


MARK YOSHIMOTO NEMCOFF

FATAL
SUNSET:

A silhouette of a person standing on a dark, rocky outcrop with their arms outstretched horizontally. The background is a bright orange and yellow sunset sky. The person appears to be wearing a dark, sleeveless top and shorts or a skirt.

DEADLY VACATIONS

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FATAL SUNSET is dedicated to the memories of Nolan Webster, David Potts, Brent Midlocks and to many victims whose tragic stories are chronicled in this book.

I am not telling you to avoid going on vacation. Nor am I trying to suggest you shouldn't go to Mexico, the Caribbean, Hawaii or on a cruise. This book only asks one thing:

DARE TO BE AWARE!

INTRODUCTION

Vacation is the ointment of the soul.

There are few things we love more than leaving behind the grind of our daily lives and heading off for a few days to get away from it all—to relax, have fun, maybe take in the sights. Rarely, when we are thinking about those warm sandy beaches, snorkeling trips and drinks on the lanai, do we ever contemplate the notion that paradise could potentially be the location of sudden and unexpected tragedy.

I was two days into a Maui vacation with my family when I first heard news of David Potts. Barely a dozen miles from where I was staying, Potts had been knocked down by a large wave, which then very quickly washed him twenty feet into the narrow, lava-rock rimmed Nakalele Point Blowhole. Instantly, his body was pulled deep into the churning current below the jagged lava rock shelf and never seen again.

As unsuccessful searches for David Potts, and later his body, continued to make the local paper, I thought to myself that in the times I'd been to Maui, not once had I ever heard a single person make mention of the potential, yet somewhat seemingly obvious, danger of getting too close to this particular natural attraction. I'm the kind of person who, for a photo or a dare, would probably have done the same thing as David Potts. I don't blame his death on stupidity or carelessness. I think that we often go on vacation and conveniently forget that we may be taking risks that are beyond our capacity to handle when the situation very quickly goes from serene to adverse.

My intent in writing *FATAL SUNSET* is not to sensationalize the tragic deaths of unfortunate vacation-goers, but instead to point out that your carefree getaway is not immune to danger whether it is from forces of nature beyond your control or predators who count on the fact that your guard may be down.

Though I have found nearly all of the stories mentioned in this book to be somewhat terrifying in their own rights, it does not mean I will forgo my family vacations in order to hide in the relative safety of my own house. Instead, in the same way that I always look both ways before crossing the street, I feel that when armed with knowledge of events past I am better prepared to identify potential hazardous situations and hopefully avoid similar tragedies befalling myself and those I care dearly about.

Should you be afraid to go to any of the places mentioned in this book? No. But you have to remember it's not always rainbows and Mai Tais. You should be aware of the potential dangers. In the name of having fun, you may undertake some physical challenges that you are unprepared for or may visit places you believe are safer than they seem. For me, personally, knowing what I know now will make my vacations even better. At the very least, I'd like to think my vacations will be safer for my entire family...and will help us continue to enjoy happy memories intended to last a lifetime.

CRUISE SHIP DISAPPEARANCES

Though it is quite uncommon to hear about the type of fatal incident that doomed the *Costa Concordia* (on a Friday the 13th, no less), it is surprisingly even more rare to hear anyone talk about the alarming statistics involving people who have gone missing from perfectly sound and functional cruise ships.

According to the U.S.-based International Cruise Victim's Association—set up by businessman Kendall Carver after his own daughter, Merrian, disappeared from a cruise—more than one hundred seventy people have gone missing at sea since 1995.

Twenty-four passengers disappeared between 2003 and 2006, not including suicides and accidents due to intoxication. More than thirty passengers mysteriously vanished from cruise ships without a trace since 2007. Thirteen of those in 2011, alone.

It is an increasing trend with disturbing and somewhat sinister implications.

It was August of 2004 that Kendall Carver received a frantic call from his thirteen-year-old granddaughter asking, "Do you know where my mommy is? I've been trying to call her and she hasn't called back for days. Is she with you?"

What Carver didn't know was that Merrian, a vivacious forty-year-old redhead with a penchant for writing poetry, had taken a flight from Boston to Seattle before boarding the cruise ship *Mercury* on a seven-day Alaskan Royal Caribbean vacation without telling anyone, not even her own daughter.

And then without a trace, Merrian Carver vanished at sea.

By the second day of the cruise, a ship attendant named Domingo Monterio noticed the bed in Merrian's cabin had gone unused. After reporting this to his supervisor, Monterio was instructed to, "Just forget about it and do your job."

For six more nights, the attendant continued to place the customary chocolates on Merrian's pillow in the bed that remained empty for the remainder of the cruise.

Three weeks after the *Mercury* docked in Vancouver, Kendall Carver called the cruise line. After three additional days, Royal Caribbean officials finally confirmed that Merrian had boarded the vessel. However, what they couldn't tell him was where she had gotten off, or if she had even gotten off at all.

In fact, it seemed to Kendall Carver that Royal Caribbean had known all along that Merrian had not once disembarked from the *Mercury* after discovering what her cabin attendant had reported to his own boss. Even when everyone else had left the ship in Vancouver harbor, all of Merrian's belongings remained in her cabin.

Then to Kendall Carver's horror, he was informed that all of Merrian's clothing had been given to charity and that her purse containing all of her identification and Social Security card was locked up in storage. Most shocking of all, Royal Caribbean never informed anyone, neither the police nor her family, of Merrian's strange disappearing act.

Two months after Merrian vanished, Carver hired Tim Schmolder, a San Francisco-based private investigator to discover exactly what happened to his daughter. However, once Schmolder began asking questions, Royal Caribbean put up roadblocks stymieing the investigation. Schmolder's requests to interview passengers and crew were denied. His access to investigate the ship's video surveillance tapes was blocked. Initially, cruise officials told Carver that video tapes were erased after twelve days when in fact it was company policy to keep them for thirty days. By the time Carver learned the truth, it was too late. The tapes had been wiped clean.

After much pressure, Schmolder was eventually allowed two hours to “walk through” the *Mercury*. He checked out Merrian's room on the Panorama Deck, more than one hundred feet above the waterline. Although her cabin had an ocean view, the windows were bolted shut. Still, Schmolder easily saw that her room was a short distance to an elevator or stairs leading up to an open-air deck.

“It seemed highly plausible that someone could go overboard without being observed,” Schmolder reported, adding that Merrian's “sudden disappearance is most easily explained by the suicide theory.”

However, Schmolder could not positively rule out foul play aboard the *Mercury*. “A harmful encounter with a stranger would almost certainly have been swift and fatal.”

