

Prologue

The noonday heat was oppressive as the young Mexican woman eased herself down on a wooden bench. She lovingly caressed her swollen belly, feeling for life within her. In moments, she was rewarded by the gentle kick of the developing child, and it delighted her. The sound of her soft laughter floated on the wind and caught the attention of the tall, handsome man across the yard. A broad, boyish grin spread across his tanned face as he blew a kiss to the woman. She raised her hand to wave as a slight breeze teased her long dark hair, and she brushed a few tendrils away from her face.

As she started to rise, she felt a growing tightness in her abdomen. She hesitated a moment, mentally calculating the time remaining for her pregnancy, and then she smiled. Over the past few weeks she had experienced similar intermittent pains as her body began the preparations for true labor. Still a few weeks early, she dismissed the tightness that traveled across her as more of the same. How she wished it would be soon!

The near-end of her pregnancy had dramatically reduced her ability to complete her normal activities, but she still managed to pick a handful of Mexican primrose, her favorite wildflower, for her kitchen table. Fatigue continually plagued her, and she was always grateful when the day ended, and she could lie in a cool bed next to her husband. Tonight, she believed, would be no different.

Sometime past midnight, she was awakened by her discomfort. Rising from her bed, she ambled into the washroom to confirm that her water had broken. Turning the light on, she stared at a small pool of bright red liquid that puddled at her feet. She cried out for her husband.

The nearest hospital was more than two hours away over rugged terrain. Although he drove as fast as possible, the ride was painstakingly slow for the young couple, and despite their prayers for God's help, they both feared the worst.

Upon arrival at the hospital, a nurse ushered the frightened woman into the treatment area, and the man was left alone... standing... staring at the closed doors that separated him from his beloved wife. How long he was there, he did not know for time had stopped for him.

Finally allowed to see his wife, he rushed to her side. The steady drip, drip, drip of the intravenous line and the muted beep, beep, beep of the cardiac monitor assaulted his senses. He resisted the impulse to grab her and run. Instead, he hesitantly wiped away the tears on his wife's face. Her eyes fluttered open; the depth of sadness in them took his breath away. Fear gripped his heart, and he choked back a sob. He had to be strong for her, so he did the only thing he knew to do. He prayed. Holding tightly to his wife's hand, he prayed, and he prayed harder than he had ever prayed before, but the fear within him remained.

"Please don't leave me," she whispered, her hand protectively holding her abdomen as silent tears continued to roll down her cheeks. Her other hand tightened around his fingers. She gazed up at her husband, sorrow on her face.

"I won't. I promise." And he kept his word. When the nurses had asked him to step outside, he refused. When the doctors examined her, the husband stood steadfast by his wife's bedside. And when she drew her final breath, he was there, as he had promised to be.

Cradling her in his arms, he told her he loved her. “Te amo,” he whispered as he held her tightly to him. Finally, he relaxed his hold and stared at her now peaceful face. He kissed her one last time, caressed her face, his fingers lingering for just a moment, and then, he cried. Unashamedly.

If only there had been a doctor much closer ...