

The Wicked Wall of Water

Rrringg!! My alarm clock suddenly rings waking me up. I groan, but then quickly remember that it is Boxing Day. *“Yay! Time to get ready to go on the train to go see Grandma and Grandpa!”* Quickly, I bound out of bed.

It is a loud and exciting day with so many natives and tourists bustling around Colombo, the capital of Sri Lanka. Wafts of cinnamon and other spices make me feel lucky to be alive. Dad loads our backpacks with gifts to give to Grandma and Grandpa for Christmas, and we make our way towards the Colombo Fort Station along with many others to board the Samudradevi Holiday Train, meaning “Queen of the Sea.” The train bell rings, and we squeeze by hundreds of passengers to our reserved seats which we are lucky to have since there are over 1,500 people. After a while, we settle down for the two hour trip to Galle, the southernmost tip of Sri Lanka.

We pass by lush green coconut trees and the magnificent golden shoreline of the Indian Ocean. I imagine shapes that the cumulus clouds make just outside my wide window, and I see the brightly shining sun. Clear aqua-blue water washes up along the pristine, tropical beach where tourists and locals are basking and relaxing in the sun. As we near our destination in Perali, about an hour and a half in, the train stops at the signals. Oddly, I start to feel my new ivory-colored sneakers getting soaked by a little water. I wonder if I might have accidentally not closed my water bottle properly, but it *is* completely tight. I look around the train, and I notice that everybody's feet are wet. Amused, people begin to chatter assuming it was only a slightly bigger tide than usual.

In the blink of an eye, a twenty-foot high wall of water comes roaring towards the train, and people are stunned with no time to react. There is a moment of silence, and it is replaced by

shouting and screaming. I quickly grab my brother and pull him close to me as I bellow, "Don't let go of me no matter what!" I quickly glance around the car only to realize that our parents are not in sight.

In a flash, I try to recall my science lessons. If it was a flood, then shouldn't there be heavy rains? Just as I turn around to look for Mom and Dad, the whole train is engulfed with water and falls onto its side as if it is a defenseless, drowning dragon. The wave keeps spinning the train in circles like a blender until coming to a stop on a hillock.

I see Mom getting tossed around the train like a raggedy old doll. The swirling column of water forces her over to the darker side of the train. Dad comes up behind me, and he makes sure that I am with my brother, and before I can respond, he starts swimming over to Mom to try and save her. In the next moment, my brother's leg gets stuck under the train seat. I help him yank it out, and the color of it surprises me. It has an abundance of hues: blue, black, and green. In shock, I look down at my hand and notice it is bleeding. Perhaps, it's broken.

What caused this gargantuan wall of water? I see a few people trying to smash the windows on the top side of the train trying to get a breath of fresh air. I wrap my bleeding hand and Ajith's bruised leg, each with one of my socks, so that they do not get infected, and then we reach for the railings. I tell my brother to hold on to my hand so I can climb up.

Just as I'm about to get on top of the train, I poke my head out of the cracked window and the horrific reality outside shocks me like a bolt of electricity. The entire village is washed away. Vermillion blood is trickling down bodies of the deceased and living. The train track is nothing more than broken matchsticks. A putrid and malodorous odor hits me like raw sewage

almost making me faint. Despite trying to stay alive by grabbing on to pieces of floating material, natives and tourists are drowning everywhere.

All of a sudden, I feel an excruciating pain in my hand as I clutch Ajith who is trying to hold on to me despite not having very much strength himself. I pull with all my might, but my grasp of him loosens, and he falls back into the caliginous water.

He shouts “Akka!!Ahhhhh!” I scream for help, and then I am startled awake.

I rub my eyes relieved to realize that it was all just a dream. The day prior, I watched with my cousins a documentary on the 2004 Boxing Day Tsunami which was caused by a 9.2 magnitude earthquake in Sumatra, Indonesia. The train wreck in Sri Lanka, my home country, was the WORST in the world, with over 1,700 dead, many of which were children. There were eleven countries that were affected by the December 26th’s calamity, and only Thailand and Indonesia belonged to the Pacific Ocean Tsunami Warning System. None of those countries issued a warning leaving the people in other nations at the mercy of the gigantic waves. Additionally, many Sri Lankans had never heard of a tsunami or thought it could hit because it was the first to approach Sri Lanka EVER in thousands of years. Since then, public safety measures have been put in place to protect the citizens of Sri Lanka. Survivors of the train wreck provided lurid details of the sins committed against humanity by Mother Nature.

It is vital to remember that those who died are not just some statistic. They were someone’s father, mother, sister, or brother. They made contributions to their country and families. May all those perished on that terrible day in Sri Lanka rest in peace.

(Word Count: 1018)