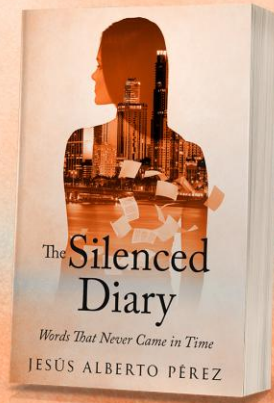


The Silenced Diary

JESÚS ALBERTO PÉREZ



THE SILENCED DIARY

Chapter one

A reading sample from the novel

Jesus Alberto Perez

Free sample for personal reading. Sale or unauthorized distribution is strictly prohibited.

THE SILENCED DIARY

Chapter one

Here's a preview of the opening pages of the novel.

Before the truth came to light, there was a diary. And a single sentence that changed everything.

MARINA'S DIARY

March 14, 2023

La Ceiba, Honduras

Today was one of those days that remind me why I'm here.

It's been several weeks since I arrived in Honduras with nothing but a backpack and a head full of hope. This is my second mission as an international aid worker, but something feels different this time. It's not just the project, or the destination. It's the visceral need to do something real, something tangible and necessary. After so many years spent in offices and conference rooms, I wanted to feel the ground again. And here, the soil smells of coffee, dust, and a fragile mix of hope and fear.

The NGO I'm working with, "Raices Vivas Foundation", is based on the outskirts of La Ceiba, a coastal city full of contrasts. Modest family shops display hand-painted signs, and every morning fruit stalls take over the corners with piles of mangos, papayas, and bunches of bananas. The city center has that unfiltered liveliness, a touch of chaos that somehow feels human. In the parks, people play dominoes or simply watch the day go by. Some façades are worn and cracked by time, but others burst with colourful murals that speak of identity, struggle, and roots.

Here we help women who have suffered violence, many of them deported migrants returning from the Mexican or U.S. border, to rebuild their lives. I coordinate the employment program: workshops, micro-loans, and legal guidance. On paper, it all sounds perfect. In practice... I've quickly learned that nothing here is as simple as it seems.

I woke up before dawn today. The fan does what it can, but the humidity in La Ceiba is like an animal that clings to you without permission from the very first light. Still, I got dressed with purpose.

It doesn't always happen. But today it did. I felt that the work mattered, that the stories we gather here are worth far more than the numbers and reports we send back to Miami.

I walked from the volunteers' house to the community center, passing barefoot children playing among chickens and rusted motorbikes often carrying two or three passengers. I greeted the neighbours who always welcome you with the kind of smiles that make you feel part of something. It's a hospitable city, though one that knows how to guard its secrets.

The center was already full by early morning. The foundation's building is modest but alive: turquoise walls, murals painted by the women themselves, and a communal kitchen that always smells of beans and warm tortillas. I feel useful here, listening to stories so raw they tear through me, notebook in hand, not always sure whether to cry or keep writing.

Four new women arrived today, one with a three-year-old boy who hasn't spoken a word. Domestic violence, displacement, poverty, the same invisible thread tightening around their lives. We offered them a comforting breakfast, clean clothes, and a moment to breathe. Sometimes, that's enough to begin again.

As always, I coordinated the workshops with Doña Lety, the local accountant. She's practical and quiet, has been here for years, distributing resources as if they were her own, making sure every last sack of rice goes where it should. I like her, though she dodges questions more often than she should.

While reviewing the donation reports today, I found a transfer that didn't make sense.

Fundación Amanecer – 25,000 USD – “Logistical Support, Rural Program.”

The entry was clear, but I didn't recognize the name. It wasn't in the partner records or meeting minutes. I asked Lety about it, and she simply said they were “external donations managed by the central office.” Then she mumbled something I couldn't catch, shrugged, and changed the subject.

Note to self: look up Fundación Amanecer when I have a stable connection.

That's all for today. Tomorrow, we head into the countryside. I promise to write more from there, if the signal allows.

March 23, 2023

La Ceiba, Honduras

I can't shake the knot in my stomach.

