

## Chapter 1—Kidnapped

**S**orry I came home late, dear,” Ernest Glick apologized to his wife while they ate supper.

“Did you forget we wanted to go with Papa to the evening service at El Paste?” Bonnie asked.

“I didn’t forget,” the young missionary answered. “I just had too much to do.”

“Well, I was ready, and I had dressed Nathan too,” Bonnie said. “Then you didn’t come home until nine.”

“I’m sorry,” he repeated. “Do you feel let down?”

“Oh, just a little. Never mind. It’s just that it was the last chance we had to go before we move.” She picked a piece of lint from Nathan’s diaper. “Isn’t it strange that Papa hasn’t come back yet? He usually passes here at ten.”

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“Maybe he already drove by, and we didn’t hear the van,” Ernest answered, running his fingers through his blond hair. Not wanting to upset Bonnie, he tried to hide his concern. His father had gone as usual to hold a preaching service at El Paste, a mountain community twenty-five kilometers (fifteen miles) away. Now it was almost 11:00 p.m. As far as Ernest knew, his father hadn’t returned.

Ernest hated to think of his father still being on the El Paste road. Hugging the side of the El Chingo volcano on the Guatemalan border, the desolate dirt road wound within several feet of the unbarricaded frontier line. Bandits from both El Salvador and Guatemala hopped back and forth across the border to escape capture. Notorious for lawlessness, El Paste had no police force.

Trying to dismiss the thought of danger, Ernest turned back to Bonnie. “How did your day go, dear?”

“Fine,” she answered. “How was yours? Did you get a lot done?”

Ernest nodded. “I almost finished the wiring. The workmen are nearly done with the plastering too. You should see how different the house looks now. If things keep going as well as they did today, we should be able to move in a week or two.”

Bonnie looked around the adobe home she and Ernest had shared for the last year and a half. “It’ll be hard to leave,” she said softly. “But I’m looking forward to settling where I know God wants us to serve Him.”

Just two months earlier, on November 29, 1992, twenty-three-year-old Ernest had been ordained to the ministry. The church was sending him and

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Bonnie to a remote area of El Salvador to help start a new mission outreach.

Ernest smiled. “Won’t it feel good, Bonnie, to put down roots after wondering so long whether we’d go or stay? The more time I spend there, the more I look forward to moving.”

Bonnie nodded and smiled as she got up to carry the sleeping baby to his crib. Moments later she was hurrying back to Ernest in the kitchen.

“Listen, Ernest!” Bonnie exclaimed. “Isn’t that the van? Why, it’s stopping here. I wonder why.”

Ernest shrugged. “Maybe Papa wants to tell us something.”

But when Ernest opened the door and peered into the night, he saw it wasn’t his father. Instead, a young Salvadoran man ran to meet him.

“What’s the matter, Loncho?” Ernest called.

“Something terrible happened!” Loncho’s voice trembled.

“What happened?” Ernest demanded.

“Robbers stopped us.” Loncho’s haunted eyes searched Ernest’s. In a hushed tone, he said, “They kept your father up on the mountain. They also captured some of the girls. They want you to take one hundred thousand colons up tomorrow. You have to go alone. They said if you don’t get there before two in the afternoon, they’ll kill your father.”

Ernest shivered as he stared at Loncho. The moonlight revealed the fear and dread etched on his friend’s face. “What do you think we should do, Loncho?”

“Look,” Loncho whispered, “I have to take home all the people who went to church. After that, I’ll go

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inform the families of the captured girls. Why don't you go tell your mother? Try to keep her calm. I'll come back as soon as I can to give you more details. Wait for me at your parents' house."

As Loncho drove out of sight, Ernest turned to his wife. Bonnie had heard everything. Wide-eyed and breathless, she threw herself into Ernest's arms. Forcing himself to remain calm, he said tensely, "Bonnie, we have to go tell Mama. I don't know how long we may need to stay with her. Take plenty of clothes and diapers for Nathan. Also, let's ask your sister Julie if she and Juan want to go with us."

*How can I tell Mama?* wondered Ernest, as he put on his shoes. *How can she take any more?*

## Chapter 2—Shock

**V**erda looked at the clock again. It was almost 11:00 p.m. She brushed back a straying gray hair, and with it tried to sweep away a nagging thought. *Why is Eli so late getting back from El Paste? Church dismisses at nine. It usually takes an hour to drive back, so he should have been here at ten. He's a whole hour late.*

She tried to console herself by remembering other times when she had worried needlessly about her husband. In their twenty-six years of mission work in El Salvador, Eli had been late many times. And many times Verda had feared the worst. But Eli had always come back, bringing logical explanations.

Now she reminded herself that just a few months earlier he had returned from El Paste at 11:00 p.m. That time he had been delayed because his pickup