Desperate for any clues, the Carvers’ attorneys forced Royal Caribbean to make cabin attendant Domingo Montiero available for questioning. What was said in Montiero’s deposition now opened the doors for the discovery of Royal Caribbean’s own documents offering possible evidence that Merrian’s disappearance had been covered up. Montiero’s report of the suspicious circumstances of Merrian’s room had been logged, along with documentation showing Royal Caribbean had held their own internal investigation, which eventually led to the firing of Montiero’s boss over his handling of the situation.

In the three months since Kendal Carver began asking questions, not once did Royal Caribbean officials divulge any of that information. Ship records confirmed that Merrian had never utilized her Sea Pass, an onboard credit card that also acts as passenger identification. Never had it been used by Merrian to buy a single drink or make any other purchase. There also was no record that Merrian left the ship in any port during the cruise.

Almost exactly one year later, in August of 2005, the Carvers sued Royal Caribbean for damages.

When reporters began to question the cruise line’s officials about both the lawsuit and Merrian’s disappearance, Royal Caribbean issued a short statement on October 26:

“Mrs. Carver had severe emotional problems, had attempted suicide before and appears to have committed suicide on our ship. The death of Merrian Carver is a horrible tragedy, but, regrettably, there is very little a cruise line, a resort or a hotel can do to prevent someone from committing suicide.”

Stunned and insulted by the press release, Kendall Carver asked, “How do they know she’s dead? Do they know something we don’t?”

The strange and mysterious case of Merrian Carver is not the only time Royal Caribbean has been accused of a cover-up in an attempt to protect the cruise line’s image and legal interests. On March 24, 1998, twenty-three year old Amy Lynn Bradley also disappeared without a trace while traveling aboard the Royal Caribbean ship, *Rhapsody of the Seas* with her mother, father and brother.

Amy was a pretty, recent college graduate who attracted the attention of several crewmembers aboard the ship. According to her mother, “The waiters were very over-attentive towards Amy from the moment they met her. After dinner one evening, one of the waiters approached us while we were visiting with associates with whom we had been traveling and asked for Amy by name. The waiter stated ‘they’ wanted to take Amy to Carlos and Charlie’s while docked in Aruba.”

This was an invitation Amy chose to not only pass on, but also to not even acknowledge. “I would never do anything with any of those crewmembers. They give me the creeps,” Amy responded. She and her brother chose to stay aboard the *Rhapsody of the Seas* instead of exploring Aruba.

“That same evening, March 23 (Monday), while docked in Aruba,” added Amy’s Mother, “all four of us attended a party on the upper deck, where the band was playing. We noticed a group of individuals standing alongside the railing who had boarded the ship with a dance troupe and who also were not passengers. They were not a part of the cruise! I wondered, how they could be allowed to board a ship and just stand around watching the performance with paying passengers? Looking back now, it seems even more dangerous to us.”

Shortly afterwards, the Bradleys noticed something quite curious, and now-seemingly ominous. During the party, Amy and her mother ventured to the ship's fourth deck to check out photos that had been taken after dinner by the ship's photographer. To their surprise, every single one of Amy's photos was missing. Though the photographer claimed he remembered placing them out in the gallery where all of the other passenger photos were on display, the pictures had vanished.

The following day, during the early morning hours, Amy Lynn Bradley left her cabin with only her cigarettes and a lighter and was never seen again.

According to her mother, there was no way Amy had intended to be gone for long given that she hadn't even been wearing her shoes.

When Amy's parents couldn't locate her, they begged the ship's purser to search the ship and make an announcement. Also they requested Amy's photo be shown around to guests to ask if anyone had seen her. By lunchtime, the ship's captain told the Bradleys that he would not make an announcement that Amy was missing or post a picture for passengers to view for fear of "disturbing the guests." He assured the Bradleys that every inch of the ship had been searched.

The following day, with Amy still missing, Amy's parents left the ship to contact authorities. That day, they were informed by the F.B.I. that the only sections of the ship that had been checked were the common areas and restrooms.

On Thursday, March 26, Amy's mother, father and brother flew from Curacao to St. Maarten where they re-boarded the *Rhapsody of the Seas* and demanded a meeting with both the ship's captain and chief of security. Instead, they were greeted by a member of Royal Caribbean's 'risk management' team, who they later learned was an attorney assigned to represent the cruise line's interests against the Bradley family.

To date, according to Amy's mother, Royal Caribbean has failed to cooperate with the Bradley family in their search for answers to Amy's disappearance aboard their ship.

The day before leaving for vacation, Amy Lynn Bradley adopted a female bulldog named "Daisy." She had just moved into a new apartment and was starting a brand new job the week after the cruise. As her many friends and family have continued to express, there is no reason to believe Amy was suicidal or unhappy with her life.

On April 6, 2011, sixty-three-year-old Jon Halford, a bookseller from Buckinghamshire, United Kingdom, vanished from the liner *Thomson Spirit* while on a week-long Egyptian cruise. Hours before he had last been seen drinking cocktails in the upper-deck bar around twelve thirty in the morning, Halford had sent a text message to his wife, Ruth, back home to let her know he would see her at the airport the following day.

As Ruth was on her way to pick Jon up from his flight, the phone rang. "The plane is in the air but your husband is not on it," a Thomson's agent flatly expressed. Somehow, Jon had gone missing from the ship without anyone realizing—all despite the many checkpoints one must cross when disembarking.

When questioned, passengers who had remembered talking to Jon Halford in the bar that evening claimed he was not drunk. In fact, they said he was in good spirits and looking forward to seeing his wife and three children.

"A search of the sea was carried out at the time, but nothing was found," added Ruth. "I am told there are sharks in the area. It is very painful to think about."

Just a month earlier, twenty-four-year-old Rebecca Coraim, who had been working as the youth activities coordinator aboard the *Disney Wonder* was reported missing at sea off the western coast of Mexico after failing to report for a scheduled shift.

At five forty-five that morning, as later witnessed by her parents on a section of grainy surveillance camera videotape, Rebecca picked up a phone in the hallway of the ship, dialed an on-

board number and then talked briefly to someone on the ship. What her parents witnessed next stunned and shocked them. During the call Rebecca's body language showed she was very emotional. As she hung up the phone, Rebecca began to cry.

That was the last image seen of her. To this day, there have been no answers as to her fate.

Rama Forman, a forty-eight-year-old Swiss native living in North London vanished from Silversea's luxurious liner, the *Silver Cloud*, a small ship that carries only three hundred guests along with two hundred twenty-two crewmembers. By the time the ship docked in Mumbai, the final port of call for the voyage, Rama was discovered to be missing.

