

Student Name  
Date

## A Vacation in Paradise

The ad in the luxury hotel brochure said, “You will experience golden beaches with glistening sand caressed by the gentle roll of the Indian Ocean.” so I decided that I would spend Christmas 2004 in Sri Lanka at the Palms Hotel. I called my best friend to see if she would like to join me in paradise and she quickly replied, “Count me in!”

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We left for Sri Lanka on December 23, 2004. We couldn't wait to put our toes in the Indian Ocean and feel the gentle roll of the ocean on our feet as promised. Our hotel was on Kalutara Beach. We spent the days at the beach and in the evening, we went sightseeing.

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Comment [LAH1]: Should the hotel be described in more detail?

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December 26, 2004 started out like any other day in paradise. It was about 10:28 and we were lying on the beach soaking up the sun, when we heard screams. My friend and I jumped up and we couldn't believe what we saw! What was seconds earlier, a gentle rolling ocean, turned into a people-eating monster!

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Comment [LAH2]: Should I describe the beach before the tsunami took place?

Comment [L. H.3]: Are there enough interesting words here?

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We ran as fast as our bodies could carry us. We tried to stay ahead of the water, but it became impossible. The water carried us until we were lucky enough to grab onto a pole. Suddenly the pole gave way and we were slammed into a tree. My friend and I were still together. We were able to climb the tree and look over the devastation that lay before us.

Comment [L. H.4]: Should I describe the water?

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Comment [LAH5]: What did you see??

We clung to the tree for dear life. We climbed down carefully and knew immediately that we needed to help. We ran into a Doctor who quickly set up a makeshift hospital in our devastated hotel lobby. We did what we could. Helping others kept us busy so we were not able to dwell on our small problems. With all of the support we provided, it seemed like we were there for months.

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It wasn't until later that night that we got a name for what happened. It was a Tsunami! It was explained to us as an earthquake under the ocean. It registered 9.2 on the Richter

scale. It wasn't till days later that we learned that approximately 229,000 people were killed, 30,000 in Sri Lanka alone. It was the deadliest disaster in Modern History and my friend and I had been a part of it and survived.

On our way home we realized how lucky we were to be alive. We knew that we would never be the same and in some way that was alright with us. As our lives were passing in front of us we realized that it was not cars, money or jewelry that was important, but family and friends and helping others. Somehow the words, "golden beaches with glistening sand caressed by the gentle roll of the Indian Ocean," will never again sound the same.

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