

"Each day, it eats away at my soul," says Danica Weeks (at her Ellenbrook, Perth, home on Feb. 11) of losing her husband on MH370.

HOLDING ON TO HOPE

Weeks's counsellor suggested she encourage her son Lincoln draw pictures of his dad to help him move on, but "I am not ready to do that," she says. "I'm still holding on. A friend said to me, 'You do realise Paul has gone?' And I said, 'No.'"

"Paul was smart and funny," says Weeks (on their wedding day).



Paul "adored the children," says Weeks (with her sons, Lincoln, left, and Jack, and their dog, Bella).

Shaking with fear and on the verge of panic, Perth mother of two Danica Weeks boarded an Air New Zealand plane bound for her husband Paul's home town of Christchurch on Jan. 27. It was the first flight for the 38-year-old since the Malaysia Airlines plane carrying Paul, 39, inexplicably vanished last year, and she had long-dreaded how being inside an aircraft would hit her. "My brain was racing through all the possible things of what might have happened to Paulie," says Weeks, who was travelling with their two pre-school boys, Lincoln and Jack, and her mother, Kay. "I started to get upset and couldn't stop." Seeing her torment, the cabin crew upgraded her to business class, but it did little to quell Weeks's inner turmoil. "I couldn't even do my seatbelt up," she says. "The boys saw me shaking and I just said, 'I'm missing Daddy.'"

Now more than ever. With still no clue as to the fate of Malaysia Airlines Flight 370, which vanished shortly after take-off from Kuala Lumpur one year ago, Weeks is struggling to accept the loss of her husband. On March 8,

2014, Paul Weeks, an engineer heading to Mongolia for work, was one of 227 passengers on board the Boeing 777 en route to Beijing when it disappeared from the radar. In one of aviation's greatest mysteries, no trace of the aircraft nor its 239 passengers and crew has been found, leaving loved ones in a tortured state of emotional limbo. "It's getting worse," Weeks, an accountant, tells WHO in an exclusive interview at her home in Ellenbrook, on the doorstep of Perth's lush Swan Valley. "People say, 'It looks like you're coping,' but I don't cope. I just exist. And I exist because of our boys."

When those boys burst into the house from kindergarten and day care about 3 PM with their grandmother Kay on the day of WHO's interview, Weeks scoops up Lincoln, 4, who she calls her "little man of the house" since Paul's vanishing. Paul's little doppelgänger, Jack, 22 months, settles into watching ABC Kids while Lincoln, quiet and brooding, sticks close to mum. "Lincoln is coping the hardest because he was dad's little

shadow," says Weeks, who moved with the family to Perth in 2011 after Paul landed a prized job with an engineering company (at the time of MH370's disappearance he was working for Rio Tinto). "He cries for Dad and when he gets frustrated he screams at me to bring Dad back. It's heartbreaking."

Moving to the master bedroom for a photo with the children, Weeks places a family snap of

"He screams at me to bring Dad back"

—Danica Weeks

says. "I spend a lot more time in bed. I could happily live in bed 24 hours a day."

Her grief is compounded by the anguish of not knowing her husband's fate. "I know people think, 'Get over it. He's not coming back,'" says Weeks, who takes antidepressant medication and undergoes counselling every fortnight. "But the human psyche does not accept that until you



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THE SEARCH

The designated underwater search area for the MH370 aircraft (below, in 2011) is thousands of square kilometres more than 2,000km south-west of Perth in the Indian Ocean. So far, authorities have searched 24,000sq-km (nearly half of the region). They hope to have completed the search by May.



have proof. I haven't been able to have any sort of memorial because I don't know if he's going to come home dead or alive."