Suspicious was the fact that Rama's balcony room was found to have been locked from the inside. Though her purse was still there in the room, all the jewelry she had taken along with her on the trip was missing.

Just eight days before his thirty-seventh birthday, Christopher Caldwell was squeezing every last moment out of a three day Carnival Cruise to Mexico with his fiancée. Instead of going back to his room to pack on the last night of the trip, Chris ventured back to the ship's casino where onboard video surveillance cameras captured him staying until two seventeen a.m. Sometime around three thirty a.m. on July 23, 2004, a bartender spotted a very drunk Chris on the promenade deck. Instead of making sure Chris made it safely to his cabin, the bartender chose to ignore the inebriated passenger.

It is most probable that Christopher Caldwell fell overboard some fourteen miles southeast of the Cape Florida lighthouse. An exhaustive search was performed by the Coast Guard. After thirty-six hours had passed with no sign of his whereabouts, Chris was presumed dead.

On May 15, 2006, less than twenty-four hours after boarding the Royal Caribbean *Mariner of the Seas*, Daniel DiPiero awoke from an inebriated state on a deck chair around two fifteen a.m. On video he was seen walking to the railing where he apparently vomited before sliding over the rail into the sea.

Sixty-eight-year old John Dresp of Omaha, Nebraska, was a first-time snorkeler in the water of the Belize Barrier Reef. Along with his brother Don and Don's wife, Winifred, John boarded a catamaran operated by Discovery Divers after arriving in Caye Cauker aboard the Norwegian Cruise Line's *Norwegian Dream*. The current and conditions that day were far from ideal for a snorkel trip, especially for a novice like John. While another of the ship's contracted excursion companies pulled their guests out of the water after ten minutes, Discovery went about with their normal itinerary. At first, it was Don who had gotten into trouble, requiring a rescue from the guides after being pulled far from the boat by the current. When they returned, to Don's horror, John was now missing.

Thirteen months later, after traveling back to Belize City for a coroner's inquiry, Donald and Winifred Dresp spent a tearful hour in front of the Magistrate Court, reaffirming their previous testimony as to the events of John's disappearance. To their shock, no witnesses from Discovery Divers appeared in court due to the fact that they had never even received a summons. To make matters worse, the Dresps were forced to fire their attorney, Louis Young, who they claimed demanded six hundred dollars in cash in advance.

Later, the Dresps learned that local rumor had placed John alive and well in Europe, living off of insurance money received in the fraud. It was noted that two days after John's disappearance, five Belizian fishermen also vanished in the current, yet only the American was presumed to have faked his own death.

Sadly, a very common thread in nearly every single documented case of suspicious disappearances involving cruise ship passengers is what is often described as a climate of obstructionism and insensitivity by those handling such difficult investigations. The frustration felt by family members confronted with the loss of a loved one, along with the inability—and in some alleged circumstances, sheer incompetence—of the authorities in charge of finding the truth can be

overwhelming.

Such is the case of the family of Angelo Faliva, a head chef aboard the Royal Caribbean *Coral Princess*. After Angelo's November 25, 2009 disappearance during the middle of his shift, his family in particular his sister, Chiara, has been tirelessly fighting to obtain answers that have yet to come. According to an Italian newspaper, two months after Angelo's disappearance, Chiara received an email from Bermuda police notifying her that they had not yet examined the data on Angelo's laptop computer, camera, or three cell phones they had in custody because they were "very busy with other matters." They did, however, find time to warn Chiara that her family was "on the verge" of harassing the Bermuda police with their constant inquiries.

It should be noted the circumstances surrounding Angelo Faliva's case are rather curious. The day Angelo vanished, the *Coral Princess* was a mere two miles offshore of Cartagena, Columbia where it was set to dock the next morning at nine a.m. To some this may seem like an innocuous piece of information until one considers that discovered inside of the missing chef's hat was the name "Capil del Mar," the very same hotel in Cartagena that had been researched from Angelo's own computer the morning of his disappearance. In addition, just one day before, on November 24, Angelo sent an email to Chiara mentioning a recent dispute with his boss on the ship, a sous chef who had filed a formal complaint in the matter.

With its many restaurants, the "promenade" seventh deck of the *Coral Princess* is not only heavily trafficked by passengers and crew alike, but is also under constant surveillance from security cameras monitoring the entire area. Sometime around eight fifteen p.m., Angelo returned to his post in the kitchen of Sabatini's after being seen conversing with two passengers. Shortly thereafter, he was observed entering an "employee's only" elevator that descended into, among many other places, an area where trash was routinely discarded into the sea.

This was the last confirmed sighting of Angelo even though another crewmember claimed seeing the chef on deck the next morning, despite the fact Angelo had not slept in his cabin during the night in question.

According to Bermuda police, who did not even begin their investigation onboard the *Coral Princess* until ten days after Angelo's disappearance, a single life preserver was also missing from deck seven, though the standard-issue night illumination flares attached to it had been torn off and lay nearby on the deck.

It would seem strange that someone voluntarily entering the water in the dead of night would leave behind these safety flares. Certainly nobody attempting suicide by jumping off a ship would do so with the aid of a life jacket.

Falvia's family has several chilling theories. Could it be that Angelo fell victim to foul play? Possibly pushed into the sea from a clandestine below-deck location by a disgruntled co-worker? Or was Angelo Falvia just in the wrong place at the wrong time, witnessing something he shouldn't have seen? Other scenarios seem less likely. Is it possible Angelo was decoyed to a storage area, subdued, put in a crate and taken onshore while cargo and luggage was moved, similar to one hypothesis held in the disappearance of Amy Lynn Bradley years earlier?

The ongoing idea of foul play aboard a cruise ship becomes a chilling consideration in the case of Annette Mizener. On December 4, 2004, during the last night of a nine-day Mexican Riviera cruise aboard Carnival's *The Pride*, Annette's small black-beaded evening bag was found on a lower deck of the ship just outside an Internet cafe. The purse was discovered torn and beads had been strewn all over. Nearby, an overturned drink glass and scattered papers were found alongside a railing.

Also found near the purse were spots of blood.

Perhaps most curious of all is that the security camera covering that part of the deck was later found to have a ship's map deliberately taped over the lens.

Annette had been traveling with her parents and teenage daughter. After winning twice at bingo while on the cruise, Annette planned to test her fortune again. She told her parents she would meet them for the ship's ten p.m. match, saying she wanted to arrive early so she could make sure and get her lucky seat.

When Annette didn't show up, her father became concerned and went to look for her. He was told she had been seen in the casino around nine thirty. After having her paged, a crewmember discovered Annette's purse on deck and paged her again at ten past ten to give it back.

