

# Without Explanation

*A True Story of Love and Loss in the Jungle*

ROD JASMER



# Chapter 10

*Santa Elena / Flores, Peten*

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**E**ven from my limited vantage point, I could tell we'd reached a more populated area, though the first structures we passed appeared meager and in various levels of disrepair. I had no idea how large the town was, though it seemed large enough to support a commercial business base, in which case a hospital would certainly be part of its infrastructure. We'd made the trip to the edge of civilization in less time than our driver's initial estimate of one hour.

"I think we're close," Jenn said to the group. Julie looked up and provided a slight nod.

In an area indistinguishable from the residential neighborhoods we'd just passed, the ambulance suddenly stopped. I could see a larger building in the distance but no hospital name and

only some dim lighting on the inside. *We made it*, I thought, not really concerning myself with how the outside looked.

We continued CPR but tried to study our new surroundings. I looked out the front window again and this time noticed a formidable metal gate preventing us from proceeding farther.

“You should have called ahead,” were the first words out of my mouth. “I asked you to call. We should have . . .”

The truck’s horn pierced the otherwise still night air, and my remaining words were lost. The driver clenched his teeth as he pushed hard on the center of the steering wheel and stared at the obstacle in front of him. I heard the ambulance’s rear door open and glanced to my left just in time to see Jenn exit and close the door in one motion. Ludovic, Julie and I continued CPR without missing a compression. How could we arrive at the hospital and not get in? My mind tried to comprehend how something so unbelievable could happen.

After the next two rescue breaths, I looked out the window and saw someone scaling the gates just in front of the truck. “Is that Jenn?” A nod from Julie confirmed the person climbing the gate was indeed Jennifer. With assistance from the park ranger, Jenn climbed to the top of the gate, made it over, and disappeared out of sight.

Jenn ran to what she assumed was the front entrance, grabbed the handles of the glass doors, and started shaking them and screaming. The building, as well as the surrounding area, was dark, but she had traveled a long way and had no intention of being denied entry.

The combination of flashing lights, sirens, pounding fists, and yelling eventually reached a person inside, and a single light turned on inside the doorway. The woman under the light

didn't look particularly interested in helping anyone, much less opening the door to someone wildly beating on glass and yelling in the middle of the night. Jenn continued to express her desire to enter, and it seemed the woman inside wanted only for the commotion to stop, but eventually realized Jenn wouldn't simply go away. She motioned Jenn to go around the building to the back, and from the look on her face, she didn't intend to open the front door.

Turning away from the door, Jenn quickly realized she had another problem. She could neither get in the building—as the person inside had already left and turned off the light—nor could she reach the ambulance without climbing over the iron gates. The boost from the park ranger that had propelled her over the gate was not available on this side of the fence. Without time to dwell on complex alternatives, Jenn noticed a metal-legged chair to her left and positioned it in front of the gate. She moved back and ran at the chair. One foot on the chair and the other on the first crossbeam of the gate, Jenn miraculously hoisted herself up and over the iron barricade.

Jenn directed the ambulance driver to move parallel to the hospital and down a small street. *How could the ambulance driver not know where the emergency entrance is located?* I thought. We made a quick left turn into an alleyway, and the ambulance stopped again.

This time we all exited, and a sense of renewed hope washed over me. We were only seconds away from getting to the emergency room and securing the help Valerie needed. Though we had no idea of the name of the facility or even the town we were in, considering where we'd come from, I was thankful to be at the hospital.