

Oh my god lookitthat . . .

I just climbed back down from my Brooklyn rooftop. An airplane has flown into the World Trade Towers. There's thick black smoke billowing out of several floors of both towers.

Let me pause for a moment to say with all the lucidity I can muster that it is the strangest sight I have ever seen in my life.

I can hear the sirens of multiple emergency vehicles, 360 degrees around. There were people on other rooftops in my neighborhood, some of them talking on their cell phones. Down in the street below me a workman was shouting in some language other than English for the rest of his work crew to come out of the house they're renovating and see what's happening. I couldn't make out a word of it, but there was no mistaking the sense.

Patrick called from the office. He says from where I'm standing I can't see the big hole in the side of one tower.

While I was typing that, Claire Eddy called from the street outside the Flatiron Building. She was on the street when it happened. You can see the World Trade Center from there. Claire says it was two planes, one for each tower. She says it's a big hole. She can't see the tops of the towers for the smoke. I told her that when I last looked, only a few floors of each tower had smoke coming out.

I phoned Jim Macdonald, who's up near White Plains taking care of his mother. He hadn't heard. When I rang off he was looking up the NYC disaster plan, I think in order to find out whether as an EMT (albeit nonlocal) he should go in to help.

I'll post this now.

Tuesday, September 11th, 2001, 9:36 A.M. ▶

—Teresa Nielsen Hayden

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Ellen Datlow From the Zone

Thursday, September 13th, 2001

I woke up Tuesday morning to the sound of sirens. I looked out my window, which faces west, and saw people along Hudson Street looking downtown and lots of fire engines and police cars. I figured it must be a huge fire but got online. Then I received a phone call from Chris Fowler, Pat Cadigan's husband, from London, who asked if I was OK. I said sure, why not? And he told me about the two planes flying into the two towers. I expressed shock, and as soon as I could went downstairs where, with my neighbors, I watched the buildings burn. People had car radios on so everyone could hear the news.

I watched for awhile, went into a coffee shop for coffee, and while in there the radio announced that one tower had collapsed. Went back to Hudson Street and they were gone.

I'm in the "zone" below 14th Street that is guarded by local and state police. Today was the first time since the bombing that I really walked around to any extent.

I've been lucky, as the smoke was blowing east and south for the first two days, not north and west where I live. Constance Ash lives much closer—in Soho—and has gotten a lot of really bad smoke.

I've been online and on the phone with worried friends from all over the world and country in the past three days. It's given me an incredible sense of community. And this may be awfully sentimental but this whole horrible experience has made me love New York City

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Kathryn Cramer & David G. Hartwell There Is No Word: An Introduction

This is an independent supplement to *The New York Review of Science Fiction* devoted to writing primarily from the New York City and Washington, DC, areas by members of the extended sf community on or about the events of September 11, 2001. The contents are excerpted from over 100,000 words made available to us.

Real-life horror came so suddenly that facts overwhelmed the factive power of the media—the power to make a “true story” out of a jumble of presumed facts. Even though narratives grow up over the facts, sometimes concealing them, they are also our way of taking in what we know about historical events, especially catastrophes. We want to preserve and record what people in our community saw, did, and felt. Our intention is to avoid analysis—the imposition of any master narrative—and instead attempt to preserve a record. Because when the consensus narratives are finally in place, some of the facts will be concealed or forgotten. We want to preserve the suddenness, the revelation that somebody tried to kill us, not much caring which of us, and is still trying.

To a calamity, a disaster, a catastrophe, an apocalypse, a range of responses are possible. The old-fashioned religious response is cast in the terms of moral allegory, deriving its form from the Biblical account of God's destruction of the cities of the plain:

San Francisco was a wicked city in 1906, and there were those who said after the disaster that it had only got what it deserved. The news was greeted in Benton Harbor, Michigan, for example, with a celebration that included a brass band. They'd known it was coming, those Flying Rollers of the House of David announced. Not only had they known it, they were responsible for it. They'd sent their missionary Mary McDermitt out there to convert the heathens of San Francisco, and while she preached in the streets, San Franciscans had gone about their merry way, ignoring her. That was too much for Mary, and using powers possessed by any prophet of the Flying Roller sect, she had called down an earthquake upon them. It had better be a lesson to San Francisco, Prince Benjamin, the patriarch of the sect, thundered. There wouldn't be much time because the world was going to end in 1916 (*The Great Earthquake and Fire: San Francisco, 1906*, p. 3).

There is also the aesthetic response, cast in terms of romantic melodrama in which the event is raised to a level of sublimity, composed of horror, wonder, and intense emotion; and the psychological, blaming the victims of the misfortune for having the poor judgement to be in the wrong place at the wrong time; and the rationalist, subsuming the event in a universal scientific system of causes and effects.

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From the Zone

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more than ever and appreciate my fellow New Yorkers. I am overwhelmed by the extraordinary reaction of everyone around the country to our plight. A few years ago New Yorkers were certain everyone in the rest of the country hated us and our city. This proves they don't.

Today, Lois Metzger and I decided to get together and have lunch, then see what we could do to help.

She is a former Clarionite/writer who is married to Tony Hiss. We ate quickly and then walked west along 14th Street offering any form of aid we could to the police and state troopers stationed at each intersection.

They all were taken care of, so we continued to the Hudson River and there it

was suggested that we go to Chelsea Piers, several blocks north where they had a volunteer site set up. We did and found understandable chaos. When we asked what they needed one woman said, heavy gloves and facemasks—further down we were told they didn't need more gloves or masks. We hiked back to 8th Avenue and went to the first hardware store we came to—of course they'd already given stuff yesterday plus the government took all the batteries they had.

We realized that it was hopeless to wander around this way and we wouldn't be able to afford to pay for more than a couple pair of gloves ourselves anyway, and it would be harder to get anyone to donate without official sanction.

We went back south through the checkpoint at 14th Street to St. Vincent's Hospital and finally got through to someone

passing out lists of what they need: ice, small bottles of water, hot food for the doctors (I assume for any hospitals involved), cold sandwich fixings for cops and others. For the rescue workers, they are collecting socks and lots of towels. Lois went home to make sandwiches.

I walked along 14th Street almost to Union Square because that's where there is a bunch of discount stores.

I subsequently brought shopping bags of towels and socks to the drop-off point.

Met Jack Womack for dinner on 18th Street. I could go north, but he couldn't come south of 14th Street. Only those with IDs with their address can go below 14th on 8th Avenue. He was the first close friend I've seen in days, but it seems like months, and I think I must have talked his ear off because it was so good to have someone—in person—to talk to. ▲

There Is No Word

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The terms "calamity," "disaster," "catastrophe," and "apocalypse" have distinct connotations. "Calamity" emphasizes one's emotional response to a misfortune. "Disaster" is astrological in origin and means, literally, ill-starred. It pertains to sudden and extraordinary misfortune. Thus disaster entails the notion of fate and cosmic causality. "Catastrophe" pertains to the denouement in drama, an "overturning of the order or system of things," and to the geological—earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and such. "Apocalypse," frequently used to pertain to the end of the world, actually has a broader meaning. Certainly it can refer to the Revelation of St. John the Divine, but it also has another, more abstract, meaning particularly useful here: anything viewed as a revelation, a disclosure.

These terms form a hierarchy. Calamity relates only to the feelings of its victims, neither giving nor implying explanation. Disaster allows for cause and effect, but the causes are divine, in the stars, not subject to human intervention. In the word catastrophe, we find the invention of the story of an event and the event itself inextricably intertwined. There is a battle for authorship between the storyteller and God. Apocalypse is the prediction of or the revealing of the event, not the event itself. We have increasing amounts of predictive data which, one expects, will far outstrip our ability to prevent. The more information we have, the less like calamity and the more apocalyptic the true tales of extreme misfortune will become.

The contemporary discourse of disaster takes a variety of forms, removed by varying degree from the event itself: direct experience; word of mouth—both eyewitness reports and those which are second, third, fourth hand; newspapers; web sites; radio; television; film; photography; science; popular songs and ballads; fiction; poetry; law; and insurance.

The emotional state of eyewitnesses as they recount their experiences may range from extreme excitement to clinical detachment, or combine both. In the discourse of disaster, clinical detachment is not a reliable indicator of objectivity of information and observation. While today we tend to put greater faith in information conveyed with the flat affect of clinical detachment, even in its most literal origins—the clinic—clinical detachment has a rather problematic psychological history: it is a state beyond the range of ordinary emotions. Clinical detachment is acceptable to us for its usefulness in eliminating extremes of subjectivity, not because of its superior moral status; the detached authoritative observer approaches the subject at hand with meditative objectivity that cancels out the moral as well as the sublime responses to disaster. Emotion is subtly buried.

But in disaster narratives, especially eyewitness accounts, a usually authoritative and objective observer is as much at the mercy of large forces as any other victim, and loses both authority and the distance necessary for objectivity. The point we make is that no individual account is privileged.

Cheerful affect cannot conceal the effect of horrific wonder generated by so many visual images of destruction. Nor can flattened affect. The devastation becomes a landscape that speaks for itself. We are saturated with it immediately after it occurs. What we know is a concatenation of facts and details which can be assembled in many ways, given the force of narrative. Emotionally, this publication is an attempt to raise the reader's consciousness through a sincere sensationalism and by giving the reader characters with whom to identify.

Unlike pre-World War I disasters in which all events for bad or good were seen as part of God's design, our views of events since the two World Wars—and especially since television became the average citizen's preeminent source of information—have become fragmented, without causality, and become, through repetition of viewing a flat

aspect in which the destruction of the World Trade Center and of a portion of the Pentagon, with the sound turned down, very like a Hollywood disaster film.

Disaster is commodified and, with increasing amounts of information about the event both beforehand and revealed through the events, it becomes more apocalyptic: What seemed paranoid nonsense becomes sense. If this event is possible, then anything, the denied, the repressed, becomes possible, forcing something like what people mean when they say the September 11th calamities are the death of irony, or the death of Postmodernism. Meaning must be synthesized from the materials at hand, sometimes prematurely; everyone's great issues are raised, sometimes ridiculously. We each use what tools we have.

There are no precise words yet for what happened here. As a term, *terrorism*, the use of terror to intimidate or subjugate, coined to describe the acts that caused that part of the French Revolution called The Terror, barely scratches the surface: That we are terrified seems insignificant in the face of the larger goals of these people. Search the dictionary in vain for a verb that means, "(1) to kill indiscriminately with the intention to inspire genocidal rage against oneself and one's countrymen; (2) to die in the attempt to cause the use of weapons of mass destruction against one's own people and home for the purposes of attaining salvation and heavenly rewards." And where can we find terms for large-scale, purely man-made misfortunes, deliberate acts, partaking not at all of either the forces of nature or divine will? There are no words. Adequate words are needed, but will come only from confronting raw facts.

So we present not the whole story but a variety of personal experiences of the day and the places and the events. Bear with the first reactions, which are almost uniformly flattened in affect, and read on to find out what it was like. Lest we forget. ▲

Matthew Appleton In Arlington, Virginia

I first heard the news about the World Trade Center from my fiancée, Cheryl, who called me on her cell phone on her way to work. Just as I ended the call, shortly after 9:15, the news was spreading over my office like wildfire—you could hear the news jump from one cubicle to the next. My first instinct was to try to log onto one of the news web sites to see what had happened, but the increase in web traffic had already made that impossible.

My boss came over and told me he was heading downstairs to the fitness room in the lobby of our building to see the TV coverage. I decided to join him. I was stunned to see the footage of the buildings on fire and the replayed footage of the second plane slamming into the south building. Tears welled up, but the repeated male training I had undergone as a young boy took hold—I held back the tears, and eventually left for my desk after hearing the same information over and over for a few minutes.

Leaving for my desk didn't mean I returned to work, however. Upon reaching the 10th floor, where I work, I stopped to talk with a coworker. I actually said something along the lines of that I was surprised something like this had never happened in DC before, and the two of us conjectured as to why not. Me and my big mouth.

Shortly after I'd returned to my desk, a supply clerk came running, telling me that a bomb had just gone off at the Pentagon. The office building I work at is about one and a half miles away from the Pentagon and the conference room nearest my desk has a direct line of sight. I raced over to the conference room to see what had happened.

News pictures taken certainly looked more dramatic, but the scene from that conference room window will be the one I'll remember most. It's one thing to see the carnage and devastation on TV; it's another to see it for yourself, even from a distance. The billowing smoke coming from the west side of the Pentagon was surreal—it didn't seem possible that the Pentagon could actually be attacked. For a minute or two, I watched in horror before once again pulling myself away.

I began to fear for my safety. Even though the Pentagon was far enough removed as an immediate threat to my wellbeing, I could only speculate what else was being planned for Washington, DC. The rumors flying around the office, all of which were repeated as fact, didn't help; there were rumors of a car bomb going off next to the State Department, that the executive offices of the White House were on fire, that there was an explosion on Capitol Hill, and that

another bomb had gone off in the middle of the Mall in DC.

Information was so sketchy and it seemed that the city was under attack, I decided that I was safer at home than in my office. Unfortunately, the Yellow Line of the Metro system, which I used to commute to and from work, ran directly underneath the Pentagon. Assuming that it too had been damaged, I realized I needed to get a ride with a coworker who had driven in to work and lived near me if I was going to get home without too much inconvenience.

My home is within five miles of the Pentagon; the billowing plume of smoke was an ever-present companion to the news on the car radio. When we came closest to the Pentagon (not within eyesight at that spot), I saw someone in an Air Force uniform hop out of a car and start strolling in the direction of the Pentagon. He was stopped by a nearby police officer, and after a few seconds I could see a look of horror and shock fall down his face. My guess is that for whatever reason, he wasn't listening to the radio on the way in to work, thought that the plume of smoke was from something else, and it was the first he heard about the attack.

As we continued home, traffic was
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snarled. In order to make the drive a little easier for my coworker, I got out of the car about a quarter mile from my apartment and walked the rest of the way. Unfortunately, I had some mundane business that needed tending to when I got home. The previous night the freezer in my apartment stopped working properly so I needed to contact the property office and get someone up to fix it. I had intended to call from work, but given the timing of the attacks and my urgent quest to get home, it was something I forgot until passing by the office.

I stopped in along the way and sheepishly asked if the maintenance person was still around. Thankfully, she was and within 10 minutes of my arrival home she was fixing a motor in the unit that had seized up. It was around that time that I first saw the footage of the Trade Center buildings collapsing. I had heard it on the radio during the drive home, but even imagining it couldn't prepare me for the horror of watching the footage. Like most of the day so far, it seemed surreal, like it shouldn't be happening at all.

I then realized that I needed to call my close friends and family to let them know I was okay. Many of them knew that my commute literally took me underneath the Pentagon and I was sure there might be concern for my

safety. By the time I started to try to make phone calls, the phone lines were already tied up. It took about 20 attempts to just get 3 phone calls out to my mom, dad, and grandparents. It was much worse trying to use a cell phone. I hadn't talked to Cheryl since her initial phone call and because she was starting a new job, the only number I had was her cellular. Since her commute didn't take her anywhere near the Pentagon, I was fairly sure she was okay, but it would've been nice to get confirmation before she got home much later that day. Nonetheless, whenever someone she knew called I said that despite not hearing from her all day, I knew she was safe and sound.

I passed the day watching television coverage, unable to tear myself away. Understandably, most of the coverage centered on New York. After all, the tragedy up there was much greater than what we were facing here in Washington. However, even if the coverage never mentioned events in DC, it would have been impossible to escape the knowledge of what had happened here. The constant sounds of low-flying military jets and helicopters often came through my windows, their sound amplified by the lack of commercial air traffic that normally passes over my apartment on the way to Reagan National.