I spent part of the morning alone in the office while Julio and the others went with the medical team to the rural zone. I stayed behind, sorting through the monthly records, and something caught my attention again. Fundación Amanecer appeared once

more, this time for 48,000 USD, with no clear justification. The transfer came from a Panamanian account.

I checked the system. No project file. No meeting minutes. No approval. Nothing.

Then I opened the corporate email from the Tegucigalpa office. Lety had left her session open by mistake. I know it wasn't right, but I did it anyway. In the "signed agreements" folder, I found three emails with attachments, documents signed by someone not listed anywhere in our organizational chart. A new name: H. Davis.

No title. No photo. Just a scanned signature and several PDFs I couldn't fully understand. One mentioned "regional migration management," another "exchange of risk profiles." None of it sounded like humanitarian aid.

Back in my room, I searched online. I started with Fundación Amanecer. Their website was primitive: no contact info, no staff, just a postal address... in Brickell, Miami.

That's when I thought of Daniel. That's exactly where his law firm is. We haven't spoken much since I got here, the time difference, the endless work hours. I miss him.

I kept digging, but there was little to find. A handful of vague companies with names that reeked of cover stories: Global Support Ltd., Orion Outreach, Tropic Trade Corp. Consultancy, legal services, international philanthropy. No names. No real offices. Just mailboxes. All façade.

I shouldn't jump to conclusions. Not yet.

It's hard to focus. I've shut the laptop and opened the window. The heat is suffocating. Outside, the city is already asleep. The buzz of mosquitoes mixes with the chirping of crickets and the distant whine of a motorbike.

Quick note: Ask Julio if he can help me connect the dots between Fundación Amanecer and those companies. Don't tell him anything yet, just test the waters.

March 24, 2023

La Ceiba, Honduras

I ran into Maritza today, one of the program's oldest beneficiaries. A forty-year-old woman with steel eyes and visible scars on her arms. I asked her directly if she knew Fundación Amanecer. She fell silent. Then, lowering her voice, she said:

—You shouldn't talk about them, Marina. Those people don't help. They buy.

—Buy what?

—Silence.

Then she walked away. Said nothing else.

I'm writing this in my room with the blinds shut. Every sound makes me jump. I can't bring myself to call anyone. Daniel is far away. I don't want to worry about him. Besides, what would I even say? That I'm investigating from a shared computer with a failing Wi-Fi connection?

No. Not yet.

March 27, 2023

La Ceiba, Honduras

Since that encounter with Maritza, everything feels different.

I've tried to carry on, organizing workshops, visiting homes, writing progress reports with a smile that feels like a mask. But deep down I know I can't turn away anymore.

Every time I look at Doña Lety, the local coordinators, even the new volunteers, I wonder who knows the truth. Who stays silent? Who gets paid?

I kept pulling at the thread. Behind the supposedly humanitarian emails, I found a personal address unrelated to any foundation staff:

h.davis@fcomgroup.net

I went through LinkedIn and corporate registries. Almost no personal info, just a web of companies in Panama, Delaware, and... Honduras.

An American firm with subsidiaries here, quietly funding a supposedly nonprofit foundation?

I don't need to meet him. I already know his name sits at the center of everything I can't yet understand.

April 1, 2023

La Ceiba, Honduras

I woke in the night and stepped out to the porch. I needed air. The heat hung thick like a wet blanket. The mountains were shrouded in fog. Everything looked normal, yet I couldn't stop staring at the trees. I felt watched. No one was there, but it didn't matter. The doubt had already taken root.

Then my phone rang. Unknown number. I answered without thinking.

—Marina Ellis?

—Yes. Who's this?

A brief silence and then a calm, measured voice.

—I suggest you stop asking questions and stay out of matters that don't concern you.

I hung up, heart pounding. No name. No overt threat. Just a precise, surgical warning.

I locked my door, shut the windows, drew the curtains, and slept with the light on for the first time since arriving in Honduras.