According to Carnival, crew aboard *The Pride* conducted a three-hour long search aboard the ship finding nothing. It was then after two a.m. that the captain called the U.S. Coast Guard, who instructed the ship to turn around and search the chilly sixty-degree waters. During this time, Annette's daughter, parents and a couple of other passengers had to block the attempt by Pride crewmembers to "clean up the crime scene before finally prevailing in having the area in question roped off.

Still, no photos of the crime scene were ever taken, not by Carnival's highly-trained security staff, not even later by the F.B.I.

For sixteen hours, the U.S. Coast Guard, along with a Navy ship and search aircraft, scanned over eight hundred square miles of ocean to no avail.

Within a couple of months of Annette's disappearance, her husband John, who at the time of the cruise had been at home tending to the couple's new business selling dietary supplements, became very frustrated with the FBI. At first, he says, they told him they suspected foul play, in part due to inconsistencies in a particular crewmember's responses during questioning by authorities. As a year slipped by, the FBI's crime lab had still not examined DNA evidence collected from the scene.

According to the family, there remains a single person of interest (POI) in the strange case of Annette's disappearance—a single man in his mid-thirties who has never been married and has no children. As his story goes, he was out on the deck smoking a cigarette when he found Annette's purse, coincidentally at the very same moment two security guards arrived and collected her handbag. The POI witnessed the security guards remove a large amount of cash from the purse before he left the scene to join his traveling companions.

The POI is on record as having made no less than six trips back to the scene of the crime between eleven p.m. and one a.m.

An unofficial investigation into the POI's background done by Cruise Bruise, an organization that tracks cruise ship crime, allegedly found a number of curious circumstantial events. Three years before Annette Mizener vanished without a trace from the deck of *The Pride* another woman had gone missing from the POI's hometown of approximately sixty-five thousand people. Also reported was a case of a missing woman from a town the POI had recently visited. Oddly enough, both victims were between thirty and forty years old, married, with blond-hair and blue eyes, just like Annette.

In 2006, a year and a half after Annette Mizener vanished, DNA test results and fingerprints obtained from the POI turned up negative. The FBI removed him from their list of suspects though, like nearly all similar cruise ship disappearances, the case remains open.

Ask family members of those who have gone missing or died during pleasure cruises and almost all speak of similar circumstances of obstructionism and blatant untruths that have been told to them in their search for answers. Perhaps it is the law itself that is to blame. The current 'Death On The High Seas Act' (DOHSA), a 1920s law enacted by the US Congress, and which is still in effect, has complicated jurisdictional issues surrounding foreign-registered ships owned and/or operated by foreign-registered companies, sailing in international waters, and crossing territories and borders of countries. DOHSA has continued to protect the cruise industry from being held accountable for the safety and security of its passengers.

Judging from the mysterious stories of those dozens of people who have gone missing never to be

seen again, it is not unheard of to fall victim to a suspicious disappearance aboard a cruise ship anywhere in the world today. Even as I write this chapter, five people have gone missing from cruise ships in just the first sixty days of 2012. Of course, a great many of these cases may indeed be the result of suicide, but still it would be hard to dismiss every single missing person case aboard a cruise ship as the desperate act of one wanting to kill themselves. Nonetheless, there seems to be no slowing down the number of people vanishing from cruise ships and even more disturbing, few answers for those families who have reason to believe foul play may have somehow been involved.

WHAT HAPPENED ABOARD THE COSTA CONCORDIA?

Their website reads: *No matter what travel destinations you are considering, a cruise vacation is the best way to travel in comfort and style. Costa Cruises' vacation packages will take you to the most fascinating travel destinations in the world: Western and Eastern Mediterranean, Norwegian Fjords, Baltic, Western and Eastern Caribbean, Red and Arabic Sea, Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Ocean.*

Perhaps it wasn't the most well-known cruise ship in the world. No *Love Boat*, no Disney floating city. Maybe they should have sensed something back on September 2, 2005 when the champagne bottle failed to break during its christening. On Friday January 13, 2012, at around six thirty pm local time, the *Costa Concordia*, a massive five hundred seventy million dollar passenger liner more than three football fields long and weighing just about one hundred and fifteen tons, left the Italian port of Civitavecchia on its way to sudden disaster.

Two and a half hours later, the ship would run around on a reef just one hundred and fifty meters off the shore of Isola del Giglio, capsizing and turning the *Costa Concordia* into the world's most notorious cruise ship in nearly a century since the Titanic met an iceberg it didn't like.

How did it all happen?

One could call it "user error," though it may be a good idea to talk to *Concordia's* captain Francesco Schettino first.

Born in 1960 near Naples in the coastal town of Castellammare di Stabia, then later attending a nautical institute in the nearby town of Piano di Sorrento, nearly all of Schettino's life had been influenced by the sea. In 2002, he became employed by Costa Cruises, first as an official in charge of security. Within four years time, he was promoted to the role of Captain after having moved up to the title of "second in command."

On the evening of January, 13, 2012, the seemingly cowardly Captain Schettino was caught abandoning the *Concordia* as the crippled ship lay listing on its starboard side, half submerged in water. From his lifeboat, Schettino refused orders to return to his ship to oversee the evacuation, insisting it was dark.

The following is an English-translated transcript of the radio conversation between Capt. Francesco Schettino, and Capt. Gregorio De Falco of the Italian Coast Guard in Livorno. Within hours of its release to the world, the Italian Coast Guard confirmed this transcript's authenticity to The Associated Press.

—De Falco: *"This is De Falco speaking from Livorno. Am I speaking with the commander?"*

—Schettino: *"Yes. Good evening, Cmdr. De Falco."*

—De Falco: *"Please tell me your name."*

—Schettino: *"I'm Cmdr. Schettino, commander"*

—De Falco: *"Schettino? Listen Schettino. There are people trapped on board. Now you go with your boat under the prow on the starboard side. There is a pilot ladder. You will climb that ladder and go on board. You go on board and then you will tell me how many people there are. Is that clear? I'm recording this conversation, Cmdr. Schettino..."*

—Schettino: *"Commander, let me tell you one thing..."*

—De Falco: *"Speak up! Put your hand in front of the microphone and speak more loudly, is that clear?"*

—Schettino: "In this moment, the boat is tipping..."

—De Falco: "I understand that, listen, there are people that are coming down the pilot ladder of the prow. You go up that pilot ladder, get on that ship and tell me how many people are still on board. And what they need. Is that clear? You need to tell me if there are children, women or people in need of assistance. And tell me the exact number of each of these categories. Is that clear? Listen Schettino, that you saved yourself from the sea, but I am going to...really do something bad to you...I am going to make you pay for this. Go on board, Christ!!"

