

0. SURVIVING the TSUNAMI - Story Preface

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Local villagers who survived the tsunami's devastating impact cared-for Maria Belón after finding her and Lucas. They got her to this hospital, in Takua Pa, where health-care providers saved her life. Photo by Stephk, online via Travel Blog.

Takua Pa - the town where Maria Belón and her son, Lucas, were treated - resembled other health-care-providing areas ravaged by the Great Sumatra-Andaman earthquake and its aftermath.

Overflowing hospitals were staffed with hardworking people who did their best to treat, and save, the injured. As survivors searched-for missing loved ones, they studied walls covered with pictures of hospitalized patients.

Often a desperate search ended with the worst-possible news for locals and tourists alike. As carefully wrapped bodies were identified by relatives, the magnitude of the tragedy continued to escalate. Photos, on the exterior of many coffins, helped people to identify whose remains were inside.

It is impossible to imagine how everyone coped with so much death and dying. On the other hand, there are also amazing stories of survival. Marie Belón is one of those stories. **

Lucas tells us about his mother's condition when she arrived at Takua Pa:

*Mum was bleeding internally very badly and had to be operated on. She had infections from everything she had swallowed, and from her wounds. ****

Lucas' personal trauma, however, was not over. Leaving his mother, during her operation, he was stunned to come back to her bedside and find her ... gone:

I thought they had taken her away because she had died. It was the first time that I properly panicked. I thought I was completely on my own. For there was no question in my mind that my father and brothers were dead.

None of his family had died, although Lucas did not-yet know the facts.

Unlike so many other horrifying stories, associated with the quake and tsunami, the Alvarez-Belón family lived. Lucas tells us what it was like to survive one of the world's worst natural disasters:

I spoke to a Swedish boy at the hospital. He had come to Thailand with both parents and four siblings and he was flying back with his mother. Everyone else was dead. It felt really unfair.

It took more than two days for Señor Alvarez to find his wife and oldest son. During the process, as he looked from place to place - and hospital to hospital - he befriended others who were similarly suffering from the tragedy.

Lucas - who wants to be a doctor and is currently a student at University College London - recalls that everyone in his family connected with at least one non-family member during the trying ordeal. For his mother, it was the child they had rescued when Maria's own life was in jeopardy:

For my mother it was Daniel. We have always wanted to find out what happened to him.

Maria - who is missing part of her leg as a result of her tsunami-caused injuries - still feels the bond with the child whose cries touched her heart:

I feel like I have another son somewhere living in Sweden. I would love to know how Daniel has grown up.

Daniel - like the Alvarez-Belón family - had survived the dark day of destruction.

Meanwhile ... west of Phuket, across the Bay of Bengal, people on the island of Sri Lanka were enduring their own tsunami-caused catastrophe.

** The link for "one of those stories" takes you to Maria Belón's first interview about her family's tsunami ordeal and survival. The Spanish-language radio interview took place on 26 December 2007 - three years to the day after the disaster.

*** 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/SURVIVING-the-TSUNAMI-The-Impossible>

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

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/SURVIVING-the-TSUNAMI-The-Impossible>

Questions 2 Ponder

Why Do People Develop Survivor's Guilt?

After the Alvarez-Belón family survived the disastrous tsunami which struck Thailand, in 2004, they wondered why they had all lived while so many others had died.

Lucas, the oldest child, later said:

I spoke to a Swedish boy at the hospital. He had come to Thailand with both parents and four siblings and he was flying back with his mother. Everyone else was dead. It felt really unfair.

Why do you think that Lucas, who was relieved about surviving the 2004 tsunami, thought "it felt really unfair" that other families had not been so fortunate?

Do you think Lucas was feeling what is known as "Survivor's Guilt?" Why, or why not?

Media Stream



Takua Pa - Caring for Tsunami Victims

Image of a scene at Takua-Pa, following the 26 December 2004 tsunami, online courtesy Phuket-Town.com.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Takua-Pa-Caring-for-Tsunami-Victims>



Phuket City Hall - Coffins

Image of a scene at Phuket City Hall, following the 26 December 2004 tsunami, online courtesy Phuket-Town.com.

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Tsunami Victims - Thailand

Image of a scene following the 26 December 2004 tsunami, online courtesy Phuket-Town.com.

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