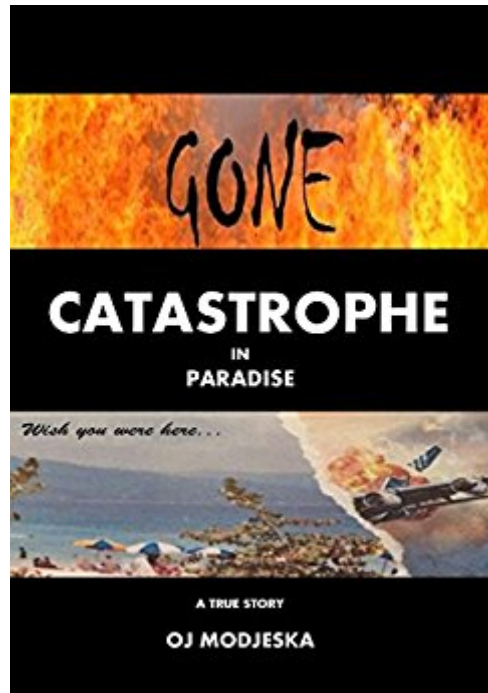




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# Gone: Catastrophe In Paradise



## Synopsis

A mass of European and American tourists descend on an idyllic tropical island for the holiday of a lifetime. Within hours, hundreds are dead. What happened? The true story of one of history's most tragic and shocking disasters...in which aviation, terrorism, a sudden change in the weather and plain old bad luck made for a ruinous mix. This gripping novella length work unravels the mind-boggling facts of this catastrophe as a compelling, action-packed and haunting tale of the human condition that will have you turning the pages to the very end.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Gone: Catastrophe in Paradise by OJ Modjeska is the real story of the worst aviation accident in history. The Canary Islands, a popular tourist location for both American and European tourists in the late 1970s has just been rocked when its major airport was bombed by a separatists group seeking to gain independence from the Spanish who had been in control of the island chain for a long time. The decision was made to divert all air traffic to a small regional airport nearby when the threat of another bombing was made. An overwhelmingly large number of large planes then began

to land and circle the small, understaffed, and ill equipped airport. To add to the mayhem, a thick fog rolled into the area which drastically cut down on the visibility of both the pilots and the air traffic controller. The stage was set for an easily avoidable, yet horrible accident to take place. This is the true story of that accident. There are several things that I really enjoyed about this novella. First, it is short and gets right to the heart of the issue. Many times nonfiction gets bogged down with unnecessary discussions of small details. This one sticks to the main points and keeps on going. Second, it has been well researched and presented in a way that is easy for the reader to understand, enjoy, and learn from. Third, it brings to light an accident that many in the aviation field are aware of but most average people have no knowledge of. I really like it when an author takes the time to shine a light on a small forgotten part of history and make the reader aware of its importance. Excellent read.

My original title for this review (but ditched, too long!): Suspenseful, yet familiar...creates a suffocating sense of coming doom for the characters, then you remember: it's a true story! I was intrigued by the "teaser" (and also the title) for this book: "One fine afternoon on a sun drenched island hundreds of lives are destroyed...a true story." I wondered: tsunami? terror attack? a case of mass, very serious failure of sunscreen resulting in the death of hundreds of beachgoers? As it turned out, after a few pages I realized I was familiar with the topic: teen memories of my parents/maternal aunt talking about it at the time, plus images of TV news that evening and the following days; and even a somewhat recent "air disaster" type program I watched on Netflix. The book concerns the "Tenerife airport disaster," still ranked as the deadliest accident in aviation history (I promise, no spoilers beyond this, and in fact the writer spells out the subject matter in the prologue). I happen to be one generation removed from Tenerife, one of the Canary Islands: my maternal grandmother was born/partly raised there (along about 1900, later she immigrated to Cuba, where I was born). Despite my familiarity with the subject, I found this book quite well executes a challenging dilemma: when the reader knows the end-result (for example, the JFK assassination or the sinking of the Titanic), how does the writer create a captivating, even suspenseful narrative? True, in this case most readers may not know the end-result, but again, the writer mentions it early on. Modjeska takes the same tack as Alfred Hitchcock famously stated as the recipe for suspense: scenario 1: diners at a table, one steps away, then suddenly a bomb explodes, all are dead save the one; or 2: first, we are shown a bomb under the table, with a clock on it ticking towards zero...then, the camera rises to diners at a table, one steps away, the camera returns under, shows us the ticking bomb again, now the timer nearer to zero, the camera rises to

the diners again, the laughter, the camaraderie, etc., then suddenly the bomb explodes, all are dead save the one (suspect? lucky?), and we find we have been tightly holding onto our seat, our lover's hand, or our TV remote as the suspense built...suddenly released (fyi, this is all from memory, but accurate, save perhaps for the one diner walking away (?). Hitchcock termed the first scenario as nothing but shock and gore (as most horror/suspense movies are nowadays, so-called "slasher films")...the second scenario as the heart of suspense. This writer, who I am not directly comparing to Hitchcock (after all this story is non-fiction/ a written narrative, not a film, etc.) nonetheless manages to engage in such suspense-building. Modjeska also takes a tack that may not be everyone's cup of tea, but I found satisfying: a sense of "fate" closing in on the soon-to-be-victims: the nature of randomness, probability, small incidents, human fallibility all contributing to or even directly causing the tragedy about to unfold. In addition, the author adds layers and details I was not aware of, despite my intermittent exposure over the decades to this story; for example, a bit about the much-lauded but now gone Pan American airlines' enlightened corporate culture (advanced by the standards of the 1970s; btw, is Pan Am back? I'd heard something about it being revived, I'll have to Google that). A slim volume, for sure....a quick read....perfect for a one-sitting or two-sitting read. I look forward to more from OJ Modjeska.

Author O.J. Modjeska's *Gone: Catastrophe in Paradise*, is an intriguing telling of a true disaster that claimed the lives of nearly 600 people. Modjeska writes this true tale as a narrative and captures intricate details of everything that happened from the point-of-views of the actual victims who both endured and survived the horrifying incident. It was actually a historic event: the Tenerife airport disaster; and to this very day, it still holds the title of being the deadliest accident in the entire history of aviation. Although this is not my usual genre of choice, I was intrigued by the way the author wrote this nonfictional story. It caught my attention right at the beginning and pulled me in, and I had to keep reading right up to the end. Even if historical disasters are not your cup of tea, this particular story is worth at least one good read-thru. Not every writer can write about true events with talent and intrigue the way this one does, capturing the reality of event from the eyes of the actual participants and painting a vivid picture of everything they experienced as if it was playing out right before your eyes. Details that were not in the initial media coverage are also included in this story. It's definitely worth reading through at least once.

An amazing book. I didn't really have high expectations, buying the book on a whim. But wow, it is an amazing story. OJ Modjeska is a trained historian and criminologist, and she

applies her careful analysis to examining the accident that claimed almost 600 lives in 1977, in the Canary Islands. This short book is more than a work of historical fiction. Modjeska's meticulous research not only informs her imagination about what might have happened, but also provides the basis of her careful historical analysis. The work transcends genre in this sense. It is part novel, part history, part philosophy – all focused on understanding this horrific airplane accident. But it was Modjeska's skill as a writer that kept the pages turning. I literally could not put this book down. It's an easy read in one sitting, but it really is fascinating and horrifying to contemplate. I commend Modjeska for writing about this accident, for reflecting on its meaning, and for helping us as readers to consider all the coincidences that had to align for this accident to occur. An amazing read. Highly Recommended.

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