—Schettino: "Commander, please..."

—De Falco: "No, please. You now get up and go on board. They are telling me that on board there are still..."

—Schettino: "I am here with the rescue boats, I am here, I am not going anywhere, I am here..."

—De Falco: "What are you doing, commander?"

—Schettino: "I am here to coordinate the rescue..."

—De Falco: "What are you coordinating there? Go on board! Coordinate the rescue from aboard the ship. Are you refusing?"

—Schettino: "No, I am not refusing."

—De Falco: "Are you refusing to go aboard commander? Can you tell me the reason why you are not going?"

—Schettino: "I am not going because the other lifeboat is stopped."

—De Falco: "You go aboard. It is an order. Don't make any more excuses. You have declared 'abandoned ship.' Now I am in charge. You go on board! Is that clear? Do you hear me? Go, and call me when you are aboard. My air rescue crew is there."

—Schettino: "Where are your rescuers?"

—De Falco: "My air rescue is on the prow. Go. There are already bodies, Schettino."

—Schettino: "How many bodies are there?"

—De Falco: "I don't know. I have heard of one. You are the one who has to tell me how many there are. Christ."

—Schettino: "But do you realize it is dark and here we can't see anything..."

—De Falco: "And so what? You want go home, Schettino? It is dark and you want to go home? Get on that prow of the boat using the pilot ladder and tell me what can be done, how many people there are and what their needs are. Now!"

—Schettino: "...I am with my second in command."

—De Falco: "So both of you go up then ... You and your second go on board now. Is that clear?"

—Schettino: "Commander, I want to go on board, but it is simply that the other boat here ... there are other rescuers. It has stopped and is waiting..."

—De Falco: "It has been an hour that you have been telling me the same thing. Now, go on board. Go on board! And then tell me immediately how many people there are there."

—Schettino: "Okay, commander"

—De Falco: "Go, immediately!"

Costa Cruises chief executive Pier Luigi Foschi quickly issued a statement laying claim that the fatal disaster happened because Schettino deviated from the pre-programmed route that would have taken the *Concordia* a safe distance from Isola del Giglio. Italian prosecutors quickly ruled out "technical error" as the accident's cause. Eyewitness accounts firmly point to Schettino's poor choice to show off by maneuvering the *Concordia* too close to shore.

Corriere della Sera, an Italian daily newspaper published in Milan, ran a story on January 16 describing how Schettino had chosen to pass close to the shore to please the *Concordia*'s head waiter

Antonello Tievoli, a native of Giglio. According to witnesses, Schettino summoned Mr. Tievoli up to the bridge saying, "Antonello, come see, we are very close to your Giglio."

As Tievoli watched, his response moments before the accident occurred was, "Careful, we are extremely close to the shore."

Schettino then sounded the ship's throaty horn in a salute to retired captain, Mario Palombo, with whom Schettino was on the phone with at the time. Giglio residents claim they had never witnessed the *Concordia* come so close to the "Le Scole" reef area before.

"This was too close, too close," moaned Italo Arienti, a 54-year-old sailor who for more than a decade has worked on the ferry that runs between Giglio and the mainland.

In the main dining room, the first course had just been served. Tables shook as wine glasses, silverware and dishes of finely sautéed cuttlefish and mushrooms smashed to the floor. The *Costa Concordia*, carrying four thousand two hundred people (approx. three thousand two hundred passengers and one thousand crew members) crashed into a jagged reef hidden meters below the surface of the water, ripping a one hundred sixty-foot long gash in its hull before turning on its side.

Inside the ship, panic ensued. Hallways turned sideways and went dark as the electrical lights flickered to black.

In what can only be described as the height of irony, one passenger, a Swiss native named Yannick Sgaga, claimed that in the moments before the fateful crash, playing over the loudspeakers inside one of the *Concordia*'s many lounges was Celine Dion's "My Heart will Go On," otherwise known as the theme from the movie "Titanic."

Despite the panic on board and the obvious mutiny by some of the junior crew who were well aware of the situation, Schettino did not make the call to "abandon ship" until an hour after the crash. This inexplicable delay made lifeboat rescue eventually impossible for some of the passengers, many of who jumped into the sea while others waited for helicopters to pluck them to safety.

Less than seventy-two hours after the accident, Captain Schettino was in custody in Grosseto prison, accused not only of multiple manslaughter charges, but also for abandoning his passengers on the ship. In a closed-door hearing, a defiant Schettino fervently dismissed all allegations that he abandoned the *Concordia*. "I saved the lives of hundreds, thousands of people. After the collision with the rocks the ship listed ninety degrees. I could not get back on board.

"The passengers were pouring on to the decks, taking the lifeboats by assault. I didn't even have life jacket because I had given it to one of the passengers. I was trying to get people to get into the boats in an orderly fashion. Suddenly, since the ship was at a sixty to seventy degree angle, I tripped and I ended up in one of the boats. That's how I found myself in the lifeboat," claimed the captain.

"Suspended there, I was unable to lower the boat into the sea, because the space was blocked by other boats in the water."

Schettino did eventually admit responsibility for the crash. "I made a mistake on the approach," he said. "I was navigating by sight because I knew the depths well and I had done this maneuver three or four times. But this time I ordered the turn too late and I ended up in water that was too shallow. I don't know why it happened. I was a victim of my instincts."

On a Facebook page started in defense of Schettino, one man claiming to be a seasoned maritime expert noted that, despite allegations of the captain's ill-advised maneuver, Schettino's claim of having saved lives is quite accurate given the possibility things could have been much worse if he hadn't acted at all.

Perhaps none of his supporters were there to see Schettino wrapped in a blanket on his way to the Giglio shore around eleven thirty p.m., some four hours before evacuation of the *Concordia* was completed. According to one news report, Schettino quickly hailed a taxi, telling the driver, "Get me as far away from here as possible."

Later, when questioned by authorities, the taxi driver described Schettino as visibly shaken and inquiring where he could buy some dry socks.

There were also reports that shortly before the accident, Schettino was seen drinking in one of the ship's many bars with a beautiful blonde woman on his arm. This same woman, according to eyewitnesses, was on the bridge at the time of the crash. Even more outrageous is the puzzling story that immediately after the crash, Schettino ordered dinner for him and his female guest.

Five days after the accident, divers used explosives to blow a hole in the *Concordia's* hull in an attempt to find those that remained missing. Five bodies were found.