Cheryl finally did get home sometime around 6:30 P.M. Almost immediately after falling into my arms, the first thing she started to do was cry. She had to work all day, and it was the first chance she had to release everything that she had to bottle inside. Something about seeing her in tears finally overtook that childhood alpha-male training. I finally let myself cry too. After just holding each other for a few minutes, we finally started talking about the day and what had happened. Like nearly everyone else in the country, we eventually settled into the couch and watched the continuing coverage on television before going to bed.

Because federal offices were open the next day, I had to return to work. The Metro was operating again, undamaged by the attack. Except for the lighter traffic and the smaller number of people on the trains, September 12 started just like any other day for me. There was, however, one ominous detail that was horribly out of place. As part of my commute, I have to switch trains. That morning when I got out of the first train to make my transfer, the smell of smoke from the Pentagon, about two miles from where I transfer trains, was still hanging in the air.

That may be what I'll remember most clearly about the attack. ▲

Christine Quiñones

My office was in Two World Trade Center. I was late to work. This was no special divine intervention; I'm almost always late to work.

I remember being annoyed at my mother for wanting to take a shower before me, because I was trying to get there on time for once. I remember complaining to Ma about the dry cleaners starching the shirt I put on. And thinking that it was one year, to the day, since I started working for the company. I'm the accounting manager of Sinochem USA, an American subsidiary of the China National Chemical Import and Export Corporation.

The first I heard that something was wrong was in the N train in the tunnel between Brooklyn and Manhattan. The conductor came on the P. A. to announce that there were delays in the line because of "a smoke condition at Cortlandt Street," my stop, which runs alongside the eastern boundary of the WTC. Now, a few months ago, there was a fire in one of the escalator banks at the Cortlandt Street station, and they were still being repaired or more likely replaced, so I figured that the problem was something along those lines. Then at Whitehall Street, the first stop in Manhattan, they announced that the train was bypassing Cortlandt, and if you normally got out there you should get out at Rector Street instead, the next stop and the one before Cortlandt. It's only a short walk from there to the WTC, so I got out at Rector and walked the two or three short blocks uptown.

There was paper in the air; I saw some insurance company documents on the

pavement. At Liberty Street and Trinity Place, catty-corner across the street from the southeast corner of the WTC, I could see the smoke and flames emanating from One World Trade Center, the north tower that got hit first. My vantage point was the opposite side from where the plane hit, so I had no real idea what was happening. I thought that a really bad fire had broken out in one of the upper floors; that's what it looked like. I figured the south tower, Two World Trade Center, where my office was, would be accessible in a couple of hours after the firemen controlled the fire in 1, so I looked for a pay phone to call the office and thought about going to the deli in the basement shopping concourse to get my usual bagel for breakfast.

At that point I saw 2 begin to explode. Being opposite from the plane's impact, I could only conclude that the heat from the fire in 1 had ignited something in 2 somehow. The fireball I only saw later on TV. At the time, as soon as the boom sounded everyone in the vicinity ran like hell. I ran to Broadway till I got winded, having a hard time catching my breath from the shock and disbelief of it all. I only knew I wouldn't be working that day.

I kept going east, in a daze, trying to figure out how I could get home from there. Home, by the way, is in downtown Brooklyn, with the onramp to the Brooklyn Bridge passing in front of my apartment building. I was by a church that was doing land-office business from the neighborhood when I heard a subway's rumbling from the ventilation grates in the pavement. I was by

the Wall Street 2 and 3 station, which is only one stop from home. I went in, and a Brooklyn-bound train pulled into the station, so I got on it.

Walking home from the subway, I learned about the planes from some construction workers at the site of the courthouse going up across the street from my house. I took a leaflet from a mayoral campaign worker for the primaries that were going on that day, even though I don't have a party registration and so can't vote in primaries. I looked at the leaflet, and said to the girl I got it from, "Boy, this seems kind of pointless now, doesn't it?" She could only agree. The primaries were later cancelled on order of the governor.

I knew my mother wasn't home. She had a doctor's appointment on the other side of Brooklyn, and had left home before I did. The first phone call I made when I got home was to the doctor's office to leave a message for Ma when she got there that I was OK. This was a good thing; Ma heard the news on the bus shortly before she arrived at the doctor's, and she arrived at the office somewhat hysterical until the receptionist could pass my message on to her.

She had me kind of worried herself. She didn't get home till about 2 P.M., from a 9:45 A.M. appointment. It ordinarily takes 90 minutes on the bus to get home, but the buses back weren't allowed to get to our neighborhood. Her bus terminated at Empire Boulevard and Flatbush Avenue, which is at the southern edge of Prospect Park. She walked home, to the Brooklyn Bridge, from the

south end of Prospect Park, on an empty stomach no less. It took her two hours. Ma is 74 years old, and was a freshman in high school when Pearl Harbor was attacked.

After calling the doctor's office, I called Avram, who told me about the Pentagon. Then some other friends, and my brother's house, and one of my sisters. Then the circuits overloaded, so I decided to go to the corner diner to get breakfast. In the diner, I heard on the radio about Two World Trade Center collapsing. Half an hour later, I heard from outside and saw on TV 1 World Trade Center collapsing. Not in my wildest surmise would I have guessed those towers would fall.

As the day wore on, I contacted my other sister, and I fielded calls from my aunts, Avram's mother Ellen, my friend Manny in Chicago, my friend Moshe in Flushing, and others. When Ma got home, I made my first effort to get to the local blood center to give blood, but they were overloaded; I haven't made it there yet.

Wednesday, I called my doctor and my psychiatrist to let them know I was alive (and that I might need them later), and then waited 3 1/2 hours at the blood center without getting admitted. Upon my return, Ma told me that Ellen had called and said that a cousin of hers was missing. Avram has two cousins who I knew worked at the WTC; one worked the floor up from me, and I'd run into him in the elevator every so often. The other, who's the sister of the former, I think worked in 1, and I don't know which floor. Thinking she was missing, I called Ellen immediately, but fortunately she and her brother were fine; one of her in-laws, whom I don't know, was the

missing cousin. I hope they've found her by now. I spent the late afternoon and evening with Avram.

Thursday, I called information and got the home phone number of my company's CFO. She informed me that my workmates were all safe. I never really doubted this, as we had our offices on only the 22nd floor of Two World Trade Center (the second to get hit, remember), so I was confident that everyone had time to get out, but it was good to get hard information. And no one had my home phone number, so I was able to confirm my safe escape. At this point, of course, I have no idea when I'll be working again. The president of the company will return to China as soon as he can to see what our parent company wants to do from here. As the company's other American offices are all in Florida, it is possible that they'll decide to relocate my office there too, in which case I'll be out of work in this economy, just like that. And I knew I was lucky to have a good-paying full-time job, things being what they are. At least I'll have no problem with any unemployment claims. (9/29: I am at work again as of the 18th. We've temporarily relocated to Leonia, NJ, about 20 minutes from the George Washington Bridge. My commute is now 1 1/2 hours long. No one knows where the permanent relocation will be, so I may still lose my job eventually.)

I went into Manhattan in the late afternoon to visit my friends in Avram's office. The subway I took in made all stops, to my surprise. When Avram and I left the office we went to Union Square, where an impromptu memorial has been building itself up. A candle-shaped sculpture apparently built

from a piece of pillar from one of the fallen towers is the focal point, and writings in at least seven languages express sorrow and love for the missing and lost. A copy of this memoir will end up there too.

I'm aware how lucky I am to be alive, and that no one I know has yet gone unfound. (I temped for 16 months at the New York Board of Trade at 4 World Trade Center, and haven't checked the status of my friends there yet, but I'm sure they evacuated successfully.) Too many brave and good people aren't so lucky, and they have my deepest condolences. (9/29: My mother has a close friend whose son worked on the 96th floor of 1 WTC, and who is missing. I knew him only slightly, but his family are lovely people, whose church I've visited several times. I will be at the memorial service when it's scheduled.)

It is beyond all fathoming that my workspace, my office building, the entire neighborhood, is just gone. We could see the towers from our living room window, and now there's much more sky than there was at the beginning of the week. My WTC ID card is a collector's item, or a family heirloom.

I love this city to the depth of my soul. I possess more conventional patriotic sentiments than many of my friends and acquaintances; I like singing "The Star-Spangled Banner" (of course, I *can* sing it), and attending the Millennium Philcon two weeks ago confirmed to me that this country is a wonderful place. I like this planet, and I like living on it. I only hope that it's in the civilized world's power to keep our species going.

Hang in there. ▲

Teresa Nielsen Hayden

(Continued from page 1)

Hold on Tight. Don't Let Go.

Wednesday, September 12th, 2001

I'd have kept describing yesterday, but my connectivity was too wonky. I lost my e-mail around 10:30.

During the hour I still had it, I got a letter from Bill Shunn, sent to a long list of people, saying that he and Laura Chavoen were okay. Great relief! I sent Bill a list of our friends whom I knew to be okay—Patrick, Claire Eddy, Ellie Lang, Soren DeSelby, Velma Bowen—and said "Tabulate lists of names of people heard from and circulate them." That was something I'd learned during the Loma Prieta earthquake, when we'd kept and circulated lists of our friends who'd reported in from the Bay Area.

Bill did more than that. He put up a web page where people could check in, add a short message, and see who else had checked in. I didn't find out about it until mid-afternoon, when my connectivity came limping home; but when I did, reading that list was pure heart's ease, the thing I needed most. I told other friends about it, and a couple of mailing lists that have lots of local members. Everyone agreed that Bill Shunn is a good, kind, smart,

helpful guy. Which he is. It's just that yesterday it was made very visible.

Around 4:30 I dropped him a note saying "You have no idea how much relief and reassurance you spread today." He replied, "Glad it did something good. Right now I'm trying to cleanse it of a lot of ugly filth people are posting."

That was startling. I went and looked. Sure enough, there were some nasty gloating messages, mostly in Portuguese, scattered amongst the check-ins. There wasn't much to them, really; just the textual equivalent of junior-high-school graffiti, all caps with lots of exclamation points.

What was striking was what was in between them: name after name after name. Some I knew. Many I didn't. People were leaving word there for their relatives all over the country, all over the world. It's an eloquent document. Bill had to take the check-in page down—way too many hits—but you can still see the list at <www.shunn.net/okay/list.html>.

Whole families were reporting in. Whole schools: "All kids got out of Stuyvesant." Whole companies: "We're okay here at Vindigo. We've accounted for just about everybody." "Thor Technologies—all

accounted for except Alex Yevseyevich." "The Flatiron Building was evacuated a bit after 10 AM. Tor people are OK at last report." "Everyone at DAW Books is okay."

People were leaving contact info: Baseline employees, please send e-mail to the following address. Empire Blue Cross employees, please phone this number. Alberto Magana Sanchez (NYC): *si se encuentra ab este noombre favor de comunicarnos al 36 15 15 52 ex 01 Tnks*. Please let your cousin Myna Mukherjee know if you are OK. *brad call home or your cousin*.

Others pleaded for information: Please phone. Please call. Is she alive she is my 18 yr. old daughter. Mande noticias. Has anyone heard from. Does anyone know. Worked on 100th floor West Building. Waiting for word. Does anyone know anything.

The people checking in were stories told in short: *alive and ok. got out of building in time. honey its micky i'm trying to get home. get the wine ready. physically i'm ok, mentally i'm not and never will be*. Thank god for missing the train. *Cuts, scrapes, broken arm*. Was in the first floor mall of the WTC. Now safely in Staten Island. *Estava próximo ao local do acidente, mas estou salvo*. I hope who ever

put me through this is caught. *Late for work today and missed it by minutes.* MY ENGLISH BAD. I OK. *minor wounds, will be staying in the city with a severely wounded friend.* I'm safe. dazed. . . . and angry, but safe. *baby, I love you, I am okay.*

Fragility

Wednesday, September 19th, 2001

There's so much to grieve for that your heart doesn't know where to start. All over the city you see flyers put up by the friends and relatives of the missing, with snapshots and descriptions and a number to call if you have any information. Poor souls. If they're still hoping, it's only because they can't bear to stop. Nobody's come alive out of the rubble since Wednesday last. Yesterday the hospitals announced that all the patients in their care have been identified and accounted for. The people who haven't come home yet aren't coming home ever, and there are five or six thousand of them.

Where the flyers are especially thick, at places like Bellevue Hospital and Union Square, people have been leaving votive candles burning, acknowledging that the flyers have become memorials. The faces of the dead are everywhere you look.

If you can stand to look at it, there's an amazingly detailed image of the bottom end of Manhattan Island as seen from space at www.spaceimaging.com/ikonos/wtc0915_1280.jpg.

I keep having these moments of grief for the little things. A week ago the gardens of Battery Park City were green and elegant, spilling over with late flowers and foliage plants. All that will be gone now—buried under rubble or a dense mulch of paper and pulverized concrete, or trodden into bare ground again by the rescue workers and their machinery. It's such a little thing, only plants after all; but they were beautiful. I also wonder about all the public art along the BPC esplanade—charming, witty stuff, a happy addition to the city. Nobody's reporting on its condition—and why should they, with so many other important stories to report?—but I hate to think of it being lost.

The World Trade Center was not especially lovable on a day-to-day basis. It was grand, no denying that; but so abstract. I was always much fonder of the World Financial Center and Battery Park City. I have yet to find a picture of my favorite view of Ground Zero Before, looking south as you drove down the West Side Highway late in the day. The massed WTC/WFC/BPC buildings were a complex shimmering mass, looking for all the world like an updated Frank R. Paul illustration of The City of the Future.

Another thing I can't find a picture of is the WFC's indoor signage. Some of it will still be there in the buildings that are still standing, but many pieces will have been lost when the gerbil tubes collapsed. These were the identification signs for the different parts of the complex, and they weren't small. They were made of multicolored true enamel on

brushed brass. The enamelling consisted of elaborate abstract square designs like quilt blocks on acid. I think there was a different design for every building in the complex. The signs were like big hunks of jewelry, and I coveted them.

You may already have seen pictures of the wreckage of the Winter Garden, but if you don't know what it was, you don't know what was lost.

The Winter Garden was one of my favorite, favorite places. It was a marvelous piece of public space, a rounded glassed-in atrium with the best set of stairs in the New World. They were made out of some kind of highly polished red stone, and curved in a half-circle to match the curved front and back of the building. They made a long shallow descent to a circular polished stone area, as though they were the seats in an amphitheater. The rest of the Winter Garden was a high-ceilinged atrium, all paned glass like a fancy Victorian conservatory, and the west wall overlooking the Hudson was windows from top to bottom. In the central area were two rows of tall palm trees in square planters.

I'm not conveying what a pleasant, friendly space it was. I first wandered into it some years ago when we were giving an out-of-town friend a tour of the south end of the island. We hadn't really gotten a good look at Battery Park City (then only about half-built) and the new WFC, so the Winter Garden came as a complete surprise: quiet, pleasant, with places to sit down, and decent public restrooms. There was a Brian Eno sound installation running, and a free concert that night.

That's one of the things about New York City. Sometimes it's impossible, intractable, insanelly frustrating, running counter to the grain of anything you try to do. Other times it's full of light and grace, magical coincidences happen, and marvels pop up unexpectedly all over the place. The Winter Garden was the city wearing one of its happiest faces.

