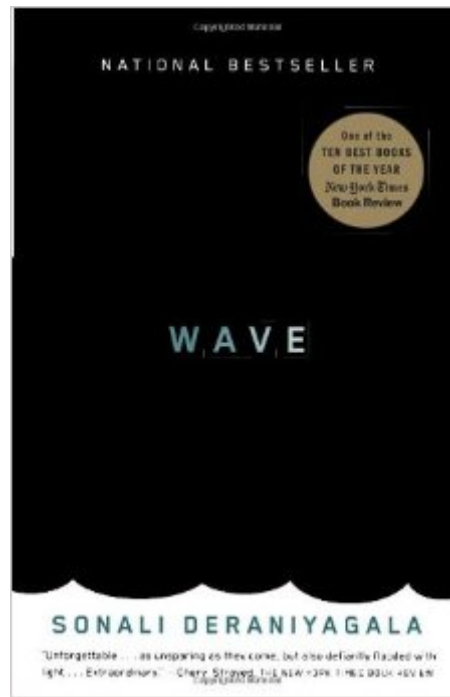


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Wave



Synopsis

One of *The New York Times's* 10 Best Books of the Year, a *Christian Science Monitor* Best Nonfiction Book, a *Newsday* Top 10 Books pick, a *People* magazine Top 10 pick, a *Good Reads* Best Book of the Year, and a *Kirkus* Best Nonfiction Book A National Book Critics Circle Award finalist. In 2004, at a beach resort on the coast of Sri Lanka, Sonali Deraniyagala and her family—parents, husband, sons—were swept away by a tsunami. Only Sonali survived to tell their tale. This is her account of the nearly incomprehensible event and its aftermath.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I have to say, this book shows the absolute darkness of humans when they face the unthinkable natural disasters. This book is brutally honest, with such vivid description about almost every single detail of the Tsunami that the author was encountering: the deadly smell of it, the weight, the color...After reading many memoirs writing about similar survival stories, I honestly think this is one of the shortest and the best ones. I simply could not put it down. When I just finished the first chapter, I could feel the desperation, hopelessness, and numbness from the author, like a mental picture was made in my mind about everything that she has to learn to understand, and eventually, surrenders to. In my view, POWERFUL is the best word to describe about this book.

Confusion was the only thing to cling to in the hours after the tsunami in Sri Lanka. Sonali had seen the ocean coming for land and had fled with her children, Vik and Mal, and her husband Steve. She didn't pause to alert her parents. She didn't pause for those left behind. Having been picked up by a

Jeep, the waters caught them nonetheless. In the dark swirling of mud and water, she grabs a limb and survives. For months afterwards, it is her survival that is the tragedy. Family gone, she longs to join them. We have become inured by the overwhelming number of stories of horror and tragedy. Perhaps we have thought to ourselves what we might do. Surely, we would sweep our parents up. Nor seeing the ocean in so strange a fashion, would be one of those who fled early. We might have had a better plan to survive. But in the end this is not the case. This book impels us to face the fact that given the overwhelming, we are helpless. The author talks intimately of her days, months, years following the loss of her family. The prose is revelatory but not melodramatic. Sonali's story is told honestly with her attempts of suicide, her drinking, and her despair. She doesn't hide her frank anger with those who did survive. She doesn't rationalize the depths of despair and the inward turning of grief. It has been said that humans cannot grasp the horror of thousands of deaths, but can come to understand it by learning a story in depth. This book puts truth to this perception.

This short book is one I will never forget. The writer tells us in simple, straightforward language how she managed to survive, and eventually, live, after losing her entire family in the 2005 tsunami. I don't think I've ever read anyone write as simply and stunningly as this - about extreme loss. At each juncture in the months, then years after the tsunami, readers learn how Deraniyagala coped by shutting out parts of her pre-tsunami life, and how she very gradually let memories in. She offers no magical answers, nothing but her years of dealing with this horrendous loss. I read a lot, about 70 books a year, and very very few get five stars. Five stars for me means the book goes way beyond "well-written", or "good story" to the level of impactful in my own life. I can't think of another book about loss that resonates so much - I have nothing comparable to her loss but her words help me view my own losses through different lenses. I will remember this book just as I will always remember Joan Didon's Year of Magical Thinking. . . it's unforgettable. Deraniyagala displays unbelievable courage.

This book started out intense and heartbreaking. Her story of grief is extremely powerful and puts all things in perspective. But after awhile I just didn't want to hear the on and on details about her children, I'm sorry to say it became monotonous. I was also troubled by her lack of recognition that her wealthy upbringing and life gave her the ability to grieve in a way (i.e. years of idleness and travel) that tens of thousands other survivors would never be able to do. There was barely a mention of the other victims of this tragedy. On the other hand no one can judge what she has gone through so this was a conflicting read for me.

Dear Potential Reader, You have a choice. You can slice open your belly, pull your guts halfway out, and light them on fire...or you can read this book. This sounds bad, I know, but I mean this is in the best possible way. Such is the power of this book that I have been completely devastated since reading it. The author was at a Sri Lankan beach hotel on December 26, 2004 for the Boxing Day Tsunami that struck several countries. Her parents, her husband, and her children were taken from her in a millisecond. The book describes her years-long battle to re-enter life itself. This is a spare, no-holds-barred journey. You may want to put this book down, but you will not be able to. The author's courage in sharing this story is truly amazing. The emotional wallop that her story packs may be life-changing for you; it was for me. The Wave about which she writes is not just the Tsunami, but also the fact that the essence of her very life itself was quite literally swept away. Who are we without our families and our memories when our roles are deleted from the script? I have to say that it is possible that I identified so strongly with this book because I have two sons approximately the same age as her beautiful boys were when they died. A lot of people will say they can't imagine what she went through, but I think that's wrong. We can imagine it. And that is why this book is so haunting.

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