The first of the dead to be identified was thirty-eight-year-old Hungarian violinist, Sandor Feher, an entertainer on the ship. Jozsef Balog, a pianist working with Feher on the *Concordia*, told a local newspaper that Feher had helped put lifejackets on several crying children before making the fateful decision to return to his cabin to pack his violin instead of boarding a lifeboat without his precious instrument.

In the days after the *Concordia* disaster, Carnival Corporation of Miami, the parent company of Costa Cruises, saw shares of their stock drop more than sixteen percent in London amid questions regarding the safety of their ships. However, analysts were quick to claim that although the overall effect of the fatal Costa *Concordia* shipwreck may hurt the cruise industry in the short run, it would not have long-term negative effects.

"When a plane crashes, people don't stop flying," one analyst was anonymously quoted.

A week after the fatal crash, Costa Cruises offered *Concordia* passengers a thirty percent discount on future cruises. Unsurprisingly, what the attempted settlement achieved was anger from the survivors and unanimous scorn from the global media.

Days later, Costa upped their offer to eleven thousand euros, approximately fourteen thousand four hundred sixty U.S. dollars, as compensation, presumably for the loss of belongings and any psychological trauma the passengers may have suffered from being aboard a ship that capsized and nearly killed them. In addition, all passengers would be reimbursed for the full cost of their trip aboard the *Concordia* as well as any return travel expenses and medical expenses incurred due to the disaster.

Again, unsurprisingly, this offer, which one would assume would include provisions to drop any further legal action as well as sign lengthy non-disclosure agreements, generated more unfavorable media coverage and refusal by many passengers to sign the deal.

In the wake of the *Concordia's* unfortunate and avoidable disaster, consumer groups have begun to engage top U.S. law firms with the aim of filing a massive class-action suit against Costa's parent company, Miami-based Carnival Cruises. Their expectation is that they will force Costa and Carnival to cough up a settlement in the range of anywhere between two hundred thousand to one and a half million dollars per uninjured passenger. For some, including angry sixty-two-year-old German passenger Herbert Greszuk, who left behind everything in the crash, including his dentures, it's a matter of forcing Costa to be accountable and to make sure something like this never happens again.

However, in the end, it may be the fine print on the tickets purchased and signed by the *Concordia's* passengers that decides how much, if any, Costa will have to pay out. Inside the ticket contract is what is commonly known as a "choice of forum" clause that clearly states lawsuits must be filed in Genoa, Italy where most of Costa Cruise's operations are based. If a Costa cruise were to touch any part of U.S. territory, the suit would have to be filed in Miami, but the *Concordia* only ever traveled in foreign waters during this journey. Since Italian law makes it more difficult for some plaintiffs to recover damages due to pain and suffering, the pursuit of legal remedies may be a very uphill battle for the injured and non-injured *Concordia* passengers alike.

Also, what is to become of the *Concordia's* one thousand crew members who not only suffered

through the disaster but are now out of work? For them, legal options are quite limited given how the employment contracts require them to first submit to arbitration before any lawsuits can be brought.

Is there any question that this was a tragedy that could have been avoided? One of the most stunning pieces of information to come from the investigation is the revelation that this was not the first time Francesco Schettino had crashed a cruise ship. In June 2010, Schettino maneuvered the *Aida Blu* into the German port of Warnemunde too quickly, causing damage to the ship.

As the *Concordia* hearings began, documents surfaced containing claims that officers aboard the *Costa Concordia* were seen snorting cocaine and getting drunk on a regular basis. It's not impossible to see why this alleged hard-partying atmosphere on the ship has been mentioned as a mitigating cause of a disaster that should never have happened.

Thirty two people lost their lives on the *Concordia*.

MEXICODE RED

Ah, Mexico. Sun and fun south of the border style, where you get lots of bang for your buck and the tequila flows like every day is Cinco de Mayo. Thousands of miles of beaches make it a tan-seeker's paradise. A certain amount of lax attitude gives it a nice cachet as a place where all types of whims and desires can be indulged depending upon how badly one wants to seek them out. Lots of people love to vacation in Mexico. Tons swear by it.

However, the prevailing question that seems to come back around in the media every couple of years or so is whether or not vacationing in Mexico is safe.

In case you haven't heard, or have been spending a lot of time in a cave, Mexico is home to one of the most brutal drug wars in modern history. Since 2006, the entire country has been gripped by fear, caught in the crosshairs of a horrifying escalation of extreme violence brought on by the government's attempted crackdown on renegade cartels that push enormous amounts of narcotics into the U.S. and abroad. It is the brutality and bloodshed from these narco wars that make the headlines. A dozen young men found massacred in a field, their bodies hacked to pieces. Rival gang members or snitches found hanging from bridges in densely populated areas. The bloody photos of victims published in tabloids there, yet rarely seen in the United States, are nothing short of barbaric. Forty-five thousand Mexican troops have been enlisted into this seemingly unwinnable war to stop this multi-billion dollar illicit industry. Still the dead pile up like kindling.

In April 2011 alone, the death toll from the narco wars topped fourteen hundred—a seeming drop in the bucket compared to the tens of thousands who have found themselves caught in the crossfire. Google it and you will find a hundred news stories full of kidnapping, beheadings and torture so gruesome they make the movie “Scarface” look like an episode of “Mickey Mouse Clubhouse.”

On February 8 2012, the U.S. Department of State issued the following updated travel advisory:

Millions of U.S. citizens safely visit Mexico each year for study, tourism, and business, including more than 150,000 who cross the border every day. The Mexican government makes a considerable effort to protect U.S. citizens and other visitors to major tourist destinations, and there is no evidence that Transnational Criminal Organizations (TCOs) have targeted U.S. visitors and residents based on their nationality. Resort areas and tourist destinations in Mexico generally do not see the levels of drug-related violence and crime reported in the border region and in areas along major trafficking routes.

*Nevertheless, U.S. travelers should be aware that the Mexican government has been engaged in an extensive effort to counter TCOs which engage in narcotics trafficking and other unlawful activities throughout Mexico. The TCOs themselves are engaged in a violent struggle to control drug trafficking routes and other criminal activity. As a result, **crime and violence are serious problems throughout the country and can occur anywhere. U.S. citizens have fallen victim to TCO activity, including homicide, gun battles, kidnapping, carjacking and highway robbery.***

*According to the most recent homicide figures published by the Mexican government, 47,515 people were killed in narcotics-related violence in Mexico between December 1, 2006 and September 30, 2011, with 12,903 narcotics-related homicides in the first nine months of 2011 alone. While most of those killed in narcotics-related violence have been members of TCOs, innocent persons have also been killed. **The number of U.S. citizens reported to the Department of State as murdered in Mexico increased from 35 in 2007 to 120 in 2011.***

Gun battles between rival TCOs or with Mexican authorities have taken place in towns and cities in many parts of Mexico, especially in the border region. **Gun battles have occurred in broad daylight on streets and in other public venues, such as restaurants and clubs. During some of these incidents, U.S. citizens have been trapped and temporarily prevented from leaving the area.** TCOs use stolen cars and trucks to create roadblocks on major thoroughfares, preventing the military and police from responding to criminal activity. The location and timing of future armed engagements is unpredictable. We recommend that you defer travel to the areas indicated in this Travel Warning and to exercise extreme caution when traveling throughout the northern border region.

