

Case

Ghost Stories

On December 26, 2004, an earthquake reaching 9.1 on the Richter scale triggered a series of devastating tsunamis off the coast of Indonesia. They spread throughout the Indian Ocean, killing large numbers of people and inundating coastal communities across South and Southeast Asia, including parts of Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India, and Thailand. The 2004 Asian tsunami was one of the deadliest catastrophes in modern history, with more than 220,000 lives lost.

Nils Lofgrin, who had managed several construction projects in Australia and New Guinea, was sent by his construction firm to restore a five-star resort along the Andaman coast in southern Thailand that had been ravaged by this tsunami. Casualties at the resort included 12 staff and 37 guests. This was Nils's first assignment in Thailand.

Nils flew down and toured the site. His assessment of the damage was that it was not as severe as feared. The basic infrastructure was intact but debris needed to be cleared and the resort refurbished. He reported back to headquarters that with a bit of luck he should have the resort up and running in a matter of months. Little did he realize how soon he would regret making such a promise.

The problems began immediately when he was unable to recruit workers to help clean up the mess at the resort. The Burmese migrant workers who comprised a significant portion of the workforce in this region had fled into the hills out of growing fears of being arrested and deported. Even when he offered double wages he was not able to recruit many Thais. At first he attributed their reluctance to the shock caused by the devastation of the tsunami. Everyone he met seemed to know someone who had died or even worse had just disappeared. But he soon realized there was more going on than just shock.

Nils was at a restaurant having a lunch with a Thai friend when an animated discussion broke out among some Thai patrons nearby. He asked his friend what was going on. The friend said someone was telling the story of a local taxi driver who had picked up three foreign tourists and was driving them to Kata Beach when he looked around and found his cab empty. Another told the story of a local family whose telephone rings constantly through the day and night. When answered, the voices of missing friends and relatives cry out for help.

Nils sank in his chair when he began to realize that no one wanted to work for him because prospective workers believed that the region and his resort are haunted by ghosts.

- 1. What options are available to Nils?
- 2. What would you do and why?