**Tom Terrific by Pam Lambert**

SAILING THE MEDITERRANEAN OFF the island of Capri on a 247-foot yacht, the sunlight as golden as the grosses from Mission: Impossible—now that would seem a pretty idyllic way to spend your summer, no? But if you're [Tom Cruise](http://www.people.com/people/tom_cruise) and you're in that situation, well, stuff happens. Last week the superstar's otherwise postcard-perfect vacation veered suddenly into Rescue 911 territory, and he once again found himself giving help to people in need of it. For Cruise, this seems to be increasingly familiar ground.

Or, in this case, water. The actor's most recent brush with risky business came on the morning of Aug. 7 as Cruise, 34, and wife [Nicole Kidman](http://www.people.com/people/nicole_kidman), 29, were breakfasting on the Talitha G. That's the luxurious chartered yacht on which the couple, their two toddlers and some high-powered pals (including a pair of studio heads) were enjoying a leisurely, weeklong cruise. Mid-croissant, they spotted a sailboat on fire and five people bobbing in a rubber raft nearby.

Wasting no time, Cruise immediately sent over his yacht's skiff to bring the victims to safety. Just moments after the stricken sailors—French paper tycoon Jacques Lejeune, 68, his wife, Bernadette, 42, daughter Eugénie, 7, and two crew members—reached safety, their 63-foot vessel sank. Cruise, who kept his feet dry and caught the whole incident on camcorder from his perch on deck, "did what any decent person would do," proclaimed the actor's delighted publicist Pat Kingsley. "If I ever get in trouble, I hope [Tom Cruise](http://www.people.com/people/tom_cruise) is nearby."

The strange thing is, he has been near trouble pretty consistently since a certain rainy night in Santa Monica last March. Back then, while driving along Wilshire Boulevard, Cruise was one of several witnesses who saw Heloisa Vinhas, a 23-year-old Brazilian-born aspiring actress, get hit by an Acura Legend as she headed to a bus stop from her job as a cashier at the California Chicken Cafe. The driver of the Legend sped away, but Cruise asked someone to call for an ambulance and then followed the injured woman to UCLA Medical Center, where she was treated for a broken left leg and bruised ribs. When he discovered she wasn't insured, he arranged to pay her emergency room bill, which totaled $7,000.

"If he's not Superman, he can be Batman—Batman doesn't have super powers," says an enthusiastic Vinhas, who, with cast and brace removed, thanked the actor personally in June on the Beverly Hills set where he was shooting Jerry Maguire. "It's a weird thing, it's like karma," she continues. "It's like, bang, and something [becomes] possible for him."

That is no news to Laurence Sadler, 7, and Christos "Chris" Tzanetis, 13, two of the mob of 10,000 that massed in London's West End for the British premiere of Mission: Impossible on July 4. When Cruise and Kidman decided to walk through a corridor of fans, signing autographs and shaking hands, instead of being deposited right in front of the theater by limo, the surging crowd nearly crushed both boys against the police barricades. Cruise saw the 4'1" Sadler being pinned against a steel bar that was catching him just below the chin. The actor grabbed the boy's arm to try to pull him to safety, then called over a policeman to assist. A few minutes later he did the same for Tzanetis.

"We could have had a tragedy on our hands—we are very grateful to Tom," says Tzanetis's mother, Anna, 33. "He is my hero," says Sadler, who lives with his divorced mother, Kim, 30, in a London suburb. "Every night I say good-night to him when I pass his poster in my room."

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