The rising number of kidnappings and disappearances throughout Mexico is of particular concern. Both local and expatriate communities have been victimized. In addition, local police have been implicated in some of these incidents. We strongly advise you to lower your profile and avoid displaying any evidence of wealth that might draw attention.

Carjacking and highway robbery are serious problems in many parts of the border region and U.S. citizens have been murdered in such incidents. Most victims who complied with carjackers at these checkpoints have reported that they were not physically harmed. Incidents have occurred during the day and at night, and carjackers have used a variety of techniques, including bumping/moving vehicles to force them to stop and running vehicles off the road at high speeds. There are some indications that criminals have particularly targeted newer and larger vehicles, especially dark-colored SUVs. However, victims driving a variety of vehicles, from late model SUVs to old sedans have also been targeted. While violent incidents have occurred at all hours of the day and night on both modern toll ("cuotas") highways and on secondary roads, they have occurred most frequently at night and on isolated roads. To reduce risk, we strongly urge you to travel between cities throughout Mexico only during daylight hours, to avoid isolated roads, and to use toll roads whenever possible. The Mexican government has deployed federal police and military personnel throughout the country as part of its efforts to combat the TCOs. U.S. citizens traveling on Mexican roads and highways may encounter government checkpoints, which are often staffed by military personnel or law enforcement personnel. TCOs have erected their own unauthorized checkpoints, and killed or abducted motorists who have failed to stop at them. You should cooperate at all checkpoints.

Effective July 15, 2010, the U.S. Mission in Mexico imposed restrictions on U.S. government employees' travel. U.S. government employees and their families are not permitted to drive for personal reasons from the U.S.-Mexico border to or from the interior of Mexico or Central America. Personal travel by vehicle is permitted between Hermosillo and Nogales but is restricted to daylight hours and the Highway 15 toll road (cuota).

U.S. government personnel and their families are prohibited from personal travel to all areas described as "defer non-essential travel" and when travel for official purposes is essential it is conducted with extensive security precautions. USG personnel and their families are allowed to travel for personal reasons to the areas where no advisory is in effect or where the advisory is to exercise caution.

For more information on road safety and crime along Mexico's roadways, see the Department of State's Country Specific Information.

It's no secret that any kind of governmental communiqué to the public, especially those concerning anything as delicate as a travel advisory, is crafted first and foremost not to inspire panic amongst those who they are attempting to advise. The implication that there is any kind of "spin" put on the facts in order to make them seem palatable, not only to the general public, but also to the government and people of Mexico with whom the United States depends upon for trade and commerce, is only suggested because regardless of how much any of us would like to truly believe governments have our best interests at heart, these advisories are still a function of public relations.

That being said, there is one sentence in the very beginning of this travel advisory that bears closer inspection.

“...there is no evidence that Transnational Criminal Organizations (TCOs) have targeted U.S. visitors and residents based on their nationality.”

Read it again. It doesn't say that TCO's have *not* targeted visitors; it only says they haven't targeted visitors *based on their nationality*.

It's a small, yet very crucial distinction, especially in light of the sections of the memo that clearly mention things like how carjacking in the border regions have resulted in U.S. citizens being murdered and also how you, as a visitor, should lower your profile as to not be noticed by the wrong elements.

Of course, it would be ridiculous to say the entire country of Mexico is a war zone and should be avoided because you may catch a stray bullet or be shot dead in a carjacking. However, according to the U.S. State Department's own travel advisory, places in Mexico to “defer non-essential travel” to include: "the northern state of Baja California, particularly at night;" "the state of Chihuahua;" "the state of Coahuila;" "the state of Durango;" "the state of Nuevo Leon, except the metropolitan area of Monterrey where you should exercise caution;" "the state of San Luis Potosi, except the city of San Luis Potosi where you should exercise caution;" "the state of Sinaloa except the city of Mazatlan where you should exercise caution particularly late at night and in the early morning;" "the eastern edge of the State of Sonora;" "the coastal town of Puerto Peñasco;" "the state of Tamaulipas;" "the state of Zacatecas except the city of Zacatecas where you should exercise caution;" "the areas of [Aguascalientes] that border the state of Zacatecas;" "the areas of the state of Colima that border the state of Michoacán;" "the area west and south of the town of Arcelia on the border with Estado de Mexico in the north and the town of Tlapa near the border with Oaxaca;" "areas of [Jalisco] that border the states of Michoacán and Zacatecas;" "the state of Michoacán except the cities of Morelia and Lázaro Cardenas where you should exercise caution;" "the state of Morelos;" "the state of Nayarit north of the city of Tepic as well as to the cities of Tepic and Xalisco;" and "the state of Veracruz."

For those of you keeping score at home, that equates to fourteen out of the thirty Mexican states.

And though nearly all of this incredible violence tends to take place in urban centers rife with the kind of low-income conditions that visitors' guides and brochures ignore, there have indeed been incidents where the fingers of this evil have touched the more resort-oriented areas as well. In January of 2011, fifteen headless bodies were found dumped in Acapulco. A sixteenth corpse was found in a nearby car, shot to death. Later, in September of the same year, five severed heads were found in a bag that had been left near a primary school in the resort city. Once the sun-drenched playground of the rich and famous like John F. Kennedy, John Wayne and Cary Grant, Acapulco has become embroiled in a turf war by gangs involved in the narco trade.

Though these bodies were all discovered in parts of the city off the beaten tourist path, in the same week those sixteen young men were found dead, two police officers were gunned down on a popular tourist strip along the Bahia de Acapulco.

By the end of 2011, the death toll in Acapulco alone had reached nearly nine hundred in a country where the drug war had claimed a record fifteen thousand two hundred seventy-three lives. The picturesque beaches and hotels where countless visitors had come for decades to forget their troubles is now a playground of fear.

It's easy to simplify the reasons why tourism to Acapulco has dropped dramatically over the last few years. Whether you want to point to any sort of combination of a flagging global economy and jitters over the unrelenting violence in the streets, hotel occupancy rates have reportedly dropped to historic lows in Acapulco.

