



- 0. MARIA BELON and HER FAMILY - Story Preface
- 1. CAUSE of BANDA ACEH QUAKE
- 2. CAUSE of INDIAN OCEAN TSUNAMI
- 3. MARIA BELON and HER FAMILY**
- 4. RESCUE!
- 5. SURVIVING the TSUNAMI
- 6. TSUNAMI-CAUSED DESTRUCTION
- 7. TSUNAMI VICTIMS SPEAK
- 8. LACK of TSUNAMI WARNING SYSTEM
- 9. AFTERMATH of BANDA ACEH QUAKE

Screen shot, from *The Impossible*, depicting the first tsunami wave as it was about to strike a resort in Thailand. Image copyright, Apaches Entertainment and Telecino Cinema, all rights reserved. Image provided here as fair use for educational purposes.

The Thai island of Phuket, in the Andaman Sea, has an elephant park in the mountains not far from its western coast. On the morning of December 26, 2004, elephants at that park unexpectedly broke free of their chains, running away from the direction of the sea.

At about the same time, but along the shore, a four-year-old female elephant called *Ning Nong* was carrying a child on her back. The visitor - an eight-year-old British girl named Amber Mason - was surprised when *Ning Nong* suddenly bolted out of the water.

Is it possible that Thai elephants - as well as other animals in the coastline areas of Indian-Ocean countries - knew a disaster would soon be upon them?

Maria Belón, meanwhile, was enjoying the beautiful morning. Her husband was in the pool of the Orchid Hotel - situated along the beach at Kalim Bay, north of the Phuket town of Patong - with two of their sons, Tomas and Simon.

While Maria was reading, Lucas - the oldest Alvarez-Belón child - was retrieving a yellow beach ball which had gotten away.

Then ... unsuspecting locals and vacationers alike began to hear a very unusual, roaring sound.

When the first tsunami wave hit the beach, at Kalim Bay, it delivered thousands of pounds of water for each meter of beach. Within minutes, the incredible force of the water was destroying nearly everything in its path.

Maria was pushed against the collapsing walls of the hotel. She later recalled: \*\*

*I remember being pushed against walls. You could feel them trembling and breaking, feeling them as they gave way, one after another. Some of the walls did not collapse - that's why people died. They were trapped.*

*I was under the water for a long, long time. I was not in physical pain but the drowning sensation was like being in a spin-dryer.*

*The doctors said I was underwater for more than three minutes because my lungs were absolutely full of water. I saw many lights under the water, tunnels with lights at the end, that people tell you they see when they are going to die.*

Enrique Alvarez, Maria's husband, also thought he was on the verge of death:

*I thought, "That's it, I'm not going to make it." But I needed to try. I saw a light above me, so I tried to push myself up and get my head out of the water.*

*More than a half-mile away from the hotel, and separated from his two sons, he surfaced in a torrent.*

*The only thing I could see was water and the tops of the trees. I was alone.*

*I thought there was no way my children had made it. I started to cry and then I thought, "Why are you crying when there is no one to comfort you?"*

\*\* All quotes, in this chapter, are from an article written by [Charlotte Eagar](#) which was published in *The Sun* on 5 January 2013.

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/MARIA-BELON-and-HER-FAMILY-The-Impossible>

See [Learning Tasks for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/MARIA-BELON-and-HER-FAMILY-The-Impossible>

## Questions 2 Ponder

### Why Cry If There's No One to Give Comfort?

Enrique Alvarez, who survived the tsunami which struck Thailand in 2004, asked himself an interesting question when he thought his children had not survived the disaster.

He started to cry, then thought:

*Why are you crying when there is no one to comfort you?*

Do you think people cry because they are seeking comfort from someone? Explain your answer.

Do we cry because we cannot hold-back tears? In other words, do tears just come if we are emotionally impacted by something? Explain your answer.

If the tears come, and we are able to force them back, is that wise? In other words, if we push-back our tears, will that make the inevitable breaking point even worse?

## Media Stream



### Andaman Sea - Location

Map depicting location of Andaman Sea by NormanEinstein, online courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

License: This image is licensed under the [Creative Commons Attribution ShareAlike 3.0 License](#). In short: You are free to share and make derivative works of it under the conditions that you appropriately attribute it, and that you distribute it only under a license identical to this one.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Andaman-Sea-Location>



### Kalim Bay - Phuket

Image of Kalim Bay, Phuket, by voetballekerke28. Copyright, voetballekerke 28, all rights reserved. Online via voetballekerke28's photostream at Flickr. Image provided here as fair use for educational purposes.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Kalim-Bay-Phuket>



### Tsunami Comes Ashore in Thailand

Photo by David Rydevik, online courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Tsunami-Comes-Ashore-in-Thailand>



### Tsunami - Animals Anticipate Disaster

Clip from FirstScience.TV's "Sense of Danger - How Animals Anticipate Disaster," copyright FirstScience.TV, all rights reserved. Online courtesy FirstScienceTV's Channel at YouTube.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Tsunami-Animals-Anticipate-Disaster>



### Tsunami - Why Does It Roar?

Video clip from NOAA PMEL, online courtesy NOAA.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Tsunami-Why-Does-It-Roar->