

Aruba: The Tragic Untold Story of Natalee Holloway and Corruption in Paradise

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ARUBA ARUBA

The Tragic Untold Story of Natalee Holloway and Corruption in Paradise Dave Holloway

with R. Stephanie Good

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I dedicate this book to my daughter Natalee, for your love, your beautiful smile, and your inspiration, and for teaching me that giving up is never an option. **Contents** [Acknowledgments](#) [One: Everybody's](#)

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during our ordeal, physically, emotionally, monetarily, or through their prayers. I want to start by thanking my wonderful wife, Robin, who has provided endless support and love. My children Matt, Brooke, and Kaitlyn who fill my heart with peace and joy and make each new day a little brighter than the last. My mother, Chris Holloway; my brothers, Steve Holloway, Phil Holloway, and Todd Vestal; my sister, Linda Allison; my mother-in-law and father-in-law, Carol and Melvin Parten; my brothers-in-law, Michael and Steve Parten, who have all joined in our search, held us up when we needed support, and kept our heartache from completely overwhelming us. My father, Jack Holloway, who has watched over us and given us strength during these difficult months. My

church and community for surrounding us with their warmth and comfort. My State Farm colleagues and policyholders, the many total strangers who sent their good wishes, and the many strangers who became our friends. The search teams, especially Tim Miller and Equusearch, Art Wood, and Patrick Murphy; the Internet bloggers; the news media; the politicians; and some of the good people of Aruba who truly care about seeking answers and justice for Natalee. The persons who have made this book possible: Larry Garrison, for knowing how to open the right doors for opportunities and for your brilliance in making things happen. Stephanie Good, for your creativity, knowledge, and the ability to write a *New York Times* bestseller. And finally, the teams at Nelson Current and Waterside Productions for making this book a reality. God bless you all! **ONE Everybody™s Child**

I CANNOT TELL YOU HOW MUCH IT HURTS TO LOSE A child. There are no words to describe the feelings that choke a parent who outlives a daughter. It is not supposed to happen this way. I was never prepared for this kind of pain, this type of emptiness. My heart has an insurmountable void that used to be filled with Natalee's presence. I watched as she received her high school diploma, and I took pictures of her at her graduation ceremony. I planned to be there when she graduated from college and then medical school. My pride would have enveloped us both. I had long imagined the day when I would see my Natalee in her beautiful white wedding gown. We would meet in the back of the church for her last moment as "daddy's little girl" and, as she encircled my arm with hers, I would lean down and whisper the words that all fathers must say to their daughters on that very special day, "I love you." I would walk her down the aisle and proudly offer her hand to her fiancé, and I would return to my seat knowing that my girl had accomplished all that a father could desire. At that moment, it would be clear that the first tier of her life with me had come to an end and that the man she would now look to for approval and love would be her husband. But she would always be my little Natalee . . . always. When Natalee and her brother Matt were young, we lived in Clinton, Mississippi. We had been building some very special memories, but lately it has been difficult to recall them without a lot of pain. I try to picture Natalee riding her bike around the neighborhood, or envision the excited expression on her face when she woke up on Christmas morning and spotted the toys we had stayed up half the night putting together. I remember how she loved climbing up onto my back as I crawled along the floor on my hands and knees and how when she wanted to show off her dancing, she jumped up on her miniature table to do a routine and it tipped over, throwing her off and breaking her arm. I think back to her first days of kindergarten when she was only five and how I drove her up to school every morning and walked her to class to show her around and get her used to it. I can still see her sad little face during the second week when I told her it was time to go in on her own. She still wanted Daddy to walk her to class. I keep thinking back because I'm so afraid that if I don't, the memories will begin to fade. And, for now, that is all I have of her to hold on to. Natalee was seven and Matt was five when their mother, Beth, and I divorced in 1993. After I remarried in 1995, my wife, Robin, and I lived in Jackson, Mississippi, but we relocated back to Clinton in 1996 to be close to Natalee and Matt. When Beth remarried in 2000, she and her husband, Jug, moved to Mountain Brook, Alabama, and Robin and I moved to Meridian, Mississippi, where our two daughters, Brooke and Kaitlyn, were born. Natalee and Matt live in Mountain Brook with Beth and Jug and visit us in Mississippi as often as their schedules allow. Prior to Natalee's sixteenth birthday and obtaining her driver's license, she and Matt had been coming to our home every other weekend and more frequently during their summer vacations from school. But, during Natalee's senior year in high school, her visits were a bit less frequent due to her many extracurricular activities. So Robin and I made it our business to visit her and watch her dance at football games with her dance team, the Dorians. Robin and I have maintained a close, loving relationship with Natalee throughout her childhood and teenage years. We have tried to instill certain values and traits in all of our children that would enable them to succeed in life. Those values include honesty, integrity, morality, and a deep faith in God. We believe that Natalee has a solid foundation in those values. Robin and I have our own set of faith-based values that guide us in our daily lives. At this time of upheaval, we have gained strength from our reliance upon those values. We have felt God's presence every step of the way, and that is what has sustained us in these, our darkest hours of need. Natalee is missing. I desperately want her back. From the moment that she was born on

