How does a 21-year-old, with no former crimes to her name, end up in a Thai prison with a death sentence hanging around her neck?

Drugs, parties, money and a whole lot of corruption.

Ko Samui, Thailand’s second largest island, is known for its sandy beaches and spectacular night life. Where else would you want to be?

Ashley Oosthuizen (22) was 19 years old when she left home for the first time in 2018 with her then boyfriend of two years. They completed their TEFL-courses in Koh Samui and moved to Bangkok to teach. They tried to make a living there but she couldn’t manage. After she caught her boyfriend cheating on her with his teaching assistant, she moved back to Koh Samui as she had some friends there. She started working as a kindergarten teacher at Oonrak International School. She didn’t have the easiest time. She didn’t have a four-year degree and many other teachers were jealous of her popularity among students and staff. She was forced to be let go after another teacher launched an official complaint when they were both up for the same promotion. She started working many odd jobs but none of them secured her a work-permit. She was struggling to make ends meet and considered returning home numerous times. She didn’t have much back home though so she knew it wasn’t really an option.

It was then when she first met him. Early 2019. The person that would change everything, the person that would turn her life upside down. He was her hero in a way. She was still so young, you see. She didn’t have any financial support from her family. She was alone in the world and she was scared. She knew she could reach her dreams but she needed help and support. He was her happily ever after. He showed her a different side to life. Suddenly her life revolved around him and parties. Everyone around her could see that she was head over heels in love and believed he was her future. So much so that she didn’t think twice when he offered to open up a restaurant on the island, which she could run. She believed it was a great move for their future. They were dreaming about moving to Nepal and starting a big family, a life-long dream of hers. Things were going great but life isn’t a fairytale as you all know. They had their problems. He was a master manipulator and had her wrapped around his pinky. She started to live for him, according to what he wanted. She dressed in the way that he’d prefer. She became his puppy. But who is he?

Triss Nepps a.k.a Tristan Nettles (35) is an American national that lived and worked as an English teacher on Ko Samui. He was a teacher at Panyadee International School. There were some things that Ashley didn’t know about him. He was actually living a double life. Teacher by day, international drug smuggler at night. Well, something like that.

He first got in to drugs at the young age of twelve. He was expelled from 5 middle schools and 7 high schools on drug and assault charges. He's been arrested more than the average guy you know. While in the marines, he was involved in a home invasion in Mississippi. He admitted to selling drugs while he was a volunteer teacher in Micronesia as well. I mean, this is not an innocent man, right?

Tristan figured out how to buy drugs on the dark web in 2018. He would order it from many different countries. He never met the suppliers. They would always chat through encrypted messages on the dark web. He would use the names Clams88 and Rutherford21 as his alias. He needed a way to pay for the drugs without it being traced back to him. So, he approached his friend and colleague, Sergey. Tristan and Sergey became friends through work long before he had met Ashley. They had a shared interest, crypto and more specifically, bitcoin. Sergey agreed to give Tristan BTC for baht whenever Tristan had to make a purchase. He would keep 3% as commission each time. They started out with small orders, only a few grams but by the end it was up to a kilo per month. They would meet up at Panyadee Intl School where they both taught to complete the deals. Tristan would pay cash and Sergey would send the BTC. The drugs would be sent to Panyadee Intl School under fictious names for more than 2 years. They were making big money and enjoyed their island lives.

Now, back to the restaurant he opened for her. The restaurant opened their doors for the first time in February 2020. She loved running the place. She spent her days planning, organizing and creating. She is such a gifted photographer and overall artist. That really came through at the restaurant. She worked so hard to make it a success. She put everything into this business. She did the menu’s, recipes, excel spreadsheet for expenses, networking and much more. All of this at only 20 years old! Her relationship with Tristan was going well. He wasn’t involved much with the restaurant as he was still working for Panyadee. He was working on a plan to move to Ukraine to start medical school as this had been a lifelong dream of his. Ashley would stay behind and run the restaurant until they could be together again. So finally, in August 2020 Tristan moved to Ukraine. Ashley then moved in to Tristan’s old apartment. Was this the end of the drug business? Unfortunately, not.

After arriving in the Ukraine, Tristan had ordered and sent more packages to Samui. It was getting delivered at Panyadee as per usual. Sergey had to make sure that the packages got delivered and given to the correct people. Shortly after moving, CEO of Panyadee (Liam Capone) found a package containing 50g of MDMA in the mail room. Surely that was the end? Liam called the police so Sergey and Tristan got busted right? Not exactly.

Liam and Tristan have never seen eye to eye. According to Tristan, Liam hated him. Liam didn’t support the restaurant Tristan had opened and couldn’t deal with his success. So, after the drugs was found in Panyadee’s mail room, Liam decided to take the law in to his own hands. Who knows why? Did his hatred for Tristan really go that deep? Or was it to protect the school? What would happen if it came out that two of the teachers were involved in an international drug ring and that the school was used to import drugs for more than 2 years? Whatever the case, Liam involved the headmaster and the owner (who is a local) to help him handle it. The owner of the school, has deep connections with police in Samui. Instead of firing Sergey and having him arrested, they shifted their focus on to someone else. An innocent 21-year-old who was working so hard to build a future for herself.