From the photos I've seen, it looks like the east end of it was smashed by falling debris. I saw once and couldn't find again a photo of firemen bringing water up from the river in hoses that ran between the palm trees. I can't tell from the satellite photo what's happened to the rest of it. For a while I thought it had been bulldozed. I don't know.

It hurts to look at pictures of rubble and remember coming into it from the gerbil tube around sunset, with the light coming through the glass-paned wall along the river and the sky visible through the arched glass ceiling. For a long time they had an elaborate full-size model of da Vinci's flying machine hanging where it was a bit above eye level as you came in, and rose higher and higher above you as you passed under it on your way down the stairs. It was beautiful. It was why we have civilization.

Park Slope on the Day. And an Artifact.

As the crow flies, we're not terribly far from lower Manhattan. All that long Tuesday, people were standing out on the sidewalks, talking to each other and staring at the plume

of smoke. Nobody wanted to be alone. I asked some of the geezers on our block if this was what it was like when Pearl Harbor got bombed. They said no, this was worse.

The light was flat and strange, filtered through the plume of smoke. All day you could hear emergency vehicles coming and going in all directions, and overhead the swooshing of fighter jets on patrol. Other than that it was oddly quiet.

The first fighter jet I saw terrified me. When I saw it make a tight turn and circle round toward the south end of Manhattan I was sure it was another kamikaze, and my knees buckled. Then it came circling back out of the smoke plume with a tremendous whoosh and I knew it was one of ours. A little while later I realized I was listening to them for reassurance: guardian angels. At night they're lit up like Christmas trees: Hi! Nothing stealthy about us!

As the day ran down people started turning up at my apartment, so around sunset I went out to pick up refreshments. Overhead the smoke plume was turning pinkish-gold. You could see papers fluttering down through it as they rained out of the cooling smoke. All those collapsed buildings were full of office files. The disaster area is covered with a thick slush of documents. (I note in passing the loss of those files. Huge amounts of information lost.)

When I reached the corner of my block I looked down. Lying on the sidewalk was a single page from a paperback book, burned black around its edges. I picked it up. The running head said *A Season in Hell*.

(I am bemused to discover that the story of my finding the book page, which Patrick posted to rec.arts.sf.fandom, has been picked up and published in translation in *Il Corriere della Fantascienza*, along with posts by Vicki Rosenzweig and Michael Weholt.)

Grieving All Over

Thursday, September 20th, 2001

Everyone's hurting. It's not just us. I hear it in their voices when I read the messages coming in from around the world. It's visible in all those photos of people leaving flowers and candles and messages. They're not just being nice. It hit them too, and they're hurting.

That emotional connection can't just be a matter of familiarity, or of having something personal at stake. The WTC always got a lot of visitors, and the London *Times* pegs the number of native countries of the dead or missing at forty-two, but even those substantial numbers don't account for the size of the reaction.

I think it meant something more to us. There was a certain kind of hope and striving embodied in those oversized towers. They were meant to be part of the world's future. All of us threw our hearts up into the air alongside them like we did with the space program's rocket launches, and felt it as a personal loss when they came tumbling down.

I think that what also touched everyone was the strangely simple, compact, well-

documented horror of over five thousand people dying together so quickly, in such a little space, in circumstances of such unimaginable violence.

City life is an intensely cooperative activity. So is our world-civilization's joint project of building a better future: one that's more just, equitable, diverse, convenient, mobile, communicative, healthy, knowledgeable, creative, and altogether richer and more interesting. It's a good dream, and not just for an elite. It's also something we can only do together.

The horror of barbarism is *Give me what I want or I'll wreck what you have*. Or maybe *I'll wreck what you have because I don't yet have it, or because I don't want it*. It doesn't value cooperation for its own sake. Barbarism has no objection to the primordial calculation of individual power without commensurate responsibility, which is that it is more amusing to be a very rich man in a poorer country than a moderately wealthy man in a richer one.

We don't have a share in barbarism. We have a share in the things that make cities and futures. That's why the sight of the towers collapsing a week and two days ago struck us all to the heart. All of us: not just New Yorkers, not just Americans, but everyone in the world who looked at the unimaginable horror unfolding on their TV screen and said "Ich bin ein New Yorker."

Well, and so they are. I don't got a problem with that.

(Naturally, our gormless national news media have once again missed the real story, and are playing the aftermath of the disaster in terms like "America Rising." Idiots! . . . Film at eleven.)

Pastry

There's a recurrent story—maybe true, maybe an urban legend—that "Ich bin ein Berliner" actually translates as "I am a jelly doughnut." Shortly after I first heard someone on the news say "Ich bin ein New Yorker," the story went round that that phrase actually translates as "I am a thin-crust pizza."

Remiss

Monday, September 24th, 2001

Dubya and the national media have continued to harp on their latest song: America, America, America! I dearly love my country—I had an American flag hanging in my front window long before the Big Awful came down on the 11th—but this is getting embarrassing. Have they not noticed how many of the missing (go ahead and say it: the dead) are from other countries?

We started receiving messages of support and consolation and sympathy from all points of the globe the minute the news went out. They've kept coming in, and we're truly grateful for them. But there's something we owe the world. I've been waiting for Mr. Bush or Mayor Giuliani to say it, but since they still haven't done so:

On behalf of the people of the United States, and especially the City of New York, we wish to convey our deepest sympathy to all those in other countries whose friends and family members died here in the terrible disaster at the World Trade Center. We mourn with you. Their deaths were a loss to us all.

Many of us know the pain of waiting to hear from loved ones who never came home on that terrible day, and whom we now must reluctantly admit will never be coming home again. We know that you, like us, have waited in hope and in dread. You've seen the terrifying news of the general catastrophe replayed over and over again, and listened for the one piece of personal news you've most wanted to hear.

We are a nation of immigrants, and a city of immigrants. People come here hazzarding the hope that this is a place where new things happen; where anything might happen. We have liked to believe that it is a place where good things happen. But your friends and family who came here were killed in a swift and terrible disaster. That disaster was not our doing but it happened in our city, and we are more sorry than we can say. We promise you, your dead are not forgotten, nor ever shall be. We are all bereaved together.

We pray for justice, and for mercy. May God comfort all our losses.

Good Mental Hygiene

The Snopes.com Rumors of War website <www.snopes2.com/rumors/rumors.htm> has been collecting, investigating, and sometimes debunking wild stories that have sprung up in the wake of the Big Awful. No, Nostradamus didn't predict it. Yes, Jews died in the attacks just like everyone else. No, CNN didn't fake their footage of rejoicing Palestinians. Yes, Falwell and Robertson really did say that—and have been trying to weasel out of it ever since. A truly useful website.

City Notes

Thursday, September 27th, 2001

According to *Newsday*, some New Yorkers are seeing the ghosts of the Twin Towers. Nobody's spooked; they're just glad to see them.

When I heard the towers had collapsed, one of the things I found myself thinking was how reassuring it had been to see the lights come back on in them after the 1993 bombing. It was nice, then, when I was bicycling home over the Manhattan bridge evening before last, to look back and see that the lights were on again in the World Financial Center.

More happy news: The photograph on the contents page of this week's Sunday supplement of the *New York Times* shows the interior of the damaged but surviving Winter Garden, palm trees and all. It isn't gone! What had looked like a blank bulldozed space in the satellite photo must have been its roof covered with a camouflaging layer of ashes, dust, and paper.

Distance

Monday, October 1st, 2001

Within the last few days I've finally started to believe it. We dodged the bullet. No one whom we know personally was killed in the WTC disaster, though we've had some close calls. And only now, as that fact sinks in, have I realized that ever since the towers went down I've been in a state of 24-hour-a-day, seven-days-a-week continuous flinch, expecting at any moment to hear the bad news I took to be inevitable.

This does not diminish the deaths of six or seven thousand people I don't know. It's just a matter of my own coming to terms with it. All those deaths are still there, starting at the edge of my social circle. One friend knew, through completely unrelated contexts, two different people on two different hijacked planes. Another friend—late to work, and so not at his desk on the 96th floor when the plane plowed into that part of the tower—lost fourteen co-workers. One of the regulars at Patrick's gigs who worked very near the WTC ran one way when things came down, and hasn't heard since then from a co-worker who ran the other way. Another regular used to work in financial services; and as Adam Gopnik said in the 24 September *New Yorker*, "For the financial community, this was the Somme."

It's like standing on the sidewalk and hearing, just around the corner in an alley, the sound of someone being murdered. You're all right; which is to say, you're not being murdered. And at the same time, you're a universe away from all right. ▲

From "Making Light," <www.panix.com/~pnh/makinglight.html>.

Steve Saffel

Saturday, September 15th, 2001

On the 11th, I was in the air on my way to Los Angeles; we were diverted to Kansas City. Then I spent a night in a hotel, and 36 hours on a bus. I'm in LA, and will try to get something done out of our West Coast office. Dazed, but OK.

Thursday, October 15th, 2001

There's a bit of a sequel to this note: I was in Great Britain with my wife (Dana Hayward of HarperCollins Children's Books) the weekend of October 4-9; on Sunday night we walked into a London pub near King's Cross Station, only to see President Bush, live from the United States, announcing the beginning of the bombing in Afganistan. The next night, from Trafalgar Square, we saw the light that indicates that Parliament is in session, as the Prime Minster filled them in during a special session. ▲

Patrick Nielsen Hayden

Tuesday, September 11th, 2001, 9:57 A.M.

Teresa and I are all right. I'm at work uptown in the Flatiron Building at 5th and 23rd. Teresa is at home in Brooklyn.

I am relieved to report that Ellie Lang, who lives right across West Street from the WTC in Battery Park City, is all right as well, although reportedly terrified; the explosion woke her up.

As to exactly what's going on—we don't know. But I can see the burning WTC towers very clearly, and it is one of the worst things I have ever seen.

Manhattan is locked down; you can't get on or off the island. I don't know when I'll get home!

7:01 P.M.

I don't have any moments of fortitude or special strength or insight to report. I'll report in more detail later, but what I want to observe is that mostly I spent the whole day being really, really scared, and trying to hook up with the people I love. And worrying about my friends who live within a few blocks of the WTC.

I'm home now, with Teresa and Scraps

and Velma. Indeed terrorism works. I'm terrified.

We'll pull together, but the first step is admitting that we've been very scared indeed.

7:04 P.M.

It was so strange to walk down tree-lined streets on the Upper West Side and be overflowed by screaming fighter jets.

And believe you me, at that moment I felt nothing but warm thoughts toward the men and women of the United States Air Force.

7:24 P.M.

It is certainly the worst thing I have ever seen.

Velma and I managed to make our way across the East River, not to Brooklyn but to Queens, and we walked from a 7 station to a G station. (Why are they not connected? Insert long Moshe Federene explanation of esoteric NYC subway history here.) On the G platform we fell into conversation with a tired-looking but friendly young black man in his stocking feet, carrying his dress loafers. He had walked all the way there from the WTC,

even walking across the 59th Street bridge. He said "I haven't seen it yet on TV, but I just know they won't show what I saw. People jumping. People clutching each other and jumping." Things like that could make you want to take your eyes out with a spoon.

7:35 P.M.

And by the way. The unearthly plume of dust and debris from the epicenter keeps blowing over the part of Brooklyn we live in. It has been refreshed by the subsequent collapse of 7 World Trade Center; it appears a couple of other buildings in the immediate vicinity, including the Marriott, will shortly go as well.

The plume is full of pieces of paper.

Teresa just went up the street to get beer and soda. (Right now our house contains us, Velma, Scraps, and Avram Grumer.) She returned with a page from a mass-market paperback book, charred on all sides, which floated down from the sky.

It's from a novel by Jack Higgins. The title is *A Season in Hell*. ▲

From rec.arts.sf.fandom.

Avram Grumer Pillar of Fire, Pillar of Smoke

Wednesday, September 12th, 2001

I live on Programmer Standard Time, so I woke up yesterday around 9:45 A.M. I was in the bathroom, still half-asleep, with WNYC FM on in the next room, hearing the talk-show host and callers talking about the World Trade Center and terrorism. The host said something about the WTC bombing that made it sound as if that wasn't the matter under discussion, and I started to think that this might be something more than just a historical retrospective. I turned on CNN, and saw the towers in flames; an absurd image, something out of a Hollywood action blockbuster. The phone rang; it was my mother. I reassured her, and then called Chris Quiñones, who was home.

Immediately I logged onto the Net. I launched my newsreader, pulled up rec.arts.sf.fandom, and saw thread titles about the disaster. I saw a reference to Bill Shunn's check-in web page, and added my own name and Chris's to it, then started composing a post to tell people that I was safe until I was distracted by the CNN commentator saying that one of the towers had collapsed. The thick column of smoke made it hard to tell if that's actually what had happened (the Hollywood blockbuster would have made sure it was clear), but it wasn't too much later before I could see the top of the north tower disintegrate and sink, taking the rest down with it. That's the image that sticks with me—the landscape of New York, changed irrevocably in an instant.

The fall of the towers took most of Panix's dialup connectivity with it, before I got to finish

my post. Kevin reassured my fellow raseffarians that it was unimaginable that I'd wake up early enough to be in the WTC area by 9 A.M. Chris, making her way towards Sino-Chem in the south tower, lived through far more interesting times. My cousin, who worked above her in the same tower, was successfully evacuated.

After it became apparent that the newscasters had run out of new information and were falling into repeat mode, I showered, got dressed, shaved (fearing it might be a bad day to look stubbly—the popular image of terrorists involves stubble), packed up my new TiBook (with AirPort wireless Ethernet card), and headed off towards the 7th Avenue Starbucks, which offers a wireless Ethernet connection. I could smell ashes in the air, and as I approached the corner and got a clearer view of the horizon, I saw that the broad streak of white cloud across the sky tapered and darkened towards Manhattan. Looking northwest from Grand Army Plaza, the immense plume of sooty smoke dominated the skyline.

Starbucks was closed, and the Net Cafe a block south of it didn't offer a machine with an SSH client. I paid \$3 for fifteen minutes of web-browsing, with the TV adding new details off in the corner. I wandered about a bit more, then headed back home; it was around 2 P.M. at this point. A piece of burnt paper fluttered to the ground not far from me; someone else got to it first. It looked like the frontispiece to some legal text, with simple line art of a key and typesetting decades out of fashion. Back home, Panix was back up (for a while). I logged on, posted, sent

out e-mail to some west-coast friends.

The rest of the day I spent at the nearby home of Patrick and Teresa Nielsen Hayden, along with Vijay Bowen and Soren deSelby, and (later) Greg Costikyan and Ellie Lang. Teresa and I headed out for snacks and drinks at one point; the local liquor store's shelves were picked over pretty well. We could see papers tumbling through the sky. At our feet lay a burnt-edged page from a book called *A Season in Hell*; Tor Books (where Teresa and Patrick work) had published that book [10/25:actually Pocket Books]. "They killed one of our readers!" Teresa wailed.

It was past midnight when I walked home. I could dimly see the smoke plume against the night sky, further south than before.

I spent today with Chris. We went up to the roof of her building and saw the column of smoke, and dimly through it the World Financial Building, which would have been invisible two days ago. I'll go in to work tomorrow, and my trip on the Q train will be a little bit shorter for skipping the Canal Street station. Going over the Manhattan Bridge, I'll see the plume where the towers used to be. Getting out at Union Square, I'll look south and see a police cordon cutting the city off below 14th Street. Looking south from Fifth Avenue there'll be a gap where there used to be a landmark.

