Impossible Odds

By Jessica Buchanan and Erik Landemalm

Reviewed by Connie Bennett, Vinton Public Library Clerk

Nonfiction- Trending

First-Person Account

Action/Thriller/Drama

"Some do come out alive," I silently tell myself. "The numbers are small, but they do exist." - Jessica Buchanan, on the day of her kidnapping.

Jessica only ever wanted to be a schoolteacher, and to help educate African children. To that end, after starting out as a grade schoolteacher in Kenya, she gradually became a developer of classroom materials for an NGO (nongovernmental organization). Jessica and her husband Erik, who worked with humanitarian aid, did charitable aid throughout Eastern Africa, which, one would think, would earn a modicum of protection from criminals and those who traffic in hate. Sadly, that is not the case. Whether it is a roving band of criminals, or hard-core terrorists, Westerners are looked at as having deep pockets, a chance at fast money, especially to the people who have an average yearly income of $600.

So, although Jessica and her husband were there for the most benign of reasons, that of, among other things, teaching the locals how to avoid leftover land mines that arbitrarily kill or make amputees of those living in this isolated desert land, there was no gratitude shown in the treatment of those kidnapped by Somali pirates.

This is the background in which this book takes place. Jessica and a colleague leave their home to travel to the other side of "the Green Line". Approximately ten minutes into this routine training trip, Somali terrorists interrupt the quiet ride and take Jessica and her colleague, Poul Thisted, into captivity. The remainder of this true story involves the horrible mind games and actual torment that was inflicted on these two hostages.

This book was hard to read, but harder to put down. The story pulls the reader into the action, causing intense feelings of helplessness and unbelief. There is no short review that is able to adequately describe this complex series of events. For the whole story, read "Impossible Odds."

Published 2015

By Atria Books

NY, NY USA