



DISASTERLAND: Life's Greatest Adventure

by John Niernberger

ISBN-13/EAN: 978-0-9796441-0-8

\$ 14.95 U.S. / £ 8.99 U.K.

6" x 9"/paperback/504 pp.

July 01, 2007

Published by Visit DisasterLand!, an imprint of
Conscious Images® LLC

*Available wholesale in the U.S. from Ingrams and Baker & Taylor;
in the U.K. from Bertrams and Gardners.*

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“ When I asked him why he had moved so swiftly [to escape WTC 1 on 9/11], he had several theories. The previous year, his house in Queens, N.Y., had burned to the ground. He had escaped, blinded by smoke... he had also been in a serious earthquake as a child in Peru and in several smaller ones in Los Angeles years later. He was, you could say, a disaster expert.”

— *TIME Magazine*, “How To Get Out Alive,” April 25, 2005

SURVIVORS ARE MADE. NOT BORN.™

An irreverent dance through contemporary America, *DisasterLand* is the story of the world's first disaster-themed adventure park, its employees and its visitors.

Conceived in the aftermath of September 11, 2001 by Shae Gibbons, DisasterLand's *zeitgeist wunderkind* CEO, the park was a transformational wonderland challenging families to survive the worst while growing together in ways they had never dreamed of. During their ten-day stay guests faced a hurricane (the *Mighty Floods*), an earthquake (the *Roaster*) or a terrorist attack.

In the dawn of the dark 21st century world, DisasterLand's goal was to create a citizenry of clear-headed survivors and by the end of their first spectacular season it was clear: they were succeeding.

Yet DisasterLand was already in danger of becoming a victim of its own success. A national mood of despair was setting in as the waiting list stood at two years and growing for the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to drop twenty-five grand a family. Children in families unable to attend were turning violent and one murder had already been the result.

DisasterLand's response was elegant in its simplicity, profound in its effect: twenty-five families would win an all expenses paid trip to participate in the season finale.

FROM A SIMPLE ACT OF KINDNESS AN IMPOSSIBLE DREAM COMES TRUE...

On an otherwise unspectacular Wednesday the Beyers, a family of four from suburban middle America, receive a golden DVD from a homeless man at the local frozen custard shop—a DVD which magically places them on a collision-course with an entertainment phenomenon unmatched in the planet's history.

Their lives would change forever.

John Niernberger is a graduate of New York University's Tisch School of the Arts and has worked in all aspects of film production and post-production for almost 15 years in New York, Kansas City and Los Angeles. He produced and directed the short film *Petrol Mart* and also wrote, produced and directed the experimental narrative short *The Happy Guy*. In 1999, John became the content manager for Chris Blackwell's pioneering and Webby-award winning website sputnik7.com, where he supervised video encoding and production. John has written for *PW Daily*, *Publishers Weekly* and *Res* magazine and produced the Publisher's Spotlight section of the Reed Elsevier website bookwire.com for over two years.

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