Oh, one last thing. Chris told me that late last night someone went down to the destruction zone and tried to steal one of the heavy equipment vehicles. No matter what happens, New York is New York. I love this town. ▲

Marleen Barr

I left the apartment on Tuesday morning at 8:45 to embark upon my usual walk across Manhattan from Third Avenue in the upper twenties to the Port Authority Bus Terminal at 42nd St. and Eighth Ave. in order to catch the bus that would take me to the suburban New Jersey college where I teach. Although the attack started while I was in the elevator, street life was perfectly normal. About ten minutes into my walk I heard someone say “Smoke is coming from the top of the building and you can see it.” I turned and looked up at the buildings directly behind me. I saw no smoke. Since the sight of smoke emanating from a building would not deter a New Yorker trying to catch a specific bus to go to work, I continued on. When I was directly across the street from Madison Square Garden and Penn Station I heard a solicitor for funds for the homeless who had a bullhorn use the horn to say “The World Trade Center has been hit by a plane. We are all praying.” I immediately thought that terrorists were responsible for this hit. Shocked, but unable to imagine that this situation could impact upon my bus, I reacted by trying to reach the bus terminal. I thought that I should fulfill my teaching responsibility. Once inside I witnessed people’s nervous reactions and thought better of entering the Lincoln Tunnel. I became scared and waited on a phone line to call my husband. I saw a fellow teacher from my college who always takes my bus. Although I have never before spoken to her, I threw myself into her arms and told her exactly how scared I was. She told me that the tunnel was closed and that we should just go home.

I thanked her, walked out of the terminal, and found myself alone on streets filled with stunned and panicking people. This was calm panic; no one was crying or screaming. Everyone resembled dazed automatons. I was petrified. I thought more planes were coming to attack more buildings. I thought that planes carrying nuclear weapons were coming. I walked to 34th St. and saw the Empire State Building. I told myself that I could not be there; I could not be in front of the Empire State Building when planes were coming to attack this prime target. I turned to change my direction and passed a building with its occupants standing in front of it. “Why are you standing out here?” I asked one of the people. His answer: “This is a tall building, and we have been evacuated.” Not understanding how standing in front of a building that might be attacked at any second could seem safe, I walked on and returned to Madison Square Garden and Penn Station, another possible target. At that point I realized that it was absolutely impossible to find safety anywhere. People who ran from ground zero said that they became the war refugees they had seen in pictures.

I walked and talked to myself. I really articulated these words: “I can’t believe it. I can’t believe it. This is a science fiction novel.

I am in a science fiction novel.” Because I knew that there was no such thing as finding a safe place, looking as stunned as everyone around me, I began to walk home no longer trying to find safety.

Then, from somewhere near what must have been Seventh Ave., I looked south. I saw black smoke billowing from the top of a tower. I say “a tower” because I saw only one tower. It was ten o’clock. One tower had just fallen before my gaze lighted upon the sole smoking tower. But my mind did not register that it was abnormal to see only one tower. My mind could not register that it was at all possible that only one tower could exist. And this occurred even though I *always* saw two towers. I imposed normalcy by reasoning that one tower was somehow not visible from this particular angle. I *really* and calmly believed this to be the case even though it had *never* been the case before. The burning tower struck me as just a more significant, horrible, and scary version of a normal building fire—i. e., the typical fire that did not deserve my attention at the start of my walk. Since the smoke was coming from a limited area at the top of the building, I thought that it would be contained and that the people inside would calmly leave via elevators. Death did not enter my mind. Even though groups of people were lined along the avenue staring transfixed at the tower, I reasoned that I had already seen the smoke and the burning tower and nothing would be gained by standing in the street and continuing to look at it. Again, knowing that safety was impossible to find, I resumed my demeanor of simultaneous trauma and calm.

I have been married, for the first time, for a total of less than three months. Although having a husband is a very alien conception to me, it stood to reason that if one does have a husband than one should call him when flames are emanating from the top of a World Trade Center tower. I went to a phone booth and dialed.

“Do you know what happened?”

“Yes.”

“I’m coming home.”

“Okay. Good. Come home.”

I am a New York Jew; he is a French Canadian. Soon after my marriage I imagined placing a headline on the cover of the Science Fiction Research Association Newsletter: “Marleen S. Barr Marries Alien.”

In retrospect, I see that his restrained reaction makes this imagined headline even more true. He spoke calmly and succinctly even though he saw the burning towers directly from our apartment’s window and he knew the magnitude of the explosions. Soon after we hung up, he had a direct view of the crumbling towers. In retrospect, I am glad that I did not see the towers fall. Since New York Jews resort to humor when they are upset, let me tell you the difference between his subsequent telephone renditions of the event and my own.

When his numerous sisters called from

Montreal what he had to say was always the same: “Bonjour. Oui. Oui. Non. Je suis bon. Au revoir.” And that was it. When people phoned me I spent no less than an hour per call articulating various versions of the following: “Aaaaaaaargh!!! Oy!!! And the sirens and the smell coming into the apartment and what will happen next and all those poor, poor people,” etc., etc.

When I arrived home my husband and I watched television. I could not decide between watching the screen and the framed space of my windows to discern what was happening. I alternated between both views. I can’t articulate how it felt to have the scene on television enacted outside of my window. Smell attached to a television screen is still science fiction; I smelled the smoke the television reporters were describing. At 5:20 the reporters said that another building had collapsed. I looked out of the window and corroborated the report in that I saw more smoke.

And then it was the day after. It was a day of more television. On Wednesday night the smoke smell in the apartment became intense to the extreme that I was coughing and my eyes were tearing. I closed the windows and got back into bed to watch more television. The reporter said that there was a bomb scare in the Empire State Building and it was being evacuated. Since I never had a chance to say good-bye to the Trade Center view from my window that I loved so much, I got out of bed and went to the bathroom window to look at the Empire State Building and say good-bye to it. (It is seven blocks away.) I never bothered to awaken my husband; if the Empire State Building fell in ruins there would be nothing that he could do. If the bombed building threatened our lives, he might as well sleep through the trauma.

Another day after. I spent it at the Bellevue Hospital missing person center trying to help a friend locate her missing cousin. The task was hopeless. He was not on any of the lists of the missing. Because of the amount of people, I could not hope to get in to file a missing person report. It is strange to stand on line with grieving people when you are not directly grieving. A chaplain asked me if I needed help. I said no and directed her toward a person who looked especially bereft. I returned home and watched more television.

Another day after. Traumatized to the point that I could not function normally or work, I resolved to try to have a normal day. I made an appointment to meet my lifelong friend for lunch. She works on Park Avenue in a large office building. On my way to my “usual sitting spot to wait to have lunch with Carol,” located across the street from the Waldorf, I forced myself to walk through Grand Central Station. I told two businessmen on the escalator behind me that it was an effort for me to walk into the building. They provided thumbs up encouragement. While I usually read while waiting for my friend in my

usual sitting spot, today I just wanted to “veg out” and stare into space at a normal urban landscape.

Suddenly I saw people running from the office building. The stunned faces appeared again. The traumatized cell phone conversations took place again. I walked up to a woman standing in front of me. “I am really afraid to ask this, but why are you all out here?”

“Bomb scare. The building has been evacuated.” I knew that the building could collapse at any moment. But I did not run. I stood on the street corner. I knew that Carol, the person whom I had known since the time she was born eleven months after my birthday, the person who had been in every grade with me from kindergarten to senior year of college, was prompt. Carol was due to meet me in four minutes. Carol would come. Even if the building crumbled, I had to wait for Carol. I saw her cross the street. She obviously did not know something was wrong. I grabbed her hand. “There is a bomb scare. We have to get out of here. We have to run. We can go to Central Park. In Central Park the buildings can’t fall on our heads.” Holding hands we proceeded to head north.

Then she stopped in her tracks. “Marleen, this is probably just a scare. I want to go back and ask the security guard the

reality of the situation. Let’s just go in the building and have lunch as usual in the cafeteria.”

“No. The authorities told the people in the Trade Center to remain where they were. I don’t care what the guards say. I am not going in that building.” We talked to the guards. We compromised. We had lunch in the deli on the street level of another building.

Another day after. I had to go back to New Jersey to meet my class. I was afraid that something new would happen and the tunnel would close and I would be stranded in New Jersey. Although I never intended to desert my students, I voiced my apprehension to my husband. He ordered me to go to school.

I stood in front of the students who looked at me nervously because they know I live in Manhattan. I told them what I had been through. I then described the events in terms of the subject of my class. It took me some time before I could ask the class something normal such as “Does anyone need a syllabus?” Looking at those young scared people and reaching out to them as a fellow scared human being rather than as a professor constituted the most amazing teaching experience of my career. I thanked my students for their help—and they thanked me.

I am now sitting in front of the computer

with my hands cold and damp, and some tears in my eyes. I am still scared. I do not really believe that things are back to normal. I still hear some sirens. If I look out of the window I will still see the smoke. I can turn off the television; I can’t turn off the window view. I am trying to tell myself that the worst is over, that New York City will not really be destroyed in short order. But the truth is that a plane can come out of the sky before I put a period to the next sentence.

I reach the end of another sentence and type the period and the plane did not come. I do not want to reread my narrative or to alter what I have said in any way. Again, I just want to be a science fiction critic who has communicated my experience with the science fiction community. No matter what happens, even if New York ceases to exist, my books will be there as long as human civilization exists. And someone will read this narrative. Is my sending of this message an act of science fiction? Well, without scrolling up and looking backward at what I have written, I know my next future action. I am going to write “Love, Marleen” and push the send button.

Love, Marleen.

And: Oy!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! ▲

Excerpted from Locus Online.

Karen Cramer Shea Reflections on September 11th

September 11th started as a normal day. My two-year-old daughter Selena and I were having our usual leisurely morning, sleeping until we were ready to get up then wandering downstairs for breakfast, probably followed by a trip outside to enjoy the beautiful late summer day in Washington D.C. I turned on the TV in the kitchen as I always do as I make breakfast. It was set on C-Span from the night before, and there was President Bush standing in front of a group of school children talking about hijacked commercial planes hitting the World Trade Center. As he left the stage, I switched to CNN feeling confused and alarmed. He didn’t just say that hijacked commercial planes hit the WTC, did he? CNN was showing the tape of the second plane hitting. The confusion quickly turned to shock and disbelief.

Selena was happily watching kids’ shows on WETA, the local public television station, the only channel that didn’t seem to have nonstop coverage of the events. I called my sister Kathryn who lives near New York City to make sure she knew what was going on. We watched TV and discussed the latest information in disbelief. Then we heard that a plane had hit the Pentagon. The disbelief turned to fear. Two planes seemed plausible for terrorists to hijack at one time, but if they got three, how many more did they have? What else were they planning? My sister and I quickly ended our conversation so I could make sure that my husband, who worked at

the White House, knew what had happened. He had already been evacuated and was walking the 3 miles home; traffic was at a standstill. On his way home he carefully avoided going near other popular targets like the IMF and the World Bank. During his trip, there was a false report of a car bomb going off near the State Department that heightened my anxiety. Over the following days I felt more scared as speculation grew that the real target of the plane that hit the Pentagon was the White House. We will probably never know what the intended target was, but it was terrifying to think I could have easily been one of those widows left behind.

What seemed like hours later I called my parents in Seattle to make them aware of the day’s events, as they don’t always pay much attention to current events. They had not heard anything until I called. The news of the tower collapses came while we were on the phone. I didn’t think it was that major an issue, except for the skyline of New York, since it had been so long since the planes struck; surely everyone must have gotten out of those buildings. In fact, it had been only about an hour since the events began. The planes had been turned into weapons against the towers, and the towers turned into a weapon against those inside. Now I look at the tape of the towers collapsing and remember Obi Wan Kenobi in *Star Wars* describing the disturbance in the Force caused by the destruction of Alderaan,

thousands of people crying out as their lives were extinguished.

After getting off the phone with my parents the question of what to do with Selena arose. She was oblivious to the events of the day even when she was watching them. It was strange going between her world and the outside world, where people were dying and running for their lives. In her world, playing “Ring around the Rosy” with mommy was important. It reminded me that there was more to life than the events of the day, and it kept me from getting too enmeshed. Selena thought this was a typical day and that it was time to go outside and play. I didn’t want to take her to her favorite park since that was on the other side of the fence from the Vice President’s residence. We ended up playing in our yard. It was unusually quiet, very little traffic either on foot or by car and no sound of children playing at the school or airplanes flying.

After Tom got home we went back inside, Selena watching more kids’ shows on WETA in the den, we watching CNN in the kitchen. It was a relief not to have to explain to a 2-year-old why she couldn’t watch her favorite shows. During the day for the entire week there was hardly any mention of anything unusual on WETA. Except for a minute of silence showing a picture of the Capitol with many flags flying at half staff which started with a page of white printing on a black screen referring to the tragedy, not a

word was spoken. Children too young to read or understand would see this as simply one of the pretty pictures they put on the screen to fill the gaps between shows. I was so grateful that WETA understood its role as a safe haven in the storm of horrible news. I suspected that they did alter their episode selection, since *Sesame Street* was dealing with the hurricane destroying Big Bird's nest and Mister Rogers was talking about coping strategies for preschoolers dealing with personal crisis; a

way of addressing the tragedy by giving small children tools.

The crisis touched everyone in different ways. There have been ripples of consequences popping up in my life, and I realize they probably will for the rest of my life. Acquaintances of friends killed. An acquaintance that was in one of the towers of the WTC at the time of the attack. A friend who, though not physically effected by the events, was so distraught and scared that she could

not sleep or eat for a week, and needed to be taken in for a good meal and a good night's sleep since she could not face going home to an empty apartment. There were also the increased security measures, the parking lot of my daughter's favorite park being closed, helicopters flying overhead. It took weeks before I could hear an airplane or helicopter and not tense up. ▲

Alice Turner Dispatches

Tuesday, September 11th, 2001

This is a note I copied out for the first wave of people sending anxious "are you okay?" e-mails.

Yes, I'm okay. Clumps of strangers congregate in the streets to watch the horrible clouds and talk—I go out every 20 minutes or so, then come back to watch TV. It is very disorienting. A friend and I have volunteered for hospital work tonight (they are overrun with volunteers now). They need blood, but every time I give blood I faint, so they will have to choose between that and my help.

Tuesday, September 11th, 2001 6:58 P.M.

Thanks again, all you who sent worried notes, and even you who didn't. It has been a very strange day. As I said earlier, the wind was steady and due east and I live about a mile north of the WTC so there was the curious spectacle, looking south along Sixth Avenue, of a holocaust while at the same time experiencing a glitteringly perfect, cloudless late summer day. I kept the TV on all day, as I think almost everyone here did, and about once an hour I went out into the street where at once I would become deeply involved in talk with strangers. We were all just shell-shocked, and because I live downtown I talked to several people who had actually seen the tail end of one of the planes at collision time and were walking north.

The strangest thing for me personally happened at the end of the day. My friend Ellen and I had agreed to go up to St. Vincent's Hospital on 12th St. to volunteer for the 8 P.M. shift and/or to give blood (I always faint when I give blood, so it really was an and/or for me). And then my friend Stephen, who lives down in the Wall St. area and had been evacuated called to say that although he was at our friend Vic's on 9th St. he wanted to come down to spend the night with me partly because Vic's cat was attacking his dog. I asked Ellen to walk down to me too, and I would make an early dinner for us all before we went to the hospital. An hour later Stephen called to say that he and Coco (the dog) had been turned away at Houston St. by the police—my area was cordoned off—and that he had gone back to Vic's. I was astonished by this, and went out to talk to the police. A policewoman confirmed that if I crossed the line at Houston I would not be able to come back, even with ID proving that

I lived in the area. Even if I went out to volunteer at a hospital? "Just following orders, lady." And we will be cordoned off tomorrow too, I heard on TV. No in or out. Of course there are no subways or buses, but no walking either. So strange—even the big blackouts (and they were strange too) were not so disorienting. I have just heard the news of the explosions in Kabul.