October 21, 1986, she has always been an exceptional human being. A father could not ask for more from a child. Her younger sisters lovingly call her Sissy, and she is a sensitive, loving, and articulate young woman. She is blessed with being beautiful both inside and out. As Natalee completed her senior year, we were all excited about her next stepping stone in life. She was prepared to go off to the University of Alabama on a full scholarship to major in premed after graduating with honors and a 4.15 grade point average from Mountain Brook High School. She participated in numerous extracurricular activities, including the dance team and the Bible Club, and she was a member of both the math and Spanish honor societies. She had a part-time job at a health food store and performed volunteer work. She has some great friends, is well-traveled, and has always looked toward the future. She never showed any interest in drugs or alcohol, and she kept close ties with her siblings and classmates who all care for her very much. In February 2005, Natalee called me and asked for permission to go on a trip to Aruba with her graduating class. This is apparently a rite of passage for teenagers all over the country. They convince their parents to allow this one-time privilege as a gift for all of their hard work, and parents often agree, even when their instincts tell them otherwise. I was apprehensive about Natalee taking this type of trip, and I tried to talk her out of it. I did not like the idea of her traveling that far away with so many other students and so few chaperones. When I received the trip brochure I saw that the cost was approximately \$985. Robin and I are from the old school, and we felt that was a bit extravagant for a high school graduation trip. After a few days of consideration, I told Natalee that we could not approve of the trip for two reasons: it was too extravagant, and we did not think it was appropriate. However, I told her that I would give her a graduation gift of half the amount of the cost of the trip for her to do with as she pleased. Since Natalee's stepbrother had been to Aruba with his class two years earlier, and her twin cousins were graduating with her class and were going along with her this year, Beth felt comfortable allowing Natalee to make the trip. The months passed, and upon receiving the invitation to Natalee's graduation, she advised us that the school had opted to hold the ceremony at a local university theater hall. Due to the limited amount of seating, each graduate was allocated only eight tickets. We were to have three of them for my wife, Robin, Natalee's grandmother, and me. That left her two sisters out. Due to the distance, I asked Natalee if she could get two more tickets for her sisters otherwise Robin might have had to stay behind to care for them. As graduation weekend drew near, Natalee and I spoke again of the tickets, and she assured me that she would call all three hundred of her classmates if she had to in order to come up with them. On Monday, May 23, we heard from Natalee, and, in a hoarse voice, she told us that after calling nearly every student, she was finally able to get us the tickets. She said that she was just not going to give up on us. I praised her determination. On graduation day, we arrived at Natalee's home expecting to rush up to the door, grab the tickets, and leave. Instead, she insisted that her two sisters come in to see her room. Natalee's grandparents, Beth's mother and mine, also wanted to catch up, so Robin and I and the family spent about forty-five minutes in my ex-wife's home. The situation was very unusual for us and somewhat awkward for me, but it was Natalee's big day. Looking back, I think that God had a hand in putting us all together on that very special day, the last day that we may be sharing a momentous occasion with Natalee. As we were about to leave, Natalee informed us that she and her friends would be going somewhere after the graduation ceremonies, so she might not see us later on. There were approximately three thousand people in attendance at graduation. When the ceremony ended, I realized that I hadn't given Natalee the gift we had brought, so we tried to locate her. Everyone had headed outside to a reception, but there were so many people, all wearing the same graduation gown, I just assumed that we would not see her again that day. I thought she might have already hooked up with her friends and left. We headed for the car, but Robin insisted that we go back to try to find her. Suddenly Natalee called my cell phone and said she wanted to see us. We communicated back and forth until we were able to locate each other. I gave her our graduation present, a check for \$500. She was thrilled and thanked us. We hugged, and I took some photos. I mentioned the trip to Aruba and asked her to be careful. We all said our good-byes and left. Later that evening, she called to thank us again. The day before Natalee was to leave for Aruba, she called and spoke to Robin. She told her how excited she was about the trip, and Robin once again strongly cautioned

