

Excerpt from Chapter 9

Julie was finishing her coffee when she heard the sound from off in the distance. It was a terrible shrieking sound she at first mistook for the call of the howler monkey. This struck her as somewhat weird since she had been told the monkey's cries were primarily nocturnal. As the noise continued she soon realized it was not the cry of a monkey. This was different. It was a cry of pain and agony, a human cry. Then above it she heard another sound. It was the shouts of Onofre's men, but she did not understand what they were saying.

Still mostly asleep, Trisia had not heard the first sound. She was, however, awakened by the shouts of Onofre's men just as she was climbing out of her sleeping bag underneath the mosquito netting. Seeing Trisia emerge from the tent Julie called to her across the small clearing where the scientists had camped, "Can you tell what they're saying?"

Trisia stood up and stretched her small, thin frame to try to shake off the sleep, then turned towards where the sound was coming from. "It sounds as if someone is injured," she replied to Julie.

As she said this one of Onofre's men came running into the scientist's camp. Julie recognized him. It was Santos, whom she had originally met on their first trip to Caracol when he was working as a guide in training for the resort.

"What is it Santos?" Julie said to him.

"Do you have any first aid kit?" he asked, his normally good English failing him somewhat due to his excitement.

"Yes, I think so," she said back to him then turned to rouse Kevin, who was still asleep. "Kevin, Kevin do you have a first aid kit handy?"

"Please ma'am. Quickly. One of the men is badly injured," Santos said, catching his breath.

"Kevin," Julie called out more loudly, stubbing her foot into his prone body as she did, "we need a first aid kit RIGHT NOW!"

Julie's foot in his side quickly got Kevin's attention. He pulled the upper half of his body out from his mosquito netting. Leaning out of the tent to where his pack lay he reached into it and grabbed the kit. Tossing it over to Santos he said, "This is a basic kit but I have other supplies if necessary. Do you know what's wrong with the injured man?"

Santos did not wait around to reply to Kevin. Catching the kit Kevin had tossed him, he turned and ran back towards the camp of Onofre's men, then beyond it, to where the cries of the injured man emanated.

Both Julie and Trisia quickly pulled their shoes on and ran off in the direction of the cries. Kevin rustled through his pack, grabbed some other medical supplies and hastily hurried after them barefoot. They all

ran in the direction from which the cries came, the same direction Santos had run towards moments before.

As they approached the source of the noise they saw a small group of men standing a few feet from a patch of dense undergrowth. Just past them, standing to his waist in the undergrowth, was Santos who appeared to be reaching out to someone. It was one of the workers, a middle aged porter named Carlos who lived near the ranch.

It was Carlos' anguished voice they heard crying out in pain. Something seemed to have a hold of him and Santos was trying to calm Carlos down while pulling on his arm in an attempt to free him. As this happened the others stood helplessly by, too frightened by Carlos' cries to risk the same fate.

The three scientists pushed past the small group of Onofre's men. As Santos grabbed at Carlos, Kevin leaned into the undergrowth pushing it back in order to see what could be holding the injured man so tightly. It was not at all what he expected.