Wednesday, September 12th, 2001 1:13 P.M.

It is another gorgeous deep blue late summer day here, shorts and T-shirt weather. But everything is weirdly wrong. I am sort of hung-over, which may be wrong in itself but I was feeling very disconnected last night. But I went out this morning to buy a paper—no papers below 14th Street—we are still cordoned off from the world. To get a bus or subway, I would have to walk a mile or so, and of course there are no cabs or traffic of any kind down where I live except for the ambulances and firetrucks which blare their way past alarmingly often. The strangest thing that has happened today is that the assistant to my accountant called to harangue me about something or other about taxes. I wrote it down, but could hardly focus—it just seemed so bizarre, though this may have had something to do with the hangover. He sounded a little hysterical himself, and said that he was leaving by 2 P.M., which is only an hour from now though he was quite insistent about whatever it was that he wanted. (And won't get.) It is so odd to be cut off from my friends. Not by phone, of course, but as I told you last night, there is a physical cordon so that friends who are only a few blocks away who called to want to spend the night or, in other instances, to want to get together just to talk or have a drink, or to go to volunteer at the local hospital together are prevented from crossing these lines. It seems totally irrational—we are a mile north of the WTC. Ex-WTC, I should say. The TV is still on full-time. I wish the prez had a brain.

Wednesday, September 12th, 2001 5:01 P.M.

The wind has finally shifted and now there is a distinct smell of smoke, although I have left my windows open rather than turn on air-conditioning, because I don't think the city needs a power overload. It is still a bright and lovely day. Every minute sirens are

shrieking. I went to bed for a while—hangover, as I told you, dozing rather than sleeping—and left the TV on. Outside there are far fewer people than yesterday but much more traffic, most of it heavy duty, big powerful trucks headed for downtown. And a bunch of police on motorcycles. We are still cordoned off, though Phillip, a front-desk security guard for our building, managed to arrive—he told me that it was a bizarre trip involving multiple subway changes, and evidently Jean, who had been here for something like 24 hours (I had asked him to come to me if he needed a rest, but he didn't buzz). My friend Stephen, who could not get to me last night across the cordon, just called to say that he is back home, way downtown near Wall Street. Says it smells foul, though he is relieved to be home. Thank you so much for your e-mails and phone calls. It is a confusing, strange time. I am completely at sea.

Wednesday, September 12th, 2001 11:29 P.M.

I can't tell you how much I appreciate you all checking in. Thank you so much for your concern. It continues to be strange here. My cats have gone cuckoo which I think may be because of the shift in the wind which makes the air hard to breathe.

Thursday, September 13th, 2001 5:37 P.M.

This is about my sixth communiqué and I am wildly uncertain as to who or who not has been reached, so I apologize either way—I'm far too disoriented to make sense. Last time, I went out to the river about 7 A.M. and noted that the wind had shifted and the air had begun to smell burnt and foul. This afternoon, because I had seen on TV that it was a place to congregate, I decided to walk up to Union Square, taking the chance that I could cross first Houston, then 14th St. (neither crossing was possible even yesterday). I sort of slipped past the guards at Houston and went up to Washington Square. There, I was completely undone by the sound of a folk guitar. For those of you who don't know, there is *always* a guy—dozens of guys—with a folk guitar in Washington Square, since I was a girl, since before Bob Dylan. And then I heard the sound of a lonely sax and I just lost it. I sat under a tree and cried a bucket. Then pulled self together and kept walking. Lots of people wearing masks. No traffic at all except now

and then for huge trucks, I guess rushing supplies in. Up to Union Square where there were indeed lots of people, all behaving a bit theatrically, perhaps for the cameras. Writing things on big pieces of paper, some belligerent, more peaceable. Some artwork. By this time, I was feeling headachy, I think because the air was so bad, and I veered into Barnes & Noble on 16th St. No chairs available, even going up several flights (escalators out of order) so I sat on the floor for a while, enjoying the air conditioning in between books on C++ and the finer points of outdoor grilling. A young guy was methodically looking at all the cookbooks. I'm sure it was just whatever that kind of behavior is called when you are in shock, but maybe he was truly obsessed with cooking. Then got up and retraced my way. Noticed an astonishing number of pretty young women with and without piercings and tattoos and fashionable clothing—are they always around or do I just not notice ordinarily? A lot of places open in Greenwich Village for business (though not doing much), though not in Soho, where I sort of live. Had to show ID at the Houston St. border. I was really tired when I got back, though the whole trip was less than 4 miles, nothing for a New Yorker, which I attribute to the bad air.

Friday, September 14th, 2001 8:58 P.M.

Today mostly I spent paralyzed in bed—strangely, my two cats were amazingly sympathetic, amazing because you don't expect that from cats—then got up to walk to the Hudson River around sunset. As always, when there is a lot of pollution, the sunset was spectacular. I went to the very oldest tavern in NYC, the Ear Inn on Spring St., and to my astonishment it was not only open but jammed. The Ear goes back to the 1770s or so, and was owned by a black man at a time when that was unknown. Because it is so close to the West Side Highway, it is a favorite with cyclists, not only the Hell's Angels sort but the bike sort too. The name is odd too. That "Ear" was originally "Bar" but, perhaps during prohibition, someone bandaged off part of the "B" and it has been that way ever since.

I got a Bass ale and began to talk with people. People had gotten candles, some brought from home, some supplied by the bar, and we tried to keep these alight. The wind was coming from the west, and to try to watch the sunset, which was irresistible, and to keep your candle alight (mine was a measly little birthday-type candle) was impossible.

Last night there was a hard rain and the temperature dropped severely. Yesterday was shorts and T-shirt weather, today I was shivering in jeans and a sweater. The last times I went out on pilgrimages like this were when John Lennon was killed (to Central Park) and when JFK was (I was in London then). A long time ago. But totally worthwhile, a wonderful thing to do, such nice people. New York is very special and I love it. Some of the strangers with whom I talked so ardently said the same thing, some from Australia.

Saturday, September 15th, 2001 7:50 P.M.

It almost looked normal today, bright and sunny. My friend Stephen walked up from downtown with his dog and we went out to lunch at Jerry's, one of the few (and much appreciated) nonfabulous Soho restaurants (this is a very pretentious area). It was jammed. A friend we both know, John Waters, the movie maker, was sitting at the bar and stopped on the way out. He said that he was stuck in New York for a few days (he lives in Baltimore) for a postponed meeting, and that he's had nothing to do but go to the movies—and that the theaters were all jammed too. Not so surprising—there's nothing but awfulness on TV and people want to feel better. John said (he's a wry guy) all the new movies are about child abuse though—maybe they wouldn't feel all *that* much better!

After Stephen left, I piled some bags with years' worth of promotional T-shirts (you get a lot of these, working for a magazine) and towels, about the only things on a long list that I could supply, and took them to a drop-off place. First, though, I stopped by the local firehouse to offer them there. They didn't want them—they were flooded with stuff, the guys said. The firehouse was a sight to see. People have been making offerings for days, candles, flowers, bunting, love notes. Very touching, and wonderful—of course there were Japanese tourists taking pictures.

Today was sad because of the pets. In the downtown area, people who had left for work as usual just before the explosions had not been able to get to their pets for three days, and of course some never will. And now big animal shelters have been set up and people are adopting dogs and cats. I don't mean to play down the human suffering, but animals are so helpless in a city—it was touching to see people trudging along with cardboard cat carriers supplied by the city.

Oh, another thing. It seemed like every few blocks there was a woman in a headscarf. Ordinarily, I suppose I don't notice them at all, but today we sure did! My closest deli is run by very nice Afghan brothers (with a Chinese counterman, typical New York) and when I went in to get a few things there was a big man in a huge purple turban. He ducked out of sight behind some shelves when he caught my glance—probably a relative of the (perfectly ordinary looking) brothers.

But I am not feeling so well, because of the tension which seems to be coming in as delayed shock. My legs have been trembling and my hips, thighs and lower back began to be actually painful. I took a hot bath, which didn't do much good, but at least I'm clean. I have some strong anxiety pills called Ativan that I got when I was fired, but they really make me out of it. I finally took one about an hour ago, hoping the muscles would unclench, and maybe it's working a bit.

So many of you wrote to say how much they liked the Auden poem ["September 1, 1939"] that I thought I might send some Whitman. Whitman is just right for this sort of thing; he can be sublime and ridiculous in the

same poem, and of course he really knew a thing or two about catastrophe. And it's nice to be touched by something and then laughing a minute later at old Walt's manic energy and extravagance. He wrote a lot about firefighters. I found the lines from "Song of Myself" about the "mash'd fireman" and then, leafing though, found a lot more. But I'm not going to do it tonight because I'm finding typing rather difficult too. Maybe tomorrow. But if you have some Whit, have a look. He's good company.

Sorry this is all a bit "me, me, me-ish," but the rest you can see on TV. One word about someone else: Rudy. He has been absolutely splendid. And though I've excoriated him in the past, I would vote for him again in a heartbeat if I could.

Sunday, September 16th, 2001 2:52 A.M.

You do deserve some Whitman before I go to bed. He's been cheering me all evening. I'm sending two snippets about firemen, and then one of his celebrations of Manhattan, among other things.

From *Song of Myself*

Agonies are one of my changes of garments,

I do not ask the wounded person how he feels, I myself become the wounded person,

My hurts turn livid upon me as I lean on a cane and observe.

I am the mash'd fireman with breastbone broken,
Tumbling walls buried me in their debris,

Heat and smoke I inspired, I heard the yelling shouts of my comrades,

I heard the distant click of their picks and shovels,
They have clear'd the beams away, they tenderly lift me forth.

I lie in the night air in my red shirt, the pervading hush is for my sake

...
Lads ahold of fire-engines and hook-and-ladder ropes no less to me

than the gods of the antique wars,
Minding their voices peal through the crash of destruction,

Their brawny limbs passing safe over charr'd laths, their white foreheads whole and unhurt out of the flames;

Miracles
Why, who makes much of a miracle?
As to me I know of nothing else but miracles,

Whether I walk the streets of Manhattan,

Or dart my sight over the roofs of houses toward the sky.

September 16th, 2001 4:25 PM

Wallace Stevens was not that kind of poet and he knew it, although you couldn't live

through his times and just keep playing your blue guitar. He wrote a long, twisty, highly ambivalent (surprise!) poem called "Examination of the Hero in a Time of War"—it could as easily be called "Twenty-One ways of Looking at a Hero"—and at the end of it he appended a little essay, the first sentence of which reads, "The immense poetry of war and the poetry of the imagination are two different things." And one certainly knows in which camp he stood!

Much of this poem is too intellectual, too complex, too abstract or ironic to feel appropriate right now (though it's a highly interesting poem). But as long as I'm on this roll, I'll note Verse VI, which seems to fit the brave firefighters without too much backing and filling and which begins "Unless we believe in the hero, what is there/To believe?"

Sunday, September 16th, 2001 8:41 P.M.

Lay low today. Considered going to church for two minutes, but decided not to be a total hypocrite. I worked in my garden, then my neighbor's garden, then sawed three limbs off my crabapple tree. I absolutely hated to do it, but the tree has been ailing (no wonder after the three summers of misery this building has put me through) and it looked better after the amputation than I feared.

Then went for a walk toward the river with my tree pruning equipment in hand.

September 11th, 2001, Pleasantville, New York

Written September 12th between 1 & 7 A.M.

It was a clear sunny morning, the first day of Peter's preschool. I'd slept badly the night before, realizing that, as a family, we had booked too many appointments for the day to be workable. The car had to be repaired; the cats had a vet appointment; both David and Peter had dentist appointments; and after school Peter had a karate lesson and a play date. Somewhere in there, I was supposed to do some work. As I dropped off Peter at preschool in Chappaqua, one of the other mothers I knew from last year asked, "How are you?" I said, "This is the day from hell." That was about 9:05 A.M.

I took Peter toward his new classroom. He ran down the hall, delighted. As I was leaving, another mother came in to deliver her child to class. She said something semi-coherent about two planes having just crashed into the World Trade Center. A 747 and another plane, she said.

Once back in the car, I turned on the radio. The usually slick, fast-talking radio announcers were speaking very slowly, interviewing one of the station's advertising sales people, a woman on a sixth floor roof near the World Trade Center. She was

When I got to the big downtown avenue (Varick, continuing Seventh) I said to a cop, "Gee, I guess they must have reopened the Holland Tunnel, judging from the traffic." He said, "I wouldn't know, ma'am, I'm from Massachusetts." Wow!

I walked a block or two farther, and a big vacant lot that usually houses sanitation trucks had all been filled up with great big trailers, all kinds of trailers, shower trailers, food prep trailers, bunk trailers. All from Tennessee! Some Tennessee Baptists, some just regular heathens like me (to judge from the truck markings). About ten men were washing big heavy-duty food trays in huge tin horseshoe things near the sidewalk so I stopped to ask if they needed a hand. "No ma'am, but we surely thank you." "Thank you!" said I and continued walking south, but we were cordoned off at Canal St. Every time a police car or fire truck went by, everyone cheered and whistled. Some of the guys waved or did a thumbs-up and some stared straight ahead. When I came home a friend called from Norfolk, VA, not exactly a teeming metropolis, to say that the entire fire dept. had careened off for NYC. "Not the Pentagon?" I asked, for that would be much closer. No, apparently Washington has enough people. They're here from everywhere.

Eleven men gone from my small local fire station, a lot. It's only a block or so away, and we all know these guys by sight. About eight

Kathryn Cramer

recounting the sight of commercial airliners ramming into one tower, then another.

I arrived home and tried to round up cats for their vet appointment, but I had accidentally let one out and the other cat couldn't be found. Since David had not called, he had probably had success at the car dealership, and was most likely at the dentist.

My sister, Karen, called from Washington, DC to tell me about the planes crashing into the World Trade Center. While talking to her, I wandered back toward our one TV that gets actual reception and flipped channels until I got Channel 2, the only one working, and saw an image of a gaping hole in the side of the Pentagon.

Karen's husband, Tom, works as an electrician in the White House. I said, "Karen, they've crashed a plane into the Pentagon, too. Call Tom at work and tell him to come home." We got off the phone. After that our phones were unusable for an hour or so.

I couldn't stand the idea of David passing through Grand Central Station, envisioning what would happen if the Pan Am Building on top of it got hit; nor the idea of him going in to work at the Flatiron Building, one of the most photographed buildings in the world. I tried to call David at the dentist. I tried to call the vet to cancel the appointment, and Caitlin Blasdell to

years ago, we lost three, and planted trees for them in the little square across the street. That seemed a tragedy, but what can we do for 11? No room for trees.

The pet rescue is still going on, and here is another sad thing I discussed with someone who lives in the area. New York has a large, bustling, vibrant Chinatown nestled right above the downtown financial and City Hall area. It teems with little restaurants, all competing with one another, employing the whole family, and operating on very low profit margins. They depend, for lunch especially, on financial guys, lawyers, jurors, etc. who love their cheap, tasty eats. Not only are four thousand of their customers gone for good, but it will be years before the financial district is really set up for business downtown again and weeks for City Hall. Some of these places will survive, but many of them probably won't. What will they do, these hard-working people who often don't speak much English?

Let's all do Chinese—in Chinatown!