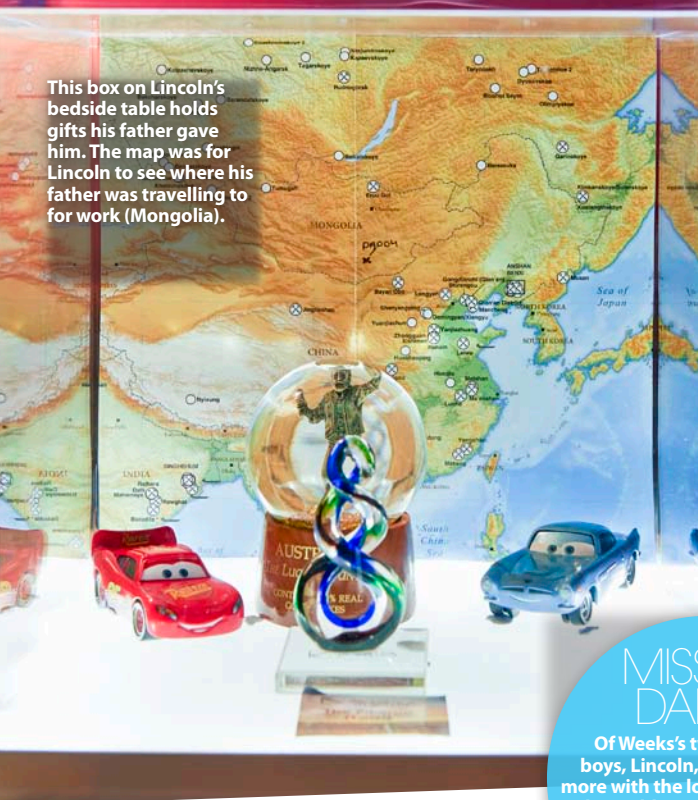
In an effort to dampen the suffering, Weeks avoids the regular outings she once took with Paul and the kids, like their cherished Saturday-lunch ritual of a burger and chips at the Vines. But she can't avoid the hardest time: going to bed alone each night. "Paul and I used to sit in bed talking about our days and about the boys," says Weeks, who met Paul in 2000 during Oktoberfest in Munich, where they were both holidaying (they moved in together weeks later in London). "So once the boys go to bed I sometimes have a drink to stop my brain, because otherwise it would be



MH370
One Year
On

"I can't move on"

A tragic casualty of a confounding modern mystery, Danica Weeks lives a tortured life in limbo



This box on Lincoln's bedside table holds gifts his father gave him. The map was for Lincoln to see where his father was travelling to for work (Mongolia).



"I'm constantly stuck in a pain that's overwhelming," says Weeks (in her bedroom with sons Jack, left, and Lincoln on Feb. 11).

MISSING DADDY
Of Weeks's two pre-school boys, Lincoln, 4, is struggling more with the loss of his father as he is older. "He cries for Dad so I comfort him," says Weeks. "But he says, 'Don't worry, Mummy, I will take care of you.' It breaks my heart."



Paul and Danica Weeks with children Lincoln (left) and Jack in 2013.

MH370 24/7. I don't have any life. My hopes, dreams and plans were with him and I can't look beyond that."

Instead, much of her time is devoted to examining the minutiae of the mystery. Since MH370 disappeared, theories ranging from hijacking to a cockpit fire have been put forward (see box), but without the flight recorders there has been no entry point for authorities to nut out answers. What is known is that at 12.41 AM on March 8, 2014, the Boeing took off from Kuala Lumpur. Following an uneventful ascent, first officer Fariq Abdul Hamid bid "goodnight" to KL air-traffic control at 1.19 AM. Ten minutes later, Vietnam air-traffic control lost the plane's signal due to MH370's transponder either not working or being disabled. Then, at 1.37 AM, an automatic transmission due from the plane's

turning towards the north-west. Finally, based on satellite data, the plane appeared to have turned southward, heading towards the southern Indian Ocean with hours of fuel left in its tanks. The final "handshake" communication between the plane and the satellite was at 8.11 AM.

In May last year, Malaysia Airlines released a statement—via text message to loved ones—saying the plane went down somewhere over the southern Indian Ocean and that all passengers and crew were presumed dead. It infuriated Weeks. "I fell apart—the neighbours said it sounded like I was being murdered when I got the text," she says. Some eight months later on Jan. 29, the airline officially declared the loss of the plane an "accident." In a statement, it said it "continues to

"ACARS" communication system did not eventuate. As military radar has shown, the aircraft made a sharp turn towards the west, before

provide assistance to the families of the passengers and crew." Again, Weeks was furious. "I want the statement retracted," she says. "Malaysia's deputy foreign minister has sat across the table from me and said, 'Why can't you accept that he has gone?' I just said, 'You have no proof. Until you have proof, I will not accept it. None of us will.'"

