



A ROMANTIC SUSPENSE FOR EVERY MONTH OF THE YEAR

# CLARE REVELL

*Gladioli in  
August*

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Clare Revell

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## **Gladioli in August**

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## *Dedication*

For Ceryn who inherited her mother's fascination of  
everything disaster related.



## *What People are Saying*

### *Saturday's Child*

Nail-biting Christian thriller! This book was worth reading, just to get to the last sentence!

~ Becky Lewis, reader

### *Vegas Vacation*

I enjoyed this rollicking tale! ...A surprising amount of suspense and danger keep the pages of this romance novella turning, from the first page to the last (I read it in one sitting).

~Delia Latham, author



*Carnations in January shake the foundations  
Violets in February are an aid to salvation  
Daffodils in March brings betrayal and loss  
Sweet peas in April consume all the dross  
Lily of the Valley in May brings danger untold  
Roses in June show hope in a heart filled with gold  
Water lilies in July a town will submerge  
Gladioli in August love from the ash will emerge  
Forget-me-nots in September are on the front line of fear  
Marigolds in October will test her career  
Chrysanthemums in November show the burden of choice  
Holly in December lets a broken family rejoice*





*Gladioli in August love from the ash will emerge*

Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea –  
Psalm 46:2

# 1

Jael Stevens climbed the steps onto the platform of Headley Baptist Church on her last Sunday morning in England for a while. Every pew was filled. Nerves sent her heart pounding and stomach turning. She hated public speaking and wasn't looking forward to this at all. But it was part of her commissioning service.

Pastor Carson smiled. "If you want to take the center mic, I'll use this one." He pointed to the one on his tie. "OK, we'll start with a few easy questions, just so people get an idea of who you are, before we tell them where you're going and what you're going to do." He winked. "They aren't as scary as they look, honest. How about you kick things off by telling us your name and occupation."

That she could do without her voice trembling. "My name is Jael Stevens, and I'm a nurse. I'm about to take a six-month sabbatical from my role as ward sister of the ITU."

"What's your favorite color?"

"Yellow."

"Which is your favorite roast dinner and why?"

At least these questions were easy and meant she didn't have to think about the answers. "Christmas dinner with all the trimmings, because the whole family is there."

"Is it true that you once knocked a certain pastor of Headley Baptist to the ground and trod on him?"

The entire church laughed as Jael's cheeks overheated. She shuffled her feet. "Thanks for that."

Pastor Carson winked. "My pleasure."

Jael sucked in a deep breath. "We were playing caveman rugby at the church retreat in April. It's hardly my fault. We were told the only rule was 'thou shalt not kill whilst getting the ball down thine own end of the court by any means necessary.'" She grinned at him. "You were in my way."

The congregation laughed again.

"Other than knocking people over playing caveman rugby, what's your favorite way to relax?"

"I read and go for walks."

"OK, so where are you off to this afternoon?"

"I have to be at Heathrow at four for a flight to East Timor. From there I'll get a shuttle flight to Tiampu. And, hopefully, there'll be some pictures on the screen behind me. Tiampu is a volcanic island out in Indonesia in the Banda Sea. I've circled it on the map. It's roughly twenty miles wide by ninety-seven miles across. The population is about 20,000 and a mix of Christian and Muslim. I'll be based at the Red Cross hospital in the capital, Achor. From there I'll be flying out to wherever I'm needed. As you can see from the photos, even though Achor is the capital it's really is little more of a shanty town. There are a few brick

buildings in the center, but that's it. Very few people have cars, as the road conditions are better suited to horse and buggies or trucks. It'll be a bit like being out in the Wild West. Though I have been assured Achor does have electricity and running water. The volcano is called Gunung Berapi, and I've been assured its dormant."

She clicked through a couple more pictures. "I'll be running some clinics, but primarily being a flying nurse going out to do home visits and so on."

"Can you give us three things to pray about and tell us how we can support you?"

Jael held up the pink sheet. "I've done a prayer letter. It's got my e-mail and snail mail addresses on it if anyone wants to write. Financially, I'm more or less there, but still a little short. Pray that the flight goes OK with no delays. Pray that I'll adjust to the difference in surroundings, food, the language, and cope with the creepy crawlies. My brother will tell you that I'm rubbish at coping with them."

Pastor Carson grinned. "So's my wife," he said. "But don't tell anyone I said that." As the laughter died down, he turned to the congregation. "I'm going to invite the elders up now, and we're going to lay hands on Jael as we send her forth as a missionary."

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"Are you mad? Is it safe?" Her older brother, Kyle, held out the potatoes, shock etched on his face. Considering he was one of the top hairdressers in the country, having just won an award for some hairstyling contest or other, his own hair was, as always, a mess.

For a moment, Jael wondered if that was fear flickering in his eyes. "Is what safe, Kyle?"

"Going to work on an island with a volcano on it? And when were you going to tell me?" He looked from her to his wife, Holly, and back again. "Or were you just going to send me a postcard when you got there?"