By morning, I pretended everything was normal, greeting everyone as usual. But the air had changed. The looks. Some avoided me. Others were overly kind.

I met Julio, one of the field technicians. Young, bright, and someone I've trusted since the start. We went to a café downtown, far from the office, and I showed him some of the documents.

—Did you know about this?

He stared at me, then lowered his voice.

—There are things better left alone, Marina. You don't know who's behind it.

—Henry Davis. That's who's behind it.

His expression changed instantly.

He begged me to keep quiet. He explained that Fundación Amanecer wasn't just a front. It was part of a human trafficking network using certain NGOs as channels of legitimacy. The women we help are sometimes selected. Some disappear. And no one speaks of them.

—And nobody does anything? —I asked, furious.

—Do what? Here, those who know stay silent. Those who speak, vanish.

A wave of vertigo hit me. As if the floor had opened beneath my feet. I thought I was here to make a difference. Now I see the rot runs deep, inside the very system we serve.

After that, I tried to confront the general coordinator. She was gone. No one knew where.

That's when I decided to act.

First, I began gathering everything: emails, transfer records, whispered testimonies. I stored copies on a flash drive and uploaded encrypted backups to the cloud. I contacted a trusted journalist in Tegucigalpa, told her part of the story. We agreed to meet in person. She'll come to La Ceiba in three days.

Three days. That's all I need. Just hold on.

April 2, 2023

La Ceiba, Honduras

When I came home this evening after a full day at the foundation, my room was a mess. Closet open. Drawers forced. The USB drive was gone.

No notes. No new threats. But the message was clear.

They're no longer warning me. They're watching me.

Next time, it won't just be a visit.

April 5, 2023

Tocumen Airport, Panama (layover)

I'm writing this here, in the transit lounge. I couldn't write last night. I couldn't sleep either. My body is drained, nerves frayed, but my mind is clear.

I've slept for two nights with half-packed bags. Every knock on the door, every sound on the roof made me think they'd come for me. It wasn't just fear, it was certainty. I've gone too far.

The journalist, Gabriela Rivas, finally arrived in La Ceiba. We met in the back of a nameless bar with plastic chairs and a useless fan spinning overhead. I showed her partial copies of the documents, just one set. The rest I'm carrying with me. I no longer trust servers or clouds to keep them safe. This time, everything travels with me.

Gabriela was direct. She said she'd seen similar cases before, but never this organized. The name Henry Davis, she told me, had surfaced in previous investigations, each closed without explanation.

—This isn't just a scheme. It's a network. Well-built. Well-protected.

We talked for over two hours. I told her what I'd seen, what I'd heard, what I suspected. She recorded part of it, then switched off the recorder.

—Marina, they'll be watching you closely. They probably already are. You need to leave. Now. I'll handle this with my contacts in Miami and international media. If I publish it alone, they'll crush us.

I left her a physical copy of the emails and transfers. I told her not to release anything yet. To wait until she had stronger backing.

—And you? —she asked.

—I'll take care of the rest —I lied.

I don't know if I can take care of anything. But I know I can't bury this. I can't pretend I didn't see it.

This afternoon I left the volunteers' house without saying goodbye. I took a bus to San Pedro Sula, then a flight to Miami with a layover in Panama.

Note to self: Once I'm home, I'll talk to Daniel. Not about this, not yet. First, I just want to hold him and tell how much I've missed him. Then... maybe. He handles sensitive cases; he understands the system better than anyone. If there's someone I can trust to move this forward, with reason and with justice, it's him.

We argued before I left for Honduras, more than we should have. But not a single day has passed here without me thinking of him. Of us.

They're calling my flight now. Flight 322 to Miami.

I've hidden the flash drive inside my laptop's lining, and the paper copies in the secret pocket of the canvas bag I bought in San Pedro Sula. I doubt anyone will check there. Still, every step feels like walking across a minefield.

I'm leaving with the sense that this story isn't over. That it's only just begun.

Want to keep reading?

The complete novel is available on Amazon

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