

VareseNews

“Dayana was playing with our son, then she disappeared”

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The disappearance of a girl always causes sadness and anxiety. And the dismay is amplified, when her body is not found, and there is no news about her, lost in the middle of the sea after the Costa Concordia disaster. And if that is the girl who was playing with your son until a few minutes before she disappeared, the feelings can be overwhelming.

Five-year-old Dayana was on that cursed ship with her father and his new partner; before the warning signal and the hurried abandonment of the ship, the girl was in the mini-club with Riccardo, also 5, the son of Giancarlo De Bortoli and Barbara Gnemmi, a couple from Malgesso, near Varese, who told their story, which, fortunately, ended well.

During the excited moments before climbing into the lifeboat and the end of the nightmare, Barbara and Giancarlo remembered the arrival of the children from the mini-club at the gathering point. “We were there for a good hour and half, without knowing where our son Riccardo was,” they said. “Just after the alarm to abandon the ship, the entertainment organisers from the Squok Club arrived with the children, and returned them to their parents.” The entertainment organiser, Giovanni Lazzarini, who was thanked by the couple from Malgesso for calming down the children who were with him at the club and bringing them to safety, described his experience on a blog. At the most excited times, Dayana, her father and his partner were also with him and the children. “That evening, I only had 8 children with me, because the others were at dinner,” Lazzarini said. “Among them, there was also Dayana, who is now missing. I talked to her before the incident, then we rushed to the theatre, to be with the children. After the coded signals, we went calmly back to the Squok Club, on Deck 10. We gathered in a safe zone because the ship was already sloping to the left. There, we distracted the children; I even dressed up as Spiderman, Incredible and Wonder Woman to calm their fear. There was also Dayana’s father, his partner and Dayana. When we heard the signal to abandon the ship, we got the children to form a human chain, and went down to Deck 4, where we split them up and returned them to their parents,” Lazzarini continued. “As I was going to collection point B, I met Dayana and her father, she was clearly in a state of panic,

as she was looking for medicines, and I pushed them to the meeting point. Then I went away with my colleagues, towards the bow (going against the people, who were literally squashing us) to look for some parents. Once we got there, we put the lifejackets on the children, and struggled to get back to the stern, where all the lifeboats were bursting and ready to set off. Thank God we found a free lifeboat, and we went away towards the pier as the ship continued to sink. Once we landed, we received first aid, but our job and our duty wasn't over, because with the help of the children we looked for their parents; in the end, we found them and they thanked us."

During the episode of "Chi l'ha visto?", Dayana's mother made a sad plea to the survivors, the scuba divers and the search machines. "I ask everyone that was in that part of the ship and that fortunately got away if they remember seeing a girl and her father slip into the sea. I ask them to give the scuba divers precise indications so that they can target their searches. Keep looking for my daughter; bring her home to me as soon as you can. Don't give up."

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