojection was disabled, but the device was lit up indicating an active call.

Ian drew in a sharp breath. His mobile was disassembled in his pocket, because he could no longer trust it to not pick up his words at times when it should not. He raised a silvery eyebrow to the girl.

"It belongs to the couple over there," she stated pointing to a table some feet away with a middle-aged man and woman in university apparel sitting there. They eyed him with a curious trepidation. "They don't know who called, but they said he asked for you by name and knew where you were sitting."

"Thank you," Ian replied and took the mobile with a put-on smile.

He waited until the waitress had walked away before saying in hushed tones, "Ian McIntyre speaking."

"Hello, professor. It's been some time since we spoke. You've become a hard man to reach," a smooth, even-voiced speaker stated.

"Amar, isn't it? Hain ... You've moved up in the world, haven't you?"

"One could say that. One could also say you should know better than try to get away with anything. The State isn't blind, you know."

"I can imagine your NSA ensures that. But seeing and sensibility aren't a package deal I suppose," he retorted.

A few seconds of silence. Amar's voice became more ingratiating. "Professor, you need to think about what you're trying to do. If you succeed, you'll be destroying our nation and if you fail, which you will, I can assure you your treason won't go unpunished."

"Threats and boasts do not belong together, Hain," Ian pointed out. "You would not need the former if you could deliver on the latter."

All warmth and superficial cordiality drained from the agent's words. "Riddles and pithy sayings won't save you or those deemed your accomplices. Alverson won't be the only one to suffer for your folly if you—"

"When I reveal the 'Veiled Sun' Hain, you will regret your words, deeply. Now, if you'll excuse me, I believe you've depleted more of that lovely couple's mobile battery stores than necessary to make your point."

"Whatever you're trying, I will beat you, McIntyre. No more riddles. No more games."

"I agree. No more games, Agent Amar. Goodbye."

Ian flipped the mobile over and removed the battery. A faint smile, of one tasting a bittersweet victory, crossed his lips. He placed a tip on the table and brought the mobile back over to the waitress. "Give the couple my apologies. A student wanted to dispute his failing grade."

As he hurried out the door, Ian squinted at the sudden brightness and held a hand, visor-like over his eyes. He glanced up. There, bold and plain as could be was a familiar sight. The moon.

"Well day moon, things are falling in place, hm?" he mused. Ian stood there a few seconds regarding the sight with interest. A brief calm before the storm began.