Weeks, who was forced to give up her part-time job due to the stress of losing her husband, suspects such proof may already be out there. "I believe you cannot lose a plane," she says. "There is something they are hiding." She's not alone in her suspicion. Emirates chief Sir Tim Clark believes Malaysia Airlines

has not made available all the information regarding the incident, and also questioned the Malaysian military's involvement. "I think we will know more if there is full transparency of everything that everybody knows," he told German aviation journalist Andreas Spaeth. "I do not believe the informa-

tion held by some is on the table."

Meanwhile, the multimillion-dollar search continues. The Canberra-based Joint Agency Coordination Centre, which is coordinating the search more than 2,000km south-west of Perth, will use four vessels to cover the 60,000sq-km area "by May," chief coordinator Judith Zielke tells WHO. "We have completed about 40 per cent of that area so far. We are using sonar to take images directly of the ocean floor in great detail." Said Steve Duffield, a managing director of the search company Fugro: "If it is within our search area, we will find it."

Until then, the anguish of not knowing is overwhelming for Weeks. Sitting at a stool in her kitchen on a sizzling Perth summer's day, she recalls her darkest moment last year. "The pain was just too much," she says. "I felt, 'I want to end it all.' But the boys are my

saving grace. They get me out of bed. Their laughter and their funniness ... They keep me going. Paulie would never let me give up on them."

Neither will she relinquish her fight for answers. "As soon as I wake, I am straight on my phone searching 'MH370' for any news," she says. And until her questions are answered, it is difficult for her to accept her husband will not one day walk through the door: "Paul was the life of the party, he was gorgeous. We used to say to one another, 'You complete me.' And we did. For all intents and purposes I'm a single mother, but mentally and emotionally, I'm not. I have had nothing, not a single piece of evidence—a cup or a seat from the aeroplane—to tell me I am not in a relationship. I am stuck in this limbo."

■ By Melenie Ambrose and Michael Crooks. Additional reporting by Louise Talbot

Crash or CONSPIRACY?

Was the disappearance of MH370 a tragic accident or a deliberate mass murder? Here are some theories

HIJACKING

Because the plane's transponder was somehow disabled and the aircraft changed direction, many thought it was hijacked. Malaysian prime minister Najib Razak said the evidence "was consistent with deliberate action by someone on the plane." The presence onboard of two Iranian passengers on stolen passports added fuel to the theory. But last year Malaysian police eliminated all passengers as suspects.



Onboard a Vietnamese Air Force aircraft during the search in March last year.

PILOT SUICIDE

If passengers are in the clear, what about the pilots? Last June, father-of-three Capt Zaharie Shah was named the "prime suspect" by Malaysian police. The suspicion was based on a number of red-flag factors: Shah was passionate about politics and related to Malaysian opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim, who hours before MH370 took off was sentenced to prison for sodomy. Shah had also reportedly used his home flight-simulator to make practice runs towards a small island in the Indian Ocean. But according to John Choisser, a pilot and author of *MH370: Lost in the Dark*, "Pilot suicide is possible but highly unlikely given the evidence."

a nearby airport before being overwhelmed by smoke. Many discounted the theory given the plane appears to have been under control long after take-off.

SHOT DOWN

At the time, the US, Thailand and Singapore were involved in military exercises in the region and many believed MH370 was accidentally shot down. New Zealander Milke McKay was on an oil rig off Vietnam when he saw what he believed was a plane "burning at high altitude." (Danica Weeks has spoken with McKay.) The theory is often discredited due to the lack of debris.

STOLEN

Was the plane diverted to an island? Air Force Lieut Gen Thomas McInerney told Fox News: "Someone wanted that airplane. I don't believe this plane crashed. I do believe it landed someplace."

Source: *Someone Is Hiding Something* (Nero, \$29.99) by George Noory, David Wayne and Richard Belzer (the actor from *Law & Order*).

COCKPIT FIRE

US pilot Chris Goodfellow suggested that a fire in the cockpit forced the pilots to seek