her to be careful. The next day, Natalee left with approximately 125 students and 7 chaperones. We heard that, upon their arrival in Aruba, the chaperones scheduled daily meetings with the students and collected their passports before distributing their room keys. Every day the students were to check in with the chaperones at a specific time. On Monday, May 30, Natalee's trip came to an end, and she was due to fly home to Alabama. But late in the afternoon, I received a call from Matt telling me that Natalee had missed her flight and that Beth was getting on a plane to Aruba. She had told him to call me, but had no details yet. I attempted to get in touch with Beth. No answer. I googled hotels in Aruba and found a number for the Holiday Inn where the kids had been staying. I called and was able to talk to one of the trip chaperones who had stayed behind in Natalee's room. He filled me in about Natalee missing her flight. At the time, there was not much to go on. Someone from the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency was there on vacation, and he made a few calls to the police. Apparently, they have the same rule that we have in the United States about waiting twenty-four hours before taking a report on a missing person. I would later find out that it is one of the very few rules or laws that the United States and Aruba have in common. Beth had flown out of Birmingham on a friend's private jet as soon as she learned that Natalee had missed her flight. I contacted a commercial airline and booked the next flight out for 5:30 a.m. the following morning. I immediately started a checklist and packed my bags. I stayed in contact with Matt, and by around 10:00 p.m., some of the Mountain Brook kids who had arrived back in Birmingham indicated to him that Natalee left a bar with a nice kid who played soccer and was visiting Aruba from Holland. Some of the Mountain Brook boys said they sat with him around the poker table in a casino on the previous evening. Later that night, Matt called again to tell me that Natalee's flight had been rebooked, and she would be coming home the next day. Someone from Delta Airlines had confirmed that a female had called and changed the flight. Matt felt that Natalee had simply missed her plane and rebooked it. I cancelled my flight, but I was still concerned because no one had heard from Natalee. The next morning, I started making more calls. I could not reach Beth, and I was unable to get a member of the Aruban police force to talk to me on the phone about Natalee. I called the Holiday Inn again, but nobody answered the phone in Natalee's room. By noon I learned that Natalee was not getting on the plane. I found out that it had been a chaperone from Natalee's group who had changed her flight in the hopes that she would reappear. It was then that I knew something tragic must have happened. I feared the worst, but prayed for a miracle. I hung up the phone and broke down. My mind was racing with so many "what ifs." Once I was able to regain my composure, I called my brothers, Phil, Steve, and Todd, and my brother-in-law, Michael. Phil, Michael, and I all tried to book flights out right away but could not get any until the next day. I tried to discourage my youngest brother, Todd, from coming. He was in bankruptcy and couldn't afford the trip. But he said he had to come, and he stayed behind to sell two of his vehicles just to get the money for the plane ticket. Steve, a fireman, had to make arrangements to get coverage for his job, so he also came in a little later on. My pastor heard the news and called from out of town to pray with me over the phone. I can still hear his comforting words, "God, please give Dave and his family the strength to get through this." Our family is very strong, and we were determined to find out what happened to Natalee and bring her home. My world was turned upside-down, and my emotions ran wild. I could barely function. I had to keep myself together in order to help Natalee. She needed me to find her. The search-and-rescue planning began immediately. We left Meridian, Mississippi, on the evening of May 31, 2005. The flight to Aruba was long, and I was in a panic. On one hand, I was traveling there to bring Natalee home. On the other hand, I was afraid of the worst. When I arrived in Aruba with my family, we hit the island running. We rented a car and immediately headed out to find a police station. There were only four on the island and I was amazed to find that the first two we entered knew nothing about Natalee's disappearance. We were then directed to a third one, the Noord Police Station. I walked in and said, "I'm Dave Holloway, and I need to talk to you about my daughter who is missing." A man in the back stood up and said, "How much money do you have?" That was how I first met Detective Dennis Jacobs, the investigator who was assigned to handle Natalee's case after Beth made a report to him upon her arrival on the island. I thought his comment about money was odd, but I ignored it and just tried to talk to him about finding

