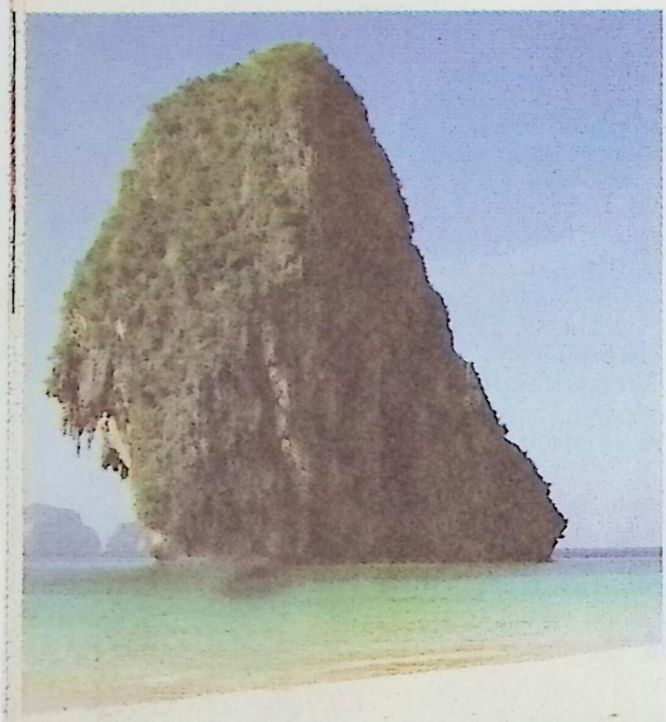


Just another day in paradise.

Paradise Restored

NABEEL ATIQUE

DEC. 26th, 2004 was an ominous day over parts of Asia and Africa. Hundreds of thousands of people lost their lives to a massive earthquake off the coast of Indonesia and to the Tsunami it caused. On that fateful day I was hanging from a wall, four feet from the Andaman Sea in southern Thailand. What saved me from becoming a statistic was the yells and screams of people who had seen the tidal waves coming. Since I was rock-climbing I was lowered by my climbing partner and outran the waves. We took refuge up in the hills. Several hours later we came down and witnessed death and destruction. Railay Beach was completely in shambles. Boats had been thrown into the resorts - there were boats in the reception and swimming pool of our resort. Some smaller shops and structures had been damaged. Several boatmen had died.

Two years later I told my mother I was going to visit her and would stop in Thailand for some climbing. She was not thrilled to hear this news. It had perhaps taken her two years to recover from the trauma. I myself had been affected for about half a year. My climbing had suffered somewhat I was being too cautious and tentative, especially while lead-climbing. But I gathered the nerve to bring things back to normal. Railay beach is a climbing utopia it deserved another chance.

Railay and I have a checkered past. I have been evacuated from Railay not once, but twice. In April 2003, the night I arrived with my friend Andy on Railay, Andy developed a fever of 102 degrees Fahrenheit. Normally it would not have been too much of a concern. But we had just arrived from China and SARS was spreading there. So Andy and I had to be evacuated in an ambulance boat with a flashing red light. Andy was quarantined on the mainland for two days and luckily did not have SARS.

As my long-tail boat pulled into Railay on Dec. 17th, 2006, I wondered "would I be kicked off this peninsula once more?" My reception was ominous. It was overcast and soon I was in a downpour. All I could think of was "why am I back to this disastrous



Tsunami hazard evacuation routes posted now