

Moon Hoax

By

Paul Gillebaard

It is hard to believe that half a century has gone by since President John F. Kennedy presented a bold challenge before a joint session of Congress and said, “Send a man to the moon and bring him back safely by the end of the decade...” Many political opponents derided the dream as lunacy but others found it as a strategic step towards winning the cold war between the US and the Soviet Union.

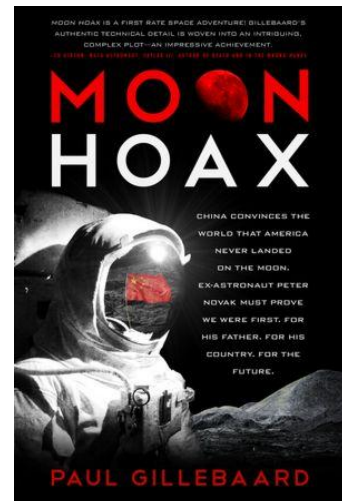
While the vast majority of the world was riveted to the television and rejoiced in the sight of Neil Armstrong hopping on the lunar surface, a small but persistent group claimed that it was all a hoax conjured up by NASA and the US government to get an edge during the cold war. Perhaps Armstrong auditioned for George Lucas and a Hollywood crew on the remote edges of the Tunisian Desert (yeah, the desert scenes of *The Star Wars* were indeed filmed there!) for the future role of Luke Skywalker under the watchful eyes of the Jedi master.

It is in this context that Paul Gillebaard has woven a beautiful story entitled *Moon Hoax* about a state-sponsored effort by China to publicly disgrace the US by undermining its celebrated claim of having landed on the moon. If China could destroy the evidence of moon landings altogether, then the US would be unable to launch any credible rebuttal to disprove the Chinese propaganda.

To combat the Chinese efforts, the US enlists Peter Novak, a CIA agent and the son of Tom Novak, a former moonwalker. Suave, charming, bold, technologically adept and slightly mischievous, Novak will remind the readers of James Bond. Peter accepts the mission partly to restore his father’s name as a moonwalker and repair the reputation of the U.S. in light of the persuasive and increasingly successful propaganda by the Chinese.

In a strange twist, a Russian cosmonaut named Viktor Alexandrov comes to Peter’s aid. Viktor is indebted to Tom Novak for life for a career-saving favor that preserved the stratospheric prestige the Alexandrov family would have in Russia. Peter and Viktor’s children, Dmitri and Anya, are childhood friends from the days their father’s trained together for the Apollo-Soyuz mission.

Peter has not seen Anya since childhood. Armed with a doctorate in Physics from Georgetown University, Anya is a top scientist in Russia. She reenters his life during the struggles with Moon Hoax “with jet black hair falling past her shoulders. She wore a short, form-fitting black business skirt and a white blouse, unbuttoned aggressively low. She completed this classy yet seductive ensemble with a



beautiful pair of sexy high-heeled black boots; Peter's favorite. She was dressed to impress. This was a woman Peter wanted to meet."

Moon Hoax skillfully taunts the reader through the remote possibility that the hoax might be true with the drama contained in a thriller where the carefully orchestrated moves of a villain are clumsily matched by the awkward steps of the protagonist creating the illusion that the villain is winning. Whether the U.S. could launch a successful clandestine mission to revisit the moon and stake its claim once again is the story Paul Gillebaard narrates in the book.



Given that the bulk of the story takes place in Washington, D.C., the plot is mired in the quintessential Washingtonian politics, dirty politics, back stabbing and jealousies that are entrenched in the capital city only to be matched by the vile ambitions of a rogue nation. The question is whether political chicanery would ultimately succumb to scientific imperatives and the camaraderie of astronauts that transcend political boundaries.

Moon Hoax is a delightful novel. Though the premise is science and space exploration, it is a human story about men and women, their emotions and relationships, loyalties and animosities. The story is fast paced, the writing is straightforward but contains thoroughly researched material, its twists and turns are as exhilarating as an Olympic luge race and the unfolding of the plot as visual as watching a George Lucas movie.

Moon Hoax is published by Dream Access Books in Rancho Santa Margarita. The author, Paul Gillebaard, is a mechanical engineering graduate from Cal State Fullerton. It is a great read and a greater gift to other readers.

The End

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