I have been trying to cancel my trip to Europe with zero success so far. Can't get through on the phone, and three e-mails are unanswered. Was going to go out again tonight, but can't face it, and my back still hurts. (The sawing probably didn't help.) One more thing, ambulances are still screaming, but now they seem a symbol of hope—maybe someone is newly being rushed to a hospital from the rubble. ▲

confirm the play date and to find out if her husband was OK. The dial tone worked, but the calls didn't go through. While I was trying to make calls, the south tower of the World Trade Center collapsed.

I got in the car and drove off to deliver my messages by hand. The streets were nearly empty. I went into the dentist's office and loomed over David in the dentist's chair and told him that under no circumstances was he to set foot in Manhattan today. (I needn't have bothered—MetroNorth shut down around then, along with the subways and all other means of transportation into or out of Manhattan, and all flights throughout the country.)

I drove by Caitlin's. She was out at the park with Will, who just turned two. The guy wallpapering her dining room, who answered the door, had the TV up loud on a news station and was wiping tears from his eyes. He said Caitlin and Will had gone to the park and Scott (a stock analyst) was in Atlanta.

I considered driving back to Peter's preschool to get him because the preschool is three blocks from Bill and Hillary Clinton's house, but decided that since Bill had left office, the school was probably safe from terrorist attack. I drove to the vet's. There was no one at the front desk. I knocked and looked around the corner. I explained that I couldn't find my cats and

that the phones weren't working, I would call tomorrow and reschedule. The veterinary staff were all clutching dogs for comfort, huddled around the radio.

As I was driving home, a beautiful apricot poodle puppy ran in front of my car. I knew was tense and upset, so I was driving slowly and carefully; I braked before hitting him. I stopped the car in the middle of the street, picked up the dog, and went to the door of the nearest house and rang the doorbell. No one answered. Then I saw the old Italian man who sometimes cuts the grass with scissors. With some difficulty (he seemed not to understand my rapid-fire English), I explained to him that the dog had run in front of my car. He thanked me and took the dog. I got back in my car. While I had been returning the dog, the second World Trade Center tower began to collapse. I heard the radio ad saleswoman scream as she saw it happen.

Shortly after I got home, David arrived from the dentist. We walked back and forth from the radio to the TV with bad reception, trying to understand what was happening. Only one TV channel was coming in at all. The phones were working again, though not to Manhattan. We could get a web connection, but nothing from the major news sites.

This was, I think, at the height of the media misinformation. As many as eight additional planes seemed to have been hijacked. There were alleged explosions near the Supreme Court and the State Department. A plane was alleged to have hit Camp David. After the demolition of the World Trade Center, we were prepared to believe anything.

Kevin Maroney called or e-mailed to say that Christine Quiñones, who works on the *New York Review of Science Fiction*, had overslept and had therefore not yet arrived at the World Trade Center when disaster struck. I called Peter's dentist to make sure they would be open. I cleaned house for as long as I could stand.

As I set out for the preschool, I turned the radio to the folk station. They were playing Judy Collins's rendition of "Amazing Grace." On the way, I passed by the Chappaqua volunteer fire department where last year Bill Clinton gladhanded the firemen, leaving us all stuck in traffic for half an hour. Today, their American flag was at half-mast and below it was a hand-written black paper sign bearing the words "God Bless America." I did not yet know that hundreds of firemen had been killed when the towers collapsed.

The preschool teachers were real pros. The kids did not seem to be rattled. The teachers had red eyes and red noses and tissues clutched in hand, but they still had the preschool teacher smile and tone of voice. I heard rumors of a problem at Grafflin, the local elementary school, where many of the kid's parents worked in the financial district. The director of the preschool brought the phone to one of the teachers, who disappeared into the hall muttering, "Oh! Thank God!" I let Peter finish his lunch and then set out for the

pediatric dentist in Mt. Kisco.

While in the car I explained to Peter that bad guys had stolen airplanes full of people and had crashed them into great big buildings, killing thousands of people.

On our way, we drove past Old House Lane, where the Clinton's house is. The street was barricaded and had a substantial police presence. As passed, I wondered what good these defenses would have been against someone flying a plane into their house. We also passed Northern Westchester Hospital, which was surprisingly quiet. Presumably, there was no easy way to transport the wounded this far from the city.

At the dentist's office, the staff was sitting hollow-eyed in a circle listening to the radio. Peter, it turned out, was one of the few patients they had coming in that afternoon because so many had cancelled, presumably to stay home and wait for word from friends and relatives.

This was a dentist appointment I had put off for months because I knew they were going to have to strap Peter down to give him the fillings he needed. It was as awful as I expected. About half an hour into it, the dentist complemented me on my calm, saying many parents couldn't take having their kid scream through a long dentist appointment. I replied that the day's disasters made it easier. "How much more upset could I get?" I said.

I had promised Peter that if he was brave at the dentist, I would take him to the toy store and buy him Annie and Clarabelle, Thomas the Tank Engine's two coaches. So I drove straight from the dentist in Mt. Kisco to the toy store in Pleasantville, taking the Saw Mill River Parkway south, though feeling that I ought to stay off significant pieces of infrastructure. The toy store was closed. On the door was a sign saying "We just couldn't bear to stay open. Please give blood." I explained to Peter, who was distraught, that the toy store was closed because the people who worked there were too sad about the bad disaster. I took him back to preschool.

During Peter's ordeal at the dentist I had been out of radio contact and Peter would not allow me to listen to the news while we were driving. When I dropped him off at the school, someone said that the military had shot down the remaining hijacked commercial planes. That's a moment from an alternate universe in which the situation was even worse than this—Air Force pilots forced to shoot down American flights full of passengers. I am glad it seems not to have really happened that way. But at the time it not only seemed plausible, it seemed inevitable.

I arrived home and worked frantically. David pointed out that there was one scheduled item I had forgotten. Our cleaning ladies were coming. The contents of my suitcase from WorldCon were still spread all over the bedroom floor. Could the WorldCon have happened that recently?

I arrived to pick up Peter at preschool to see him destroying another boy's enormous tower of Lego blocks. I winced, hoping that my description of the day's events had not

inspired him. Luckily, there was no brokers-and-terrorists fantasy element to their play. It was just an ordinary preschool squabble.

A blonde girl about seven, who had come with her mother to pick up a sibling, said something I didn't catch. Then her mother said calmly but very firmly to all the adults present, "She is not telling the truth. She heard one of the bigger girls at school say to another girl, 'I heard your daddy was killed.' She's imitating them." (I thought of the businessmen with briefcases, falling from the sky, jumping to avoid being burned alive. Could one of them be the daddy in question?) Apparently the schools had been full of rumors about whose parents had been killed or injured. At 1 P.M., the Chappaqua schools did the right thing by removing from class all the students whose parents worked in the World Trade Center. However, the mother said, some of the other students took this to mean that anyone pulled from class had lost a parent.

On the way home, I thought about driving to the top of our hill to see if I could see the smoke from the World Trade Center, but couldn't bring myself to. I didn't bother with Peter's karate class, which was probably cancelled anyway. Instead, Caitlin brought her son Will up to our house to play with Peter. Peter told Caitlin all about the bad guys stealing planes and crashing them into buildings, killing lot and lots of people, resulting in the toy store being closed. Caitlin said that her husband, Scott, was supposed to have flown home from Atlanta, but was renting a car and would drive home instead. She also said that her home phone still wasn't working.

As they left, Peter discovered that Samantha, the little girl next door, was playing in her yard with a friend from her school. He ran down the hill to their yard. I followed more slowly. Samantha's father, who was watching the girls, took a deep breath and said, "How are you?" I said, "We are all fine." He said, "It's a good day to be fine." The other girl's parents arrived to pick her up from the play date. The other father had a story of a friend seemingly confirmed dead, who turned up alive hours later: She had walked down from her office on a high floor of the World Trade Center and had walked north until four o'clock in the afternoon, when she was finally able to call home. I have never before felt so compassionate for the overprivileged people of Westchester County.

I set Geoffrey, David's 24-year-old son, the task of watching Peter in the yard while David and I cleaned house. When I was finished cleaning, I went out to the yard and found that a friend of Geoffrey's was supervising Peter while Peter climbed a tree. I had been marveling at what a quiet afternoon it was when we heard a plane. We live in the landing pattern for White Plains Airport, and so a low level of airplane noise is normal here. When Clinton was President and was in residence in Chappaqua, no planes could fly over this airspace, but you could still

hear them in the distance. But this silence was much quieter. And the plane that broke the silence had a much lower hum than the commercial planes.

I called Karen. In the morning, Tom had been working outside, helping to set up power for a renaming of the Old Executive Office Building, which is to become the Eisenhower Building. He was going in and out of the White House, past news crews, and noticed that they had a TV on showing the destruction at the World Trade Center. Suddenly, after the Pentagon was hit, the Secret Service came running in yelling, "Get out! Get out!" He said the press people didn't want to leave, so the Secret Service had to chase them out.

David disappeared. It turned out he had gone down to Geoffrey's room and learned that bombs were falling in Kabul, Afghanistan, but we didn't know whose. Peter fell asleep on the living room floor, freeing David and me to go downstairs to Geoffrey's room in the basement and watch TV using his cable connection. I put Peter in his bed, and we went downstairs.

We saw news conferences interrupting news conferences, the head of Health and Human Services calling for people throughout the country to donate blood, and the footage of the planes crashing into the world trade center and the towers collapsing over and over again. Every time they showed the towers collapsing, David said, "That is the worst thing I have ever seen in my life." I thought, but didn't say, *Hiroshima. Nagasaki. There have been worse. It could have been worse.* Nonetheless, this was the day that the Cold War had taught us to expect, minus the nukes, but plus a live payload of Americans in the missiles.

We watched President Bush's speech, waiting for some clue as to how the US would retaliate, and against whom. After Bush said, "We will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them," I turned to David and said, "He's telling Afghanistan, 'Bring me the severed head of Bin Laden on a platter, or I will kill you.'" I feel reassured that our Republican President is more restrained in his immediate reaction than I had feared, but I know in my heart that the culprits will use the time to flock to large population centers to shield themselves, and that many more innocent people will probably die when retaliation comes.

I made several attempts to sleep. I had a nightmare that all of Westchester County, ourselves included, had been forced by terrorists to take the elevators up into the World Trade Center just before the planes hit. I awoke to the sound of planes overhead. I listened for a while and then decided to get up. It was four in the morning.

I went out to the screened porch and stood listening. There were planes in at least three directions, big planes, low frequency hums—the sound of the Air Force moving into White Plains Airport, I hope.

I listened and hugged myself, nostalgic

for the comprehensible monsters of the twentieth century: King Kong up the Empire State Building and Godzilla on the rampage outside the Flatiron Building. Now, at dawn, September 12th, 2001, I wonder how we can understand the monsters of the new century. Outside, I hear big planes again, but I cannot see them, only a sunlit woodpecker flying against a clear blue sky.

Epilog

Thursday, September 13th, 2001

There are American flags up everywhere in Pleasantville and Chappaqua. At the hardware store, the flag section is picked clean. I tried to give blood today. As I turned the corner to Hudson Valley Blood Services, a man in a green New Bug yelled "Thank you!" and gave me a thumbs up. (I'm sure that's the first time a New York driver has ever yelled anything nice in my direction!) I was turned away and told to come back Friday.

We attended a prayer service at the Congregational Church in Chappaqua yesterday evening. While no member of the congregation was among the missing, ten or twelve people had friends or relatives who were. We took Peter with us, partly in order to show him that adults have other ways to cope with sadness other than staying glued to the TV or the web. The church is also where Peter's preschool takes place, so it is a setting he is very comfortable with. Peter and I stayed in the service until the Minister's sermon started. Then I took him for a walk.

He spent much of the remaining service collecting beautiful fallen leaves for a bouquet he wanted to give to the minister "to help people feel better." This morning he arranged them carefully and thoughtfully in a white wicker basket I found for him. When I took him to preschool, we left them for the minister with the church secretary. Peter's gesture shows a remarkable command of the metaphor of mourning.

Yesterday, my brother-in-law Tom stood on top of the Old Executive Office Building, across from the White House, looking out at the Pentagon. He observed that where he stood and the path of the plane that hit the Pentagon lined up perfectly, which is to say that the plane was on a perfect trajectory to hit the White House. He was working out on the White House lawn when the plane struck the Pentagon.

The skies here are still quiet. I think I heard a plane yesterday afternoon. But I've heard none today. David is in New York. The Chappaqua volunteer firehouse has an empty bay with a sign over it saying "Engine 146 in NYC helping people in need," which means they are either digging through the rubble or covering NYC fires so the NYC fire department can concentrate on rescue.

Tor Books, where David works, was closed yesterday but reopened today. The Federal Government seems to have commandeered WATS lines and 800 numbers, so Tor has no long distance service and David can't call me from work. He writes, via e-mail "The

phone does not work today at Tor, except internally. Perhaps it will work later. Moshe is not here yet. No mail service, much." There were a few reported bomb threats in Manhattan earlier in the day. But David writes via e-mail, "There has been a bomb threat and Grand Central and the Chrysler Building are closed, evacuated. Check the news for updates." There is nothing on the news about this and hasn't been all afternoon. I speculate that news outlets are refraining from reporting new bomb threats in major buildings to discourage those who would threaten, though David's daughter Alison said she had heard that. David is heading for Grand Central in hopes of coming home, but we don't know whether he'll get here tonight.

Everyone we know who works in the WTC seems to have either been out of town or else had not yet arrived at work when the planes hit. David recognized one name on a passenger list of a doomed flight from Boston. Our printing guy from Odyssey Press, which prints *The New York Review of Science Fiction*, may have been one of the victims. We will call them tomorrow.

Every time I spot a recycling bin next to the street while driving out here, I feel a chill in the pit of my stomach. The recycling truck comes on Tuesdays. Bins next to the street today signify possible casualties—I've seen four or five within a mile or so of our house.

Peter's Ups & Downs

Friday, September 14th, 2001

This afternoon, when I was picking Peter up at preschool, the minister happened to be in the hallway as we were leaving. The minister stopped him to tell him how much better the basket of leaves had made him feel. Peter just glowed! The minister said, looking at me meaningfully and holding back tears, "They came at just the right time."

That was a good ending to a difficult school day for Peter. He is in other ways a bit regressed. He bit someone at preschool yesterday, and today he got in trouble for hitting.

Saturday, September 15th, 2001

After calling up various newspapers today, trying and failing to gather biographical information about Douglas Stone, a vice president of the *NYSF* printer, Odyssey Press, who was on AA flight 11, for an obituary, I found myself yelling at Peter. (I was, by the way, the first person to give the Boston Globe any additional information on the poor man other than what was on his airline ticket.) Peter was in the anxious mode where every time he gets into trouble, he gets more anxious and does something that gets him into more trouble. I managed not to spank him and also to apologize.

What seems to connect with Peter now is telling him what he can do that will make sad people feel better. He must have asked me fifteen different questions that started "Did I make people feel better when I . . . ?" When he asks questions like that, I always say "Yes"

and give him as much detail as I can about how he made people feel better.

I should say that this is a kid who has attended more funerals and memorial services than I did before I was 30. Since he was born, he's had three relatives die plus Jenna Felice. Also, I have mastered the art of the pet funeral. When we had our first pet death, about two years ago, I was reluctant to do the fish funeral thing because he had just been to an open-casket funeral for his great-grandmother. But I found that when I let him have a pet funeral, he would make very

considered choices: the purple beta fish he wanted to bury next to the purple opal basil because it matched the fish. When "Big Blackie," his favorite fish, died he painted a picture that has a recognizable head and dorsal fin of the fish in question. He was under two.