Natalee. Jacobs painted a scenario that questioned all of the beliefs and values that we had instilled in Natalee. He insinuated that she had met someone and fallen in love. "This happens all the time. She will probably show up in a few days," he theorized. "She was just partying hard," he added. "Don't worry. Just go down to Carlos'n Charlie's and have a beer." It was June 1, 2005, our first evening in Aruba, my daughter was missing and a detective was telling us to go to a local bar and have a beer. I couldn't believe what I was hearing. He said it was the hot spot for vacationing kids. "Maybe she will show up." In fact, he was so confident that she was just partying it up or on drugs that he told us this particular bar would be the best place to find her. However, he did warn us to watch our drinks very carefully, adding that sometimes people put drugs into them. When I talked about searching for Natalee, he questioned why we would want to do that. He told us to go to Carlos'n Charlie's rather than the crack houses where he said that Beth's husband, Jug, and his friends had gone the night before. They went there due to information received from the police that a lot of the kids do drugs and party and that Natalee was probably with them. Jacobs told us that he had received reports that Jug's people were busting up the drug houses—he didn't want us going there and stirring things up too. He said we should leave any searching to the police, and if we had reason to believe that Natalee was in a crack house, we should call him and he would check it out. He then told us that the government controlled the crack houses in order to keep the drug addicts off the streets and away from where tourists shop and dine. Jacobs also told us that the day before we arrived, he had interviewed the boys who eventually became the three main suspects in Natalee's disappearance, Joran van der Sloot, Deepak Kalpoe, and his brother Satish. Beth had informed him of them after receiving information about videotapes taken from the security cameras outside of the Holiday Inn and in the hotel's casino. It had been determined that they were the last people to be seen with her. Jacobs considered the boys' statements to be consistent in that they had all said that they dropped Natalee off at the hotel. However, I did not realize at the time that Beth had already told him that the tapes did not show Natalee returning to the Holiday Inn that night. We left the police station in a state of shock. We couldn't believe the attitude of the detective. Just the fact that he asked how much money I had took me by surprise. What kind of question is that to ask the father of a missing child? It seemed as if he was not at all concerned about our daughter. But, since he was in charge of the investigation, we followed his instructions and traveled to Carlos'n Charlie's hoping to find out what had happened to Natalee. We arrived there at about 10:30 p.m. and what I found was not like anything I had envisioned. While customers must pass by a bouncer at the door, there was no indication that he was stopping anyone from entering. The bar was packed with teenagers doing Jell-O shots and sleazy-looking island boys preying on the beautiful young female tourists. The place has more than one bar, and people were dancing and singing in every corner of the bi-level establishment. It was an unbelievable scene, one that I wish I had known about before Natalee left on her trip. I did not want to stay inside, so we hung out around the street corners. In less than two hours, we probably experienced at least ten to fifteen offers from various drug dealers who wanted us to buy from them. *Some government control*, I thought. Out of curiosity, my brother asked one of them what he had. "Whatever you need," he answered. "I have it or I can get it." We managed to strike up conversations with some of them who confided that the "higher ups" wanted them to always remember one thing: while peddling their drugs, they were never to commit a crime against a tourist, especially any American around the cruise dock areas. Later that evening, we went back to the hotel and planned our next strategy. The following day, we began searching the beaches and mountain areas in the morning; in the evening, we returned to the street corners looking for leads about Natalee. After several nights there, we were confronted by some of the stray drug addicts who had come into the tourist area with tips about Natalee. Apparently, Jug's friends had started handing out money for information about Natalee's whereabouts. We had heard that Beth and the people who were searching with her were handing out hundred dollar bills. Due to the information that we were receiving about drug use on the island, Beth's side of the family was pursuing the possibility of a drug-related kidnapping, and they were going into drug houses and driving around town. One particular drug addict gave us a tip that Natalee was in a specific drug house operated by "Tanya and Jim." He said there was an escape door in the back of the house,

