

Happy Ending

The captain decided to go back to Makunudu Island although the speedboat arrived in Male Island, the Maldives after an hour sailing. The high waves and unprecedented low water levels prevented the passengers from landing. It was a beautiful, clear day but very windy, and the boat shook terribly during the sail.

Fred and Manami knew something unusual had happened while they were on the boat for Male Island, which is Fred's homeland. They were shocked to see the pier of Makunudu Island had washed away and the beautiful beach had disappeared below the water. A strong earthquake in Indonesia was the cause of the tsunami and had a significant impact on Fred and Manami's life.

Fred was a native islander of the Maldives and had helped with his father's diving shop in Male Island since he was a kid. His father, Vince, let him sit at the cockpit when he brought divers to diving points. Fred was thrilled that Vince sailed the diving boat skillfully to a diving point though there weren't any signs on the ocean. Fred felt happy divers commented on how the diving point was superb.

He was very proud of Vince, and he dreamed of running a diving shop like Vince someday in the Maldives. He was willing to help Vince even when he was pressed for time with his studies. Fred was also actively visiting famous diving sites in the world and improving his skill as a divemaster.

Scuba diving was the best refreshment to Manami. She was a hospital nurse in Japan, and her work shift was considerably stressful and severe though she had dedicated herself to her work. She needed vacations and enjoyed diving around the world. Manami had been fascinated with the beautiful Maldives sea since her first visit. Fred and Vince were divemaster for her group every time. Fred had a cheerful nature and loved to see divers from various countries. He was interested to hear about Manami's work in Japan. It was not only pleasant to talk with him, but she was also impressed by Fred's respectful attitude towards his father. Fred and Manami gradually fostered better understanding of each other and decided to be partners in life.

They moved to Makunudu Island and begun their married life. They enjoyed working together at a local diving shop.

Fred was in charge of the maintenance of diving gears for their customers. He filled the air in empty cylinder tanks for scuba diving correctly before divers attached it to their BCD (Buoyancy Control Device). Fred never forgot to ask

whether they had opened the tank valves and checked the pressure gauges indicated appropriate air pressure when they were ready to dive. Scuba diving is an at your own risk sport; however, he felt he was responsible for the safety of their customers. Fred steered the boat to a diving spot and worked as a divemaster too. He tried to show the divers the schools of blue and yellow fish, peculiar creatures in the Maldives, and the beautiful coral.

Manami's main job at the diving shop was personnel and schedule management. She also embarked on a diving boat as an assistant to Fred when they had Japanese divers. She translated the details of the briefing in Japanese after Fred explained in English. He told the divers about the surroundings, a tidal current, the route from the entry to the exit of the diving point, besides creatures what they would see in the sea. Manami made sure that all Japanese divers had understood the necessary information before their entry.

Moreover, her career as a nurse was helpful to give first aid to injured or sick divers and local people. She sometimes attended to the patients at a clinic in Male Island since Makunudu Island was a doctorless village. Fred and Manami were busy with their work, but they were always available when their fellow divers asked them to help with their diving shops. Everybody, not only divers but also local people in the community, trusted Fred and Manami's sincere and friendly

attitudes. So, their neighbors supported them when they started their own diving shop and a casual restaurant near the beach. Manami's Japanese menu and local foods were popular among tourist and local people. They thought they could get fulfillment in life as long as they had made continuous efforts to everything in their daily life. They valued down-to-earth living, and they were happy.

However, the tsunami deprived their life together. All the buildings along the beach, such as diving shops, cafes, restaurants, and gift shops, had disappeared. Several diving boats had been moored to the pier when they left to Male Island early in the morning, but nothing remained in the bay anymore. Fred and Manami walked to some houses and buildings which fortunately did not get severely damaged by the tsunami. They met the survivors of the town who hardly accepted the disaster. Everyone was shocked by the sudden losses and barely asked about each other's physical conditions.

The survivors spent the first night of the disaster together at the community center in the inland area. They had feared the approach of the second tsunami. Luckily, nothing happened, and they started to investigate the damage situations in the village the next morning. Fred suggested that they share food and daily necessities in the community until the survivors could settle in their new houses. His suggestion made a strong bond among the village people, and consequently,

they talked deeply about the new layout of the village for the reconstruction. They built diving shops, cafes, gift shops, and other commercial buildings near the beach, and put beach umbrellas and chairs for visitors that could be used freely. Their residential area was settled in the highest sea level on the island which was only about 2.4 meters (8 feet) though. They hoped even if a tsunami would have hit the island, their houses were safe.

Fred and Manami updated their blog and informed their customers how they were striving to reconstruct their community steadily. Islanders' lives and the village gradually revived. Old and new customers visited Makunudu Island. The island was encircled by the beautiful sand beach and had its own "house reef, which served as a coral garden and natural aquarium for scuba divers and snorkelers. The house reef also served as a large natural swimming pool and protected them from the ocean waves and strong tidal currents outside the house reef. Each diving shops staff got creative plans to entertain visitors. For instance, Fred and his team dug the beach and made a big table out of sand, which was shaped like a whale shark. The candles flames fluttered on it, and the barbecue dinner was served under a starry sky. Everybody was deeply moved by the staff's hospitality and eagerness to recover.

The numbers of tourists who stayed at Makunudu Island increased four years after the tsunami. The tourism had flourished, and the islanders obtained stabilization in their lives. They enjoyed peaceful and pleasant experiences. Nobody had thought that they would be condemned to a life of hardship again by another giant tsunami.

It was midnight. The village had been enveloped in silence. The sound of ripples was comfortable. Fred and Manami were woken up by the weak earth shake. It continued for about three minutes, which was an unusual incident. Suddenly, a loud, roaring sound resonated. Simultaneously, the tsunami swept toward the beach and the village in a flash. Fred and Manami were washed away on their bed by the tsunami, and they were barely able to grasp each other's hands. Fred squeezed Manami's hand, saying, "Thank you, Manami. We did our best always." She held his hand tightly and tried to say, "I was content that I had a life with you." They had never talked or considered the end of life as a realistic topic since they were young, and had dreams and hopes for their futures. However, they passed away while having fulfilment of their active lives and a feeling of gratitude to their partner in life---what a happy ending.

The tsunami swept away Fred and Manami with crushed buildings, vehicles, trees, and so on. Nothing remained except the coral atoll which surrounded

Makunudu Island before the tsunami. The coral atoll seemed to float on the flat blue surface of the sea like linking to the boundless blue sky.