I wish I could get him to paint or draw now, but he has reached an age where the pictures in his head are much more sophisticated than what his hands can execute. He gets too frustrated and tells me what he wants me to draw and demands that

I draw it for him. I try to avoid being put in that situation.

For the past two days I have had to give him his inhaler and today his eyes are swollen and irritated. Mine are also quite irritated, as are David's. I think we're beginning to get the fines from the WTC blaze out here. Little tiny pieces of the building making our eyes tear.

I keep trying to make sure Peter feels empowered to do something about the emotional landscape around him and to remember to give him as little news exposure as possible.

Zoran Zivkovic & Kathryn Cramer

Serbian Blood

An exchange of letters between Kathryn Cramer in Pleasantville, New York and Zoran Zivkovic in Belgrade, Yugoslavia during the night of September 13th - 14th.

Zoran Zivkovic lives across the street from the Chinese Embassy that the US bombed during the NATO campaign two years ago. Of that experience he wrote, "All our windows and doors to the balcony facing the street were blasted out, together with their frames. It was incredible luck that nobody was injured, although we all—myself, my wife Mia, and our twin boys of 18—found ourselves on the floor, amid overturned furniture and broken glass. It took us a couple of days of strong sedatives to recover, but I am sure some invisible scars will remain permanently. Now, I start quite involuntarily even at the sound of a distant door slam. . . ." Zivkovic's story "The Window" is reprinted in David Hartwell & Kathryn Cramer's Year's Best Fantasy 1 (HarperCollins).

Date: Fri, 14 Sep 2001 08:59:07 +0200
From: Zoran Zivkovic <polaris@EUnet.yu>
To: Kathryn Cramer <kec@panix.com>
Subject: Serbian blood.

Dear Kathryn,

How perfectly I understand everything you are passing through now. We have had a rather similar experience two years ago, during 77 days of the NATO campaign. Tragedies like these make you realize how normal, civilized life, which we all use to take for granted, suddenly collapses and leaves you in the middle of a nightmare. What still seems to me the most striking element of the days (and nights) of war was the power cutoffs. Without electricity we couldn't count on so many things that were parts of our everyday life. Refrigerators, for example, became useless, TV and radio sets, my computer, the elevator in our building . . . I can only hope the state of emergency will be canceled soon so you won't have to experience anything similar. . . .

Here is a detail that will better describe the general feeling here about the American tragedy than any of my words. TV and radio stations are getting innumerable calls of people offering their blood for the wounded in New York and Washington DC. In misery

and death we are finally all equal: simple human beings who need each other to survive. . . .

Love to you all. You are constantly in my thoughts.

Zoran

Friday, September 14th, 2001 4:26 A.M.

Dear Zoran:

Thanks for your kind note. Thunderstorms started here around midnight. They do not frighten me and in fact are somewhat reassuring, but I find that I cannot sleep through the loud thunder and the flashes of light. I am on the Internet between thunderstorms. *The Washington Post* claims two more hijackings were averted yesterday out of New York airports: in at least one case, the armed men with false ID and certificates from the same flying schools as the other hijackers had already boarded the plane.

The best that can be hoped for is that your former President gets a new cellmate soon with little loss of life. (What would they have to say to each other?) But with this talk of "ending states that back terror," I don't think that would be the end of it even if bin Laden walked into a New York City police station, turned himself in, and apologized.

I heard a weird rumor yesterday that I was thinking about during the night in the context of your own experiences: Apparently, one of Tom's coworkers saw a very low-flying plane flying up 18th Street in Washington, DC, two blocks off from the White House shortly before the plane hit the Pentagon. He hypothesizes that the terrorists could not see the White House because of the trees and so missed it and flew on to Virginia to turn around and, having turned, found the Pentagon instead (a much more obvious building—I have flown nearly over it while landing at Washington National Airport). It's easy to get lost in Washington, DC even when you can read the street signs. Guess Tom Clancy's novel didn't mention there would be trees.

Although our military likes to use phrases like "surgical" to describe their new, enlightened, post-nuclear brand of warfare, it is not so easy to navigate in a city from an airplane, even well-documented cities like Washington, DC and Belgrade. And places like Afghanistan are much less well documented. Terms like

"surgical" allow us to think of things like your own ordeal as different in kind from the destruction of the World Trade Center or the Oklahoma City bombing, in that it implies that only the guilty get hurt.

Colin Powell seems like the right man in the right place to *try* to run an extremely civilized twenty-first century war, but, as the saying goes, the road to Hell is paved with good intentions. Timothy McVeigh described the deaths of the kids in the day care center in the building he bombed as "collateral damage." He is, to my mind, a very similar figure to the 9/11 hijackers. This kind of man is no mystery of alien culture, because we have our own. The question that haunts me is whether all the fancy military hardware—VR screens, automatic guidance systems, etc.—can transform ordinary people into McVeigh or a 9/11 hijacker simply by distancing the perpetrator from the act, simulating psychosis.

David did make it home on time yesterday, despite earlier closure of Grand Central Station.

Kathryn

Date: Fri, 14 Sep 2001 11:26:42 +0200

Dear Kathryn,

The fundamental difference between what happened in Yugoslavia and the terrorist attack on America is that NATO at least tried to avoid the civilian casualties. I still hate their euphemism "regrettable collateral damage," maybe because I avoided by a very narrow margin to become one, together with my family. But they principally concentrated on the military targets. On the other hand, what really makes the terrorism monstrous is the fact that it doesn't recognize at all the very concept of the innocent civilians. In the theory of terrorism, formulated and practiced by the various extremist groups around the world, all targets are legitimate, without exception. The more vulnerable, the better. Sometime I think they would be happiest if they could bomb all kindergartens in the world. . . .

I love you all there.

Zoran ▲

Snapshots

September 16th, 2001 (e-mail to Z. Zivkovic)

I woke up at 2 A.M. and do not think I am going back to sleep. I have too much to do.

When I woke up this morning (now yesterday morning, really!), all of my e-mail was from corporations. They were using their vast databases of e-mail addresses not for advertising but to tell people how to donate to the Red Cross or how to help children through this difficult time. I don't think I will ever think of corporations as soulless again.

I have circulated our correspondence to many people, but at a certain point we had to get our poor, tired child to bed. He was an angel at the concert, and a little beast in the pizzeria afterwards.

I took Peter to karate. There's this one right-wing father of one of the kids in the class who, whenever he brings his son, sits lecturing to this other father, who mostly just says "Uh huh." His previous lecture topics have been on the evils of affirmative action, the necessity of bringing back the pesticide DDT, and such. Today's lecture: "We could take out their major cities. They don't have very many. That would at least be a gesture," he said. Fortunately, that is the only ugly talk I have heard in person so far. And it was just the right-wing dad, who always says stuff like that.

I went to pick up some of our pictures from WorldCon from our photo shop, and there was a woman there who was desperately trying to get film developed by a few hours later. She was the mother of one of the volunteer firemen excavating the rubble. Her son, who had come home to get 4 hours of sleep before heading back to work, wanted to take the developed pictures back in with him. President Bush had visited them the day before, so I presume the pictures were of Bush with the firemen, desperately needed to keep up morale. They have not found anyone alive in the rubble since Wednesday.

Look for America

Sunday, September 16th, 2001

David and I attended services at the Congregational Church in Chappaqua this morning, seated next to Caitlin and Scott Blasdell. (Peter and Will, Caitlin's son, went to Sunday school and so missed most of the grownup weeping.) The minister called for names of people to be prayed for. It took a long time, maybe half an hour for everyone who chose to speak to say the name of the victim and their connection to the victim. David and I were the only ones in the congregation with a connection to someone confirmed dead. All the rest had connections to the unconfirmed probably dead. And none of us has read the names on the whole list, where unpleasant surprises lurk. David and I learned about Doug Stone, a business acquaintance, because David recognized his name on the passenger list. And those lists were so much shorter . . .

All day I have been thinking about the

lyrics to the Simon & Garfunkle song "America," especially the line "counting the cars on the New Jersey Turnpike, they've all come to look for America." Since the morning of the 11th, that has been the most requested song on WFUV, New York's folk station.

Today's *Foster Democrat* in Dover, NH carried the information we could not get yesterday about Douglas Stone who was on AA11. The contrast between the New Hampshire obits and the ones in the local paper here (and the NYC ones, too) is quite striking. Although the *Foster Democrat* seemed disconcertingly late in giving information about the most unquestionably dead, here, as of this morning, less than one percent of those missing at the WTC were even formally confirmed dead. [10/23: Actually, the *FD* had published information starting 9/12; I just couldn't find it.]

Each night seems to have its topic. Structurally, the week has resembled Dickens's "A Christmas Carol." Each night I lose sleep to a different ghost.

On the 11th, it was the Ghost of Epistemology: We examined the bare facts of the matter, watching TV and seeing for the first time the images of disaster, knowing that it was irrefutably true that the Twin Towers had been destroyed by terrorists in hijacked planes and that a hijacked plane had punched a big hole in the side of the Pentagon. But also knowing that many things that were "true" when we went to bed would no longer be true in the morning. Different things would be true, and the new truth might be worse. I wrote in bouts throughout the night.

The night of the 12th, I was visited by the Ghost of Religion. We attended a prayer service at the Congregational Church. I do not believe in God as such, and yet when confronted with the liberal churches, I am as uncomfortable with the informality and deviation from deep ritual as I am with the fact that they expect us to believe that Jesus actually said all that stuff. Aesthetically, my taste in religion is deeply conservative. What David and I talked about that night is how I had, as a young person, exposed myself to religion, but had expected it to "work" on its own if it were real, letting it fail on its own as it inevitably did. Not capable of "faith," which I have always regarded as indistinguishable from fooling oneself, I resolved that night simply to try during the service. Take communion and try to get transubstantiation to happen by force of will. Accept the miraculous explanation when a physical one already exists. The communion still seemed an awful lot more like stale bread dipped in grape juice than the blood and body of Christ. No miracles occurred, though I have a child who can be amazingly compassionate at times. However, that first prayer service took the endless loop of falling towers from behind my eyes.

The night of the 13th, it was the Ghost of Childhood Trauma. Peter, whose actions are my best evidence for the existence of God, since he seemed occasionally to be God's own

avatar, bit another child on his second day of preschool, an obvious sign of deep stress. As Kathy Goonan wrote in a letter on the subject, "children are emotional sponges." When David didn't come to bed by 12:30 A.M., I got up and we talked until after 2. Somehow I was up a few hours later, writing "Epilog: September 13, 2001."

The Ghost of War came calling on the 14th. Sleepless because of thunderstorms, I exchanged letters with Zoran Zivkovic in Belgrade, who was nearly killed when the US bombed the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade.

Last night's visitor was the Ghost of Money. I thought deeply and seriously about the reopening of the stock market and arrived at the conclusion that defense of the US financial markets is, at the moment, the best kind of war to fight because it can do great good and prevent great harm without requiring that bombs be dropped in anyone's neighborhood. I resolved to commit a substantial chunk of my cash in hand to supporting the stock market on Monday. Tomorrow I will be an ant defending the hill in the bloodless war of finance prepared to lose what money I have.

As the sun sets, I expect that tonight's visitor will be the Ghost of Mortality. This morning, everyone in the church knew that the "missing" we were speaking of were in fact the dead. The minister said "we pray for miracles and we know these miracles will not come." And as we move from rescue to war, the classification shifts from the missing and the dead to the already dead and the soon to be dead.

I feel detached and a bit floaty and as though I have recently been hysterical. But I also know that my current state is no more sane or insane than the state I was in earlier, relentlessly composing considered letters and e-mailing them from 2 AM until nearly 6. I know that I am at my most insane at the times when I don't want to talk to anyone about anything.

I pray for victory in the War of Money in the ruins of the financial district. I no longer know what to hope for in the war to end terrorism.

The Search for St. Something

Tuesday, September 18th, 2001

Sunday, after I decided to put \$2,000 in the stock market in the morning, I slept through the night for the first time since the disaster. After watching the struggle between hope and disaster on the Wall Street charts all morning, I went to Sleepy Hollow bank and made a wire transfer of another \$2,000 so I could put in another \$1,500. I didn't actually speak to my broker until 7 P.M. He had had a rough day, apparently, speaking to clients who were afraid they were about to lose everything.

At 6:45 I had set out to find the WTC support group which was to deal with matters like sleep disturbances. I was too rattled to remember the name of the church. It was St. Something. A man's name. I didn't realize

Patrick O'Leary The Boat

I am in a boat.
No. We are in a boat.
And it's not a boat
but you know what I mean.

And the boat is going somewhere
Or maybe nowhere.
But it is floating for now.
Unless it's sinking.

It is so comforting to be in a boat.
To have a vessel. A destination.
We don't know the destination.
But at least we're floating.

But then there is the ocean
Or this small part of its depth
That surrounds us, buoys us
As if it wanted us to be here get
there.

We do not think about the depths.
Below us. The cold dark water
Unbreathable undrinkable.
Who would want to drink an ocean
even if they could?

So this boat. This water.
You and I
between here and there.
Is somebody rowing?

In this whole world
There is only you and I and this boat
On this ocean. And what happens
depends on us or the ocean.

I say we have to be very careful.
We are only so strong.
A boat is a delicate thing.
And I have never seen an ocean
broken.

I say we love each other
But that is so easy to say.
That means knowing
who we're rowing with.

We did not choose the ocean.
We did not choose the boat.
We did not choose each other.
But we must choose. ►

until I tried to find the right church how many of the churches around here are named after male saints. Anyway, my broker called on my cell phone while I was driving from St. Something to St. Something and by the time we were done working out how I should buy to help save the world, I felt so good, I didn't need to find the group. I came home, cooked dinner and while it was cooking, Peter and I danced to songs I played on the CD player. I arrived at one simple sentence, a distillation of my thoughts over the past week: *I don't want to kill anyone.*

Very quietly, the funerals started here yesterday. I don't know whose. I didn't ask. People die every day. Maybe the funerals were for people who died of old age. But I think not.

Several small things that stick in my mind: By coincidence, the minister and the house painter mentioned in the earlier e-mail each have a brother-in-law who is a NYC fireman who survived the 11th only because he had traded shifts with someone else, now dead.

A line of my sister's on the phone this morning: "Those people calling for carpet-bombing of Afghanistan with nukes can't possibly live in New York or DC. I feel like I don't want anyone to die ever again." Karen, who is about 7 months pregnant, lives with her husband Tom and their daughter Selena near Georgetown and the National Cathedral in Washington, DC. It is a neighborhood built of brick row houses in the 1940s.

American flags are sold out everywhere here. There is not a flag to be bought anywhere. Demand is so intense that there is a problem with flags being stolen from people's houses.

Death & Preschool

Wednesday, September 26th, 2001

A memo circulated at Peter's preschool today saying that one of the fathers—Louis Sam Inghilterra—is still missing. I had thought, because no one had said anything, that death had passed over my preschool acquaintances, but apparently not.

I'm not sure I would recognize the missing husband if I saw him, but I'm certain I would recognize the wife and child (named Sam; about 2 1/2). I was a mother volunteer in the little boy's class last year, in December. I'm trying to remember which kid he is.