and if we entered, she might be whisked away into a secret room. My brother Phil knew this was just a hoax as we had several others trying to get money from us for the same type of tip. The drug addicts were only interested in getting more money, and when word got out among them that the family was paying for tips, all of them wanted in on the action. Some asked us for \$10, and when my brother began asking more questions without paying, the price dropped to \$5. Phil started to walk off, and one man kept following him. He wanted money, any amount, and he finally yelled out, "Isn't she worth at least two bucks?" Phil was just about ready to bust him with a right-hand fist when an off-duty police officer walked by. The drug addict knew him by name and asked if he was on duty. He said no and kept walking. The drug addict then turned and walked off. Meanwhile, I did some investigating and found out more about the locals Natalee met who had been hanging out with the students from her hometown. Apparently, the boys had been throwing around lies about where they were staying. We heard that one of them, Joran van der Sloot, the son of a Dutch justice official, did not reveal that he lived on the island, but instead led the girls to believe that he was a vacationing student from Holland staying at the Holiday Inn. He was the boy Matt had told me about and one of the three that Dennis Jacobs had questioned. From what we had learned, on what was to be her last night in Aruba, witnesses saw Natalee leave Carlos'n Charlie's with the three locals, Joran van der Sloot, the Dutch boy, and Surinameseborn brothers Deepak and Satish Kalpoe. After that, she disappeared. When the boys were initially brought in for questioning, they all admitted having been with Natalee on the night of her disappearance, saying that they were at the bar but left there with her around 1:30 a.m. to take a fifteen-minute drive out to the lighthouse because she wanted to see it. They claimed to have brought her right back to the Holiday Inn where she was staying, and to have left her there with security guards who helped her inside because she was supposedly very intoxicated.

One father's mission to find his daughter

I am a father who has no idea what has happened to his child. The questions run through my mind all day long. They keep me awake at night. Is she dead? Is she alive? Is she being held captive somewhere? Are they hurting her? Is she crying out for me?Â

These are the impassioned words of Dave Holloway, father of Natalee Holloway, whose disappearance in Aruba sparked a media frenzy and an international scandal. This book is the heart-wrenching story of his search, the most complete account of Natalee Holloway's disappearance in Aruba. Continuing his investigation to this very day, Holloway discloses:behind-the-scenes details of the investigationnew revelations about the corruption of the Aruban law enforcementand the countless trails leading to possible rape, murder, and even sexual slavery

This book is the first insider's account of one of the decade's most disturbing and mysterious stories. Using never-before-seen photographs from their family album and stories of Natalee's childhood, Holloway relates the horror of personally searching through crack houses and trash dumps for Natalee-working alone, with authorities, even with psychics-while enduring the stonewalling of Aruban officials.

Learn what really went on behind the headlines of the tragic disappearance of Natalee Holloway.

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