



Out of Captivity: Surviving 1,967 Days in the Colombian Jungle

Marc Gonsalves, Tom Howes, Keith Stansell, Gary Brozek

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On February 13, 2003, a plane carrying three American civilian contractors—Marc Gonsalves, Keith Stansell, and Tom Howes—crash-landed in the mountainous jungle of Colombia. Dazed and shaken, they emerged from the plane bloodied and injured as gunfire rained down around them. As of that moment they were prisoners of the FARC, a Colombian terrorist and Marxist rebel organization. In an instant they had become American captives in Colombia's volatile and ongoing conflict, which has lasted for almost fifty years.

In *Out of Captivity*, Gonsalves, Stansell, and Howes recount for the first time their amazing tale of survival, friendship, and, ultimately, rescue, tracing their five and a half years as hostages of the FARC. Their story takes you inside one of the world's most notorious terrorist organizations, going behind enemy lines with vivid and haunting imagery. Their words conjure a reality that few people have ever encountered—from sleeping on beds literally carved out of the jungle to escaping Colombian military air strikes under the cover of darkness to being bound with steel chains by their captors. Describing backbreaking starvation marches and forced isolation, the authors chronicle their confrontations and interactions with the FARC guerrilla soldiers—a motley crew of brainwashed, idealistic teenagers and seasoned veterans who've been around long enough to realize that the only way out of the FARC is in a body bag.

Though the physical punishments their bodies endured were unrelenting, the psychological battles they waged were the ultimate test of their resolve. With candid detail, Gonsalves, Stansell, and Howes relate the perilous mental struggles they each experienced, as they grappled with feelings of guilt, fear, and anxiety for the families and lives they'd left behind. Exposing the transformative power of captivity, they show how they turned these fears into strengths, using their memories and their families, their pasts and their futures, to motivate them in their quest for survival.

Despite the odds and the conditions, despite the chains and the silence, and despite the often tense relationships they experienced with their fellow Colombian hostages, they had one another, forging a bond that allowed them to cope with the horrific conditions of their confinement. This brotherhood enabled them to persevere through the worst that the FARC threw at them while always reminding them of their ultimate goal: freedom.

A harrowing account of one of the longest civilian hostage crises in United States history, *Out of Captivity* is a remarkable and compelling exploration of how far three Americans were willing to go as they fought to stay alive for themselves, their families, and one another.

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