Sadly though, it is not only those connected with the drug trade that end up victims of this

barbarism. In November of 2010, eighteen residents of nearby Michoacán were abducted and later found in a mass grave. The men, most of them related, had been part of a group of mechanics who saved their money each year in order to take an annual vacation in Acapulco together. Later, a drug baron named Carlos Montemayor, known on the streets as “Barbie,” claimed the mechanics had been mistaken for members of a rival cartel.

Oops.

However, it seems that Acapulco’s loss has become Cancun’s gain as visitors continue to flock to its golden beaches. Realizing its shaky hold as the number one vacation destination in the Caribbean was at great risk, local officials have made a priority of stepping up security in the tourist zone. Now because Americans make up such a large number of the nearly six million international visitors to Cancun, they have even made it so help can be accessed by dialing the very familiar 911 from any working telephone.

As far as anyone can tell, not a single Cancun tourist has been killed in narco-cartel related violence.

That is not to say that American tourists haven’t died in Mexico from highly suspicious circumstances.

On January 6, 2007, twenty-two-year old Nolan Webster from Woburn, Massachusetts, arrived in Cancun on what was supposed to be a one-week dream vacation with his girlfriend, Kristen. The trip had been a college graduation gift from his parents purchased from a company called Apple Vacations. Nolan and Kristen’s room was booked at the all-inclusive Oasis Hotel, an upscale resort that boasts eighteen restaurants, eighteen bars, six hundred fifty meters of beachfront and a three hundred meter swimming pool touted on their website as being the longest in Latin America.

Less than thirty hours after arriving in Cancun, Nolan Webster alive, but unconscious, was pulled from that very same four-and-a-half-foot deep pool. It is what happened afterwards that is truly disturbing.

Below is a first person account of the incident:

On the seventh day of January 2007, at approximately four p.m., I was walking along the poolside with my wife. I observed a male pulling a second male (victim) from the floor of the pool. At first I thought that it was some type of event or joke, but quickly realized that it was an emergency situation.

I ran to the edge of the pool where I met the male with the victim. I grabbed onto the victim with both hands and pulled him out of the pool. I laid the victim onto his back and checked his vital signs. I was unable to locate a pulse on the victim and the victim had no signs of breathing. I observed a purple-ish substance coming from the victim's mouth. There appeared to be blood running from his nose as well.

I attempted to arouse the victim by touching his face and arms. There was no response. I then stood up above the victim and screamed for help. I yelled approximately ten times asking for someone to help. Screaming first that I needed a doctor, nurse or paramedic, I then yelled for anyone who knew CPR.

A young male in his twenties was standing next to me. This male stated that he did not know CPR but was willing to assist. I knelt beside the victim and started clearing out his mouth attempting to remove any obstruction from his airway. After clearing the airway, I started CPR compressions. As I was compressing, just more of the (purple-ish) substance was exiting his mouth. Again I cleared the airway. I returned to the chest area and once again commenced chest compressions. This continued for approximately ten minutes. Every few minutes I stood up and screamed for help. At one point, I observed the victim make gurgling noises and believed that he was becoming responsive. However, once I stopped the compressions the noises stopped as well. There were a few times during the resting phase of compressions that the victim appeared to have sucked back a breath. At this point I stopped

the compressions to see if the victim was responding. When the victim remained VSA (Vital Signs Absent) I continued the compressions.

I observed a male dive into the pool from the opposite side and swim to our location. This male identified himself as a member of the U.S. Military Reserves and stated that he knew CPR. Again, I started chest compressions and he assisted with mouth-to-mouth rescue breathing. This continued for approximately ten more minutes.

I then observed a male lifeguard running from the beach direction. I had observed a lifeguard several times on the beach the past few days, "rescuing" people who swam out too far and were in danger of not being able to make it back to shore. The lifeguard ran across the pool bar and stopped just short of our location. I looked at him and he just shrugged his shoulders as if he didn't know what to do.

At this time a female arrived who stated she had some type of medical background and knelt down beside the victim. I then moved away from the chest area to allow her to take over CPR. At approximately the same time, another male arrived who stated that he was a trauma room nurse and he too knelt beside the victim to assist. I then stood up and watched their attempts to rescue the victim.

I observed a male who appeared to be a doctor (as he was wearing a long white coat and had a stethoscope around his neck) standing at the pool and looking at the victim. He did not attempt to assist in the rescue. I stood off to the side away from the victim and rescuers.

Approximately five minutes after I stepped away, I observed two paramedics running toward the victim. They were carrying equipment bags and what appeared to be an oxygen tank. The paramedics leaned over the victim and checked his vital signs, pulled a white sheet from one of their bags and placed it over the victim. I heard the male, who stated that he was a nurse, argue with the paramedics asking for them to help the victim. I heard someone say that the victim needed compressed oxygen and that he was willing to give it to him, but the paramedics refused access to the oxygen bottle. I observed a short struggle over the equipment bags between the assisting witness and the paramedics.

I was shocked that the man who appeared to be the resort doctor did not attempt to assist in the rescue of the victim. I simply could not believe that the paramedics made no attempts to revive the victim at any point. The entire time that this event was occurring, a pool bartender at the resort just stood by and watched. He made no attempts to call for help or to assist.

After a short time, a female arrived at the location. She appeared to be a staff member of the resort as she carried a handheld radio and was adorned with a resort identification badge. She was informing people to stay away from the victim and telling everyone to move back. Everyone who was assisting was told to move away from the victim. My wife and I remained on scene for approximately twenty minutes after being told to leave. I asked the female if she required my information, stating that I assisted in attempting to rescue the victim. She said no and asked that I just leave the area. I observed the staff place plastic pool chairs around the victim as he lay on the deck beside the pool.

My wife and I left the scene and returned to our rooms. I still do not believe what just occurred. I've been a police officer in Canada for ten years and have seen many deaths, but never have I seen such a poor attempt by medical staff (Doctor/Paramedics) to assist a person in need of medical treatment.

We returned to the scene approximately two hours later and observed that the victim was still lying near the side of the pool. Another two hours went by and we returned to the scene and I couldn't believe that the victim was still lying there.

Sadly, the tragic disregard for Nolan Webster's being didn't end there. According to chilling details posted by Nolan's mother, Maureen Webster, on her website, mexicovacationawareness.com, Nolan's girlfriend Kristen phoned her in hysterics, saying, "I think Nolan's dead!" It would be the only call Nolan's family would receive from anyone to inform them of what had happened to their son.

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