"You didn't ask." Jael laughed. "Of course, it's safe. Besides it's gotta be a darn sight safer there than it is here." She glanced around the dinner table. "I mean there was that explosion at the Riverside where fifteen people died, then there was the bank raid last week. Oh, and don't forget the prime minister was assassinated here. Look, you and Holly went to Sicily last year, and Etna is constantly erupting. Gunung Berapi on Tiampu hasn't erupted since the 1700s."

"Volcanoes and August don't mix," Kyle said, a serious expression on his face. "Kakatoa erupted on the twenty-sixth August in 1883 killing 36,000. Vesuvius erupted on the twenty-fourth August, 79 AD killing 16,000."

Jael rolled her eyes. "Did you eat an encyclopedia for breakfast, Kyle? It's only a six-month posting, so don't worry. Nothing is going to happen."

"It'd better not." He put the peas down and poured gravy over his plate. "We need you here."

She looked at him. "Why?"

Kyle looked at Holly, his wife. "You want to tell her?"

Holly shook her head and chuckled. "You can. I'm surprised it took you this long."

Kyle grinned. "OK. We need you here because in about six and a half months' time, you're going to be an auntie."

Jael screamed and hurried around the table to hug

him and then Holly. "That's wonderful news. Of course I'll be here. Wild horses couldn't keep me away."

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Micah Norris hurtled down the runway of the small medical base on Tiampu and reached take-off speed with barely any room to spare. He really did need to extend the runway by at least another five hundred feet. Perhaps a job for the weekend or he'd rope half a dozen of the local lads into doing it this week. While he was on the mainland he'd put in an order for the tarmac, and he could pick it up next week. Until then he'd make do with the dirt track.

Micah loved flying, loved his job, and loved being single. Most of the friends he'd gone to school with were married and fathers by now, but not him. This way he could serve God wholeheartedly without distraction. How did Paul put it in First Corinthians? An unmarried man is concerned about the Lord's affairs—how he can please the Lord. But a married man is concerned about the affairs of this world—how he can please his wife.

He turned his attention to the view below him. It didn't change. The vast blue ocean—water sparkling in the sunlight, untamed and restless and free.

He hated change. He'd gotten the current nurse into his way of doing things, a set routine each day and no diversions, and that was the way he liked it, but now she sat in the passenger seat ready to return to London. He wasn't sure why the nursing staff had to change every six months. Wouldn't it make sense to have a permanent set of medics? If he was in charge

that would be his first order—well after extending the runway. But he wasn't the boss. He was a lowly pilot, a glorified taxi driver, as his sister, Rachel, so quaintly put it.

He brought the plane into land on East Timor and taxied to the part of the airport reserved for private planes. "Here you go, Kate. Have a good flight."

"Will do, Micah. Thanks." She picked up her bags, and as Micah opened the door for her, hopped out, and headed across the concrete to the terminal building, without so much as a by your leave.

That suited him fine. He wasn't big on goodbyes, never had been. He prided himself on his emotional detachment to everything apart from his Lord and Savior. He turned back to his post flight checks.

*Lord, I just hope this new nurse is as quiet as Kate was. Not that I don't like a bit of chat occasionally, but I like the silence more. So I can pray and think and admire the beauty of Your creation.*

He refueled the plane and headed into the arrivals hall to meet the new nurse. Not that he could remember her name. Despair filled him as he checked the board for the flight number and he sighed. Delayed. He had a four-hour window before he'd have to make other arrangements. Micah crossed to the phone booth and shoved his card in. He rang the base. "Hi, Danny, it's me."

"Did you forget your phone again?" Danny Taylor, the man in charge, sounded almost as irate as Micah felt. "The whole point is it's a mobile phone, not a static one."

"Yep, so sue me. The new nurse's plane is delayed and depending how long for, we might be here a while. What's her name again?"

“Jael Stevens. That’s J-a-e-l, not j-a-i-l. And Stevens with a V.”

Micah scribbled it on a sheet of paper. “Got it. And what kind of a name is Jael?”

“Biblical. She was the woman who shoved a tent peg through that bloke’s head when he was intent on raping, pillaging, and fighting the Israelites.”

“Seriously? What book is that in?”

“Judges, chapter four.”

“Hmmm, maybe I should read it whilst waiting for her plane. See ya later.” He hung up and made the call to the merchants to order the tarmac. Next he headed to the restaurant. One meal later, he found a chair in the arrivals hall, in sight of the board displaying flight details, and settled down to read and wait. He hated to wait, almost as much as he disliked change.

Finally, flight IEA97 from Heathrow was listed as arrived and bags collected. He gave her another twenty minutes to clear customs, and then slowly rose and headed over to the barrier. He held up his sign, trying to imagine what this one might look like.

Weary travelers streamed through the double doors. He held his sign higher and caught his breath as a petite brunette with long, curly, and messy hair headed towards him.

*You have got to be kidding me. She doesn’t look old enough to be out of school, never mind a fully qualified nurse. A breath of wind would knock her over. She won’t last five minutes out here.*

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Jael was tired and stressed. She hated being late,

especially when she knew someone was waiting for her.

As she headed towards the bloke holding the card with her name on, she took in his appearance.