It was a normal Thursday on the island. Ashley was working at the restaurant like she does most days. Two Thai men walked in that looked like regular tourists. They had ordered a rather strange combination of food but she didn’t think too much about it. A shipper came to the shop with a package addressed to Dave Van Rensburg. Dave was the previous owner of the lease. He was also an old friend of Tristan. This wasn’t the first time that Dave had sent a package to that address. She didn’t think it was weird because like I said, it has happened before. So, she digitally signed for the package as she was very busy and, in a hurry, but the shipped asked for a hard copy signature as well. She thought that was strange but she didn’t have any knowledge as to what was in the package. So, she signed and left it unopened on the floor in the kitchen of the restaurant. This was confirmed by multiple eyewitnesses. About two minutes after she signed for the package, a white car/van stopped and about 15 people came out of it. They said that they were from immigration. Ashley assumed they came to check on visas and work permits. It’s to be noted at this point, if she knew there were drugs in the package, wouldn’t she have tried to stall them or be visibly stressed about the idea of getting busted? Instead, she provided them with her passport and was very helpful. They did a search of the premises and then told her to get in their car. They didn’t provide any reason and was only communicating in Thai. She was so scared at that stage, where were these Thai men taking her? They refused to translate anything for her. Please note that in any legal case involving a foreigner, a translator MUST be provided in order to make sure everyone understands and all information is being told correctly. Now, in any other country, this would already be enough proof to get the case thrown.

According to witnesses, the police provided Ashley with a document that she had to read and sign. The ‘confession’ so to speak. Again, this document was in Thai and they didn’t provide anyone to translate. She refused to sign but they kept threating her, she was scared for her life at this point. People are known to mysteriously disappear in Thailand and then found months later to be dead. She was terrified that’s how she would end up. So, she gave in and signed this document. That would be a huge mistake as she unknowingly signed a confession and admitted to being an international drug dealer. This information was all obtained by her lawyers during the first month of her arrest.

Tristan got her a lawyer, Mike Green, and paid him a 150,000 baht to come to Koh Samui and get Ashley out on bail. Instead, he didn’t come and got his Thai associate involved. The associate sent a notice that Ashely’s bail was set at two million baht. They had only two days to pay. Tristan quickly realized that it was up to him to gather this money and get her out of prison. He had two million baht buried in a box under the ground at his old apartment at the time. He always planned on returning to Koh Samui and didn’t want to travel so much cash at the time. At this stage, he asked Sergey to get involved as he didn’t trust anyone else. Sergey would go dig up the money and would handle all transactions on his behalf. The money was taken to the court but her bail got denied. They appealed and it went to the district court. It got denied again. Why? On her arrest report it stated, bail was not recommended at this time. They never granted her bail. This ensured that Ashley would never be able get bail as the courts in Thailand highly ever go back against their decisions. So, because the lawyers filed for bail at a time that it was not recommend, they ensured Ashley would never get bail. The notice of the two million baht that Tristan received was completely fake. That money, disappeared, along with Ashley’s chances on getting out. So much greed. The money that was supposed to be used to get her life back, was stolen by a greedy lawyer who had no interest in helping her and Sergey who showed his true colors after the arrest. The first few months after the arrest, the lawyer, Noppadol from Thailand Bail, kept reassuring everyone that he gathered enough evidence and witnesses to throw this absurd case out! He shared information about other foreigners that got arrested for drug related crimes that was much worse than what Ashley has supposedly done. He told the family that he had successfully gotten each one of them out of prison or at least got them reduced sentences. According to him, there was no reason to worry or to believe that Ashley would be convicted. She had no prior convictions to her name and was known around the island as a wonderful young woman who worked really hard to make a success. She was involved in helping the local community and was well loved. Ashley had two pre-trial court hearings that went really well and was a success according to her lawyer. The trial started and everyone expected for her to be cleared of all charges or at least get a short sentence (for signing the package). The day of her final trial finally came. There was a sense of hope in the air. Her mother planned to travel to Thailand to be there for then she got released. Noppodal was paid over 35,000 USD. And what did she get?

Nobody was ready for the news.

“Dear sir, today we represent Ashley for judgement day at Koh Samui Provincial Court. Detail here – Judgement – death penalty, reduced to life in prison.”

For signing a package that she had no idea of the content inside? Even if she did know, who gets death penalty for 250g of MDMA? How does that make sense? Her lawyers were so positive and kept reassuring everyone, how could that be her sentence? Her family involved a different lawyer as it came to light that her original lawyer was a scam artist. He never argued her case properly in court and was only after money. They started with the process of her appeal but all attempts so far have been unsuccessful.

Ashley has been in prison for almost 18 months at the time of writing. She hasn’t seen anyone she loves in person for almost 18 months. To make matters worse, shortly after Christmas 2021, they moved her to a different prison in the middle of the night. That stopped the entire appeal process and she got cut away from the world. While she was still in Samui, she could receive letters and phone calls from her family and friends but now she doesn’t even have that privilege anymore.

She is being used as a scapegoat to ensure that everyone involved can save face. Zero evidence against her was found! According to multiple sources, she did not even have a bank account. How can a person run an international drug ring without a bank account or any means to receive/send funds globally? The answer is simple. They can’t.

Ashley Oosthuizen was set up to sign a package that had nothing to do with her! Except being involved with the wrong people. Ashley Oosthuizen is being kept in prison to hide in the incompetence of a police force. Ashley Oosthuizen is being kept in prison to save the name of an international school and their teachers. Ashley Oosthuizen was thrown in to prison, got a death sentence reduced to life in prison without parole, simple to save the face of others. Where is the justice? Where are her people? Where is her country? She’s not some murderous evil person who deserves to be locked up. She’s an innocent 22-year-old woman who still has her entire life ahead of her.

#freeAshley #justiceforAshley