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THE
GUARDIANS



PARALLEL OPS BOOK 3

From their floating base in the Caribbean, a multi-national team seeks to protect a secret hidden deep beneath the sea.

Prologue

(Sunday, March 16, 2008)

Tony Nicoletti looked over his shoulder again to see if he was being followed and when he saw no one, he put his head down and ran as hard as his fifty-six year old body would allow him to move. The Mexican sky was coal black and it was pouring down rain, but he brushed his hair back and laughed. This was the first time he'd been outdoors in more than five years and the rain felt exhilarating.

Headlights on his right quickly brought him back to the reality of the moment. He ducked behind a metal control box and held his breath. Had they found him already?

A white pickup slowed to cross the runway and then sped off into the low fog that was settling over Cancun International Airport.

Tony looked back in the direction he had come and stared at the silhouette of the rusty, run-down hangar that served as the entrance to a secret military complex located far below the ground. Known as MX-2, the facility had been his prison for the past five years, three months and six days and tonight had been his first opportunity to escape. Especially light Sunday night security and a malfunction in the ankle bracelet he'd been forced to wear had allowed him to sneak into the facility's only elevator and make the six-story trip up to ground level undetected. However, the small Sunday crew would also make his absence more conspicuous and he needed to get as far away from MX-2 as he could before he was missed.

Now completely soaked to the skin, Tony scanned his surroundings. The deteriorating weather conditions and the lack of any obvious options in this remote part

of the airport made him decide to head to the right, the direction the truck had come. After a distance of only a hundred yards or so, the airport service road pitched down slightly and he could see the lights of several small buildings at the bottom of the short slope. He approached carefully and found an overhang on the nearest building where he could get out of the rain and catch his breath.

Over the noise of the rain pounding on the roof above him, Tony heard a siren in the distance. As the sound approached, his heart raced. Suddenly, the flashing blue lights of a Mexican police car whizzed by the opposite end of the building and continued on into the night.

“A road!” he laughed out loud. Sure enough, the building he was hiding behind was situated on a dark road that ran along the perimeter of the airport. Quietly, he inched his way down the wall, looked both ways and slipped away into the dreary night.