Rugged looks. Blond, scruffy hair and grey-blue eyes behind wire rimmed glasses. He wore a red polo shirt, open at the neck, with khaki knee-length shorts and...open toed sandals? Around his neck hung a plain chain with a ring on it.

The man ran his gaze over her as she stopped in front of him. "Jael Stevens? You're late."

"Tell me something I don't know," she sighed.

He stuck out a hand. "That'd be my name. I'm Micah Norris, and I'll be your pilot for the next six months."

"Hello." She shook his hand. "I'm sorry you had to wait."

"No worries. I spent the time drinking coffee and reading about your namesake in Judges." He looked at the bags on her trolley. "Talk about travelling light. Is that all off it? I count two cases and four bags? Did you have to pay excess luggage?"

She shook her head. "I only packed the stuff I was asked to bring out, and there's things from the church as well."

He took the trolley from her. "This way, Miss Stevens."

"Please, call me Jael."

He nodded. "Micah." He led her to a small area. "We need to run your bags through the scanner." He winked at the uniformed officer. "Check for tent pegs."

The customs bloke raised an eyebrow.

"Private joke," Micah explained.

"No, no tent pegs," Jael explained hurriedly. She

resisted the urge to roll her eyes, and instead glared half-heartedly at Micah. "Thanks for that. Am I going to need them?"

"Not with me, honey." He grinned. "As for the rest of the natives? Well, that's anyone's guess."

She balked at the term of endearment, but let it slide. At least the bloke had a sense of humor. Fortunately so did the customs officer.

Micah loaded the cases onto the belt before following her through the body scanner. "It's a two-hour flight from here. Did you need coffee or the restroom first?"

"Both. And something to eat. Airline food isn't particularly edible. And I didn't fancy salmon at two AM."

"I can understand that." He nodded to the side of the security area. "The restrooms are there. I'll go pick something up for you to eat."

"What about my bags?"

"I'll keep an eye on them."

Jael grabbed her back pack and headed across to the ladies. By the time she got back, Micah stood by the cases with coffee and a fast food meal for her.

"I didn't know what to get, so I figured chicken nuggets were safe, unless you're a veggie."

"No, I'm not. Thank you. What do I owe you?"

"Nothing. Take a seat, and I'll go put your bags on the plane."

Jael sat down and sipped the coffee. Taking a small bottle from the pack she'd held onto, she shook two painkillers into the palm of her hand and swallowed them with more coffee. She shoved the pill bottle away and stretched out her legs. The food tasted better than she'd imagined, but even if it hadn't, she'd

have eaten it.

Micah came back just as she finished eating. "We need to go. The tower wants me out of here before the storm arrives. Otherwise, we're grounded until tomorrow afternoon."

"Storm?"

"Oh, don't worry, we're going the other way, honey. Bring your coffee with you."

Jael pushed upright and dumped her rubbish in the bin. She followed him out to the small plane. As he finished the preflight, she strapped herself in. "Can I ask something?"

He glanced at her over the clipboard. "Sure."

"Well, two something's. First, you keep calling me honey, and my name is Jael. And the second..."

"I call all my nurses 'honey.' If you don't like it, I can stop."

"I'd appreciate it if you did."

"Sure, honey. I can stop. What's the second thing?"

"Are you really a pilot? I mean, don't take this the wrong way, but you wear glasses."

He raised an eyebrow. "And you're a nurse with very long, painted nails. They'll last two minutes once Danny sees them. Less, if Kevin sees you first." He turned on his headphones. "OK, tower, this is November niner-niner-zulu ready to go."

"The varnish will come off tonight when I cut my nails." She pushed back into her seat as the small plane hurtled down the runway. She closed her eyes, always hating the lurch when the plane left the ground sending her stomach twisting into motion sickness. This time it didn't come.

"Are you all right?"

She opened her eyes. "Yes, I...Oh..." She gazed out of the window. The ground was several hundred feet below her already, and as she watched, the land gave way to a vast, sparkling blue ocean.

Micah smiled. "Were you expecting a bumpy take off?"

She nodded. "Yeah, and motion sickness, but there wasn't either."

A slight frown creased his brow. "You throw up in my plane, honey, and you can get out."

Jael snorted. "With or without a parachute?"

He paused. "Either works." Then he chuckled. "Tiampu is part of the Lease chain of islands." He tilted his head. "But I assume you did your homework and worked all that out."

"Yeah." She leaned back in her seat, watching the waves below them. Her eyes gradually slid shut, and she must have dozed because the next thing she knew, Micah was shaking her arm. "There she is."

Jael pressed her face against the window. The huge cone of the volcano rose into the sky. Kyle's worries came back to her. "It is extinct, right?"

"Who knows? The volcanologists refer to her as dormant. She last erupted in 1723 and hasn't even stirred since. You have villages all around the island, plantations, vineyards, farms. Most have dirt airstrips, so you'll get your bumpy take offs and landings there. The base one is tarmacked...well, most of it is. That also serves as the town's main runway. The actual airport isn't much more than a hut with a couple of security people on duty to man the radio, but we get by. We're not set up for anything bigger than small planes like this one."

He turned on the radio. "Achor, this is Micah on