But I remember Marian, the teacher, trying to get him to do his project, saying in her Scots accent, "Saaam, Saaam, come here and do your project, Saaam." It was snowing lightly, and the kids were supposed to make snowmen. I remember cutting out so many white construction paper circles with bad scissors that my hand was sore. Each snowman needed three circles plus a black paper hat and boots. The kids were supposed to glue the circles on blue paper and then add the hat and boots. Then they were supposed to draw the arms, the buttons down the front, and the faces. The faces were mostly beyond

them. I patiently encouraged them in the direction of drawing the faces, buttons and arms, but Marian was in a hurry because we had other things to do. As I recall, Sam didn't finish and so Marian did it for him and then told the mother, who was rightly skeptical, that Sam had done the work. Or maybe that was one of the other kids in that class. The faces have not come to me as yet.

I e-mailed the President of the Chappaqua Preschool Parents Association about this death. She replied:

Sadly, I know from my son's preschool (the Rosenthal "Y") that other preschoolers are affected by the NYC tragedy. Two dads from the "Y" are missing and have had memorial services already (one of the little girls is in my son's class).

The Rosenthal YMWHA preschool, one of several Jewish preschools nearby, draws heavily from my neighborhood. We live about four long blocks away.

This is just going to keep happening. I know too many people. I wish, now, that I didn't. My social nerve endings feel so exposed.

I had not, at this point, expected this kind of news from the preschool. I had more expected to find the name of someone I went to college with on the WTC long list, whenever it is published.

Ourselves as Characters

Tuesday, October 2nd, 2001 (to Jack Womack)

One of the things the disaster did to us was to strip us down to being stick figures, *der Beobachter*—the observer in physics. I have been compulsively observing and documenting what I see around me as resistance against this stripping away.

After writing "Death & Preschool," one of the nights I felt worst, at the point where I just wished I knew no one at all because knowing many people left me so emotionally exposed, I had a bleak epiphany: I am the living embodiment of a literary point-of-view choice. I am the narrator of the psychological horror disaster narrative.

The monster is off stage. In person, I saw no burning buildings, no smoke. (Yet when the wind changed, I could taste it and it irritated my eyes and nose.) In the regular course of things, I do not see the Manhattan skyline except on very clear days, for half a second at the top of the hill, driving back from Chappaqua.

But I see the faces of the people getting off the trains, I see the mother of the volunteer fireman who works at Ground Zero trying to get her son's photos developed in one hour developing so he can bring them back in to raise moral. I see flags and funerals.

Resistance of disaster's stripping of personality is its own trap because then the pain is on a human scale, and it is everywhere. ►

Eleanor J. Lang

The Day the Towers Fell



In times of crisis, people think about the damndest things. The day after the towers fell, I turned to my partner, Greg, and told him what was bothering me.

“You know, Honey-Bunny, the way people ask where were you when? One day our grandchildren will ask us where we were.”

“Nah, I wouldn’t worry about it. Betsy saw it all from her classroom. She can tell them herself.”

Betsy is my twelve-year-old stepdaughter. Her school was on West, at Chambers, three blocks north of the towers.

The younger girl was home sick at her mother’s home in New Jersey on September 11. The other three members of our family were all within blocks. This is my story.

I was home in bed, enjoying the luxury of sleeping in, and the comfort of cats snuggled up on the bed.

I could not have felt more secure, or more comfortable.

And then came a sound, like thunder, only louder. Jumping out of bed, I looked out the window, confused because it was a gloriously sunny day. And then, from the courtyard below, someone said, “Look at the World Trade Center.” So I looked.

Cinders, fire, raining down from the sky into my tree-lined courtyard. Debris falling on the flowers. And a fiery hole in the side of one of the towers.

Confused, I turned on the radio. Pulled on gym clothes, thinking I was late for my Tuesday morning work-out anyway. Put on a pot of coffee. 1010 News told me that a “small plane” had crashed into the side of the World Trade Center. OK, stupid aviation accidents happen. When the coffee was ready, I took my mug downstairs to the courtyard, to find out what was going on.

And the second plane hit.

I suppose my sense of terror was shared with the nation watching on television. And those folks probably knew more than I did. I did know that two planes, big ones, hitting the World Trade Center, could not be an accident. I did know that we were under attack, and that it was happening in my front yard.

Unless you happened to grow up in London during WWII, a generation or so before my own, or unless your parents were diplomats or armed service people in a war-torn country, you probably wouldn’t have had a better sense of what to do than I did, no better idea of which way might lead to safety. I ran up the stairs to my apartment, glad for a change that it is only on the second floor, and grabbed my purse and a sweater. And I called my partner, who said he would ride his bicycle downtown to get me. And then I put my coffee cup down, made sure the potty seats were open for the cats, and left, locking the apartment door behind me.

I did not stop for long enough to turn off

the radio or shut down the computer.

As I got back down to the lobby of my building, our courtyard was suddenly filled with a procession of people. Black uniforms, white caps, and name tags. It seemed that the entire staff of the Marriott, located directly between the two towers, was being evacuated into the courtyard. Chamber maids and bus boys, waiters and waitresses, reception and reservation people were all running through on their way to the esplanade, all screaming. I had the sense of watching a movie I didn’t much care for, a feeling that was to repeat throughout the day; I wanted my \$9.50 back, then and there. Still do.

And I waited and watched, first in the courtyard of my building. I watched for Greg to ride up on his bicycle, thinking, irrationally, that he would know what to do and it would be OK once we were together. I watched my neighbors, mostly looking more scared than I felt, leaving the building with overnight bags, dogs, and small children. I watch debris fall down from the sky and smoke rise up. I watched as people on fire plummeted to their deaths from the high floors of the World Trade Center. And I watched my neighbors try desperately to get a signal on their cell phones as they looked up at the towers, wondering if their loved ones inside would get out.

After what seemed like an eternity of waiting, Angel, my doorman, came to tell us that we weren’t safe, to go to the esplanade. I wondered what he would do, wondered if I couldn’t just go back to my sunny and pleasant apartment. But I went to the esplanade to wait more. It was a stunningly gorgeous day, warm, with bright sunshine and puffy clouds. The sunlight reflected off the Hudson River and the trees, still green, gave a beautiful, dappled shade. From the esplanade, the apartments blocked the view of the burning towers, and I couldn’t see what was happening, could imagine that New York’s finest and New York’s bravest would soon have things under control, that I’d be able to go home in a few hours, maybe even make my 2 o’clock interview. I could see that the gym was empty, but thought that I could do my stretches outside and go for a run along the river.

And then, people started running, south from the plaza, along the esplanade. And someone said the sky was falling. Actually, they said that the towers were falling, but that didn’t make sense, didn’t seem right. And the police came and said that the sky was falling, that we had to go south.

All of the images that you have seen show the two towers falling in a silent and stately manner. But it wasn’t like that. We heard a sound, like a jet plane coming in to land directly on top of us. It wasn’t clear if another plane was descending, or bombs were being

dropped, or if the apartment buildings we were standing next to would fall. It wasn’t clear if north or south, inside or outside, would afford the best chance of survival. I suppose I was scared; my gut had turned to ice. In retrospect, I wasn’t really frightened until later. In retrospect, I simply couldn’t feel it until later.

So I went south with the crowd, never running, but walking briskly. South past my apartment building is an open area with some nice public art. And when I got there, I looked up, and saw the towers falling, the sky falling, and then it went white.

From the inside, that debris cloud was dark as night, except white. And it just kept raining down, without stop, for what I know was minutes but felt like hours. I wrapped my sweater around my nose and mouth, grateful that I had it with me, thinking that I was breathing concrete and marble and asbestos and dead people. I wondered if it would make me sick, then wondered if it would hurt my running performance.

I kept going, south past the Holocaust memorial, thinking that the cremated remains falling down on it were fitting and frightening. Past the south end of the esplanade, while the debris kept raining. And then past into Battery Park itself. The debris had stopped actively falling, or maybe it just didn’t fall that far south; I still don’t know. I saw a man in his pajama bottoms, flannel robe, and slippers shuffling along, and I worried that he didn’t have his wallet, wondered if someone would help him get clean clothes. And I noticed that everyone was covered in a layer of white dust, some more thickly than others. I knew that my own layer was pretty thick, was grateful to be wearing glasses instead of contacts; even so, my eyes burned and continued to do so for the next twelve hours.

I thought of Pompeii, tables set for meals. I was glad that my coffee maker shuts off by itself after two hours.

I saw the Marriott employees who had fled through my courtyard. Their nametags all told where they were from: countries in Africa and Asia, members of the European community, people from Utah and Montana and Maryland, all no doubt eager for the prestigious New York placement, all having traveled far to be a part of history.

Finally, I arrived at Castle Clinton, the fort that protected the New York harbor since its earliest days, and I leaned up against the wall; it had stood for centuries, and could probably protect me while I figured out what to do. That’s when I saw my neighbor.

For five years, we had stopped to speak with one another. I knew the names of his dogs. He knew the names of my stepdaughters. But I didn’t know his name. Jared. We were in agreement that abject terror in the

company of a familiar face was better than having the experience alone. And that's when I saw the Staten Island ferry, saw that it was still running.

Jared and I and his two dogs went inside the ferry terminal and waited, and when the next boat came, we got on. "What are we going to do in Staten Island?" Jared asked me, as if I had a plan. "Breathe," I told him. "And stand in the sunshine without buildings falling on us."

Jared did better, contacting the husband of his wife's co-worker, who lived on Staten Island and happened to be home. He agreed to come and get us, told us to wait in a bar near the ferry terminal.

If you ever go to Staten Island, you should visit Ruddy and Dean's, on Richmond

Terrace. Not because it's the hippest bar in the five boroughs, but because it might be the nicest. Frequented by cops and local government workers, they were crowded with people from the nearby municipal buildings and others who were returning home or had fled to Staten Island. They were quick to put out trays of free food, and as far as I could tell, were pouring free drinks. And they let people use their phone; the owner's mother stayed with me until I got Greg to let him know I was OK. She also took me to the bathroom and tried to dust me off.

Finally, our local host picked us up. He fed us and let us shower, took me shopping for clean clothes, kept Jared overnight, and drove me to Park Slope, Brooklyn, as soon as the bridge had opened. Greg and I were reunited by about 11

that night, and spent the next ten days in Brooklyn, staying with a variety of friends, until I went to stay with friends in New Hampshire, where I am as of this writing.

My city has been hurt. My family is temporarily scattered. We still can't go home. But here's what you have to understand: we are fortunate, blessed. We have been helped by friends, and in some cases, by strangers.

The cats have been rescued.

Three of the four members of my family were within blocks of the falling towers. But we are all OK: healthy, whole, and healing.

Here's the thing you have to remember: my family and I are survivors, not victims.

And so is my beautiful city, filled with people who are and always have been generous, proud, and brave. ▲

Tavis Allison

One Sunny Morning Toward the Beginning of the 21st Century

Hearing the first jet go by overhead triggered the brain's oddball-detector; a sound normal if you're at the In and Out next to LAX is wrong—too close, out of place—in Soho. I wondered, idly, if it would crash; a whump seemed to confirm it, and then sirens and TV news sealed the deal. Both sang nonstop all day long.

My view from our apartment's roof, at Prince and West Broadway, was very like the one you saw first on TV, and indeed I could see the newscopter shooting that footage. A black cavity, with an orange tongue licking its lips. A smoke plume, bigger even than the tower, making another chaotic skyline.

Two of my neighbors were on the roof too; there was someone on about every roof we could see. We speculated about the size of a plane that would leave such a crater; I'd heard it was a Cessna. One of my neighbors was old enough to remember the bomber that hit the Empire State; but that was in fog, he said, visibility's perfect now. It sounded to me like the engines had been failing, but I wondered about the odds that even an out of control plane would smack the tower dead on.

We saw the second crash from the side opposite impact. Turns out Hollywood has done a remarkably good job of showing you what it looks like when a wall of glass is blown out by a fiery gout of jet fuel. Sparkles like tinsel or radar chaff hung in the air long after the flames retreated; after a while I realized they were sheets of paper.

That time I didn't hear or see the plane, and took it for the explosion of a bomb inside; clearly not an accident, whatever it was. My mind's eye extrapolated a series of detonations, striding towards me across the rooftops, and I was afraid for the first time.

We talked about how long it would take for them to repair it, then after a time I went back inside, finding that all but one network broadcast through the World Trade Center antenna; CBS's local channel 2 was all we could get for weeks. The first notice I had of

the tower's collapse was screams from watchers outside, then I looked up for the birds-eye view on TV. On the roof again, the details were hidden by smoke, which finally parted to show a patch of blue sky where steel and glass should have been.

Somehow that made it real to me, more than a queasy spectacle or a scare I could choke down. There wouldn't be any repairs; the jagged stump of a landmark was going to be permanent, a classic icon that wouldn't go away announcing that ours will be a post-apocalyptic future. Like feeling that you've cut your finger, and having to add the dreadful suffix "off" when you look down.

My wife Jennifer was already at work at Columbia's Health Science campus at 168th St., watching it all from her nineteenth-floor window. We tracked each event, and each other's safety, when we could get a phone connection. Then I left to try to give blood, and she answered a call for trained psychologists to deal with trauma, winding up five blocks from the WTC. One of the quieter members of the group she joined there was Matthew Klam, whose account of their experience appeared in the Sunday magazine of the *New York Times* on September 23rd.

By the time I looked down West Broadway, both twins were gone, leaving displaced towers of grey smoke in a seamless row. My mindset presumed that everything was about the emergency; overhearing two women ask directions to St. Vincent's, I said I'm going there too, we can walk together. Turned out they wanted the convent, not the hospital. One of their cousins was a nun, and they planned to wait with her until the trains or bridges could take them home.

The street was thronged with pedestrians going places, making me realize how many people must flow invisibly underfoot every other day. Their attitude was 10% tragedy, 30% unflappable Manhattan life-as-usual, 30% who seemed to take the disruption of their vacation travel plans as the most important disaster. The remainder were

sightseeing, pure and simple. On Fifth Avenue, a rotund black man dusted white leaned his head against the wall, a refugee from the tragedy downtown. Another man, white from birth, paused to aim his long-lensed camera at him. "Enough with the pictures already," someone said. A cluster of people took stills and even video of a motionless cop car crusted in debris, rear window shattered.

Radios on the sidewalk, from parked cars, mediated the crisis; direct appearances were intermittent, and always surreal. A woman weeping as she walked along in a crowd. Buses parked, doors open, then one tearing down the street so coated in white dust that it left a trail of cloud. Catching sight of the shroud of smoke over the island's tip never failed to shock.

Evidence that disaster brings out the best in humanity: The line to give blood at St. Vincent's was longer than for the opening night of *Star Wars*. There were more volunteers than people to direct them; leaders self-organized, shouting directions to a clinic that might still need people.

Evidence to the contrary: In the lobby of my building, a fat man said, "I just came back from downtown, and I saw all these people with turbans, and these Chinese. They were *laughing*." Imagine you were an American in Libya when our airstrike killed their leader's daughter, I thought; would you have felt like laughing, or hiding? I felt sick when I came back in front of the TV to see that, in some parts of the world at least, people—even children—did indeed find the attack a cause for celebration.

Evidence for another cliché of fiction: Yesterday Jennifer and I got to listen to, first her heartbeat from uterine artery #1, then artery #2, then the amazingly rapid and vigorous beat of our little twelve-week-old. Womb name: Junnajet. We're tremendously excited; it's a crappy world sometimes, kid, but I can't wait to welcome you to it. ▲

Walter Minkel

Always Taking Chances and Hoping for the Best

I spent the entire attack on the subway. I rode to work at *School Library Journal*, from my home in Queens, on the E train—which that morning still ended at the World Trade Center (although I had always left the train long before that, at 14th St.). The train was very hot and crowded; a young woman hanging on to the same pole as I was crumpled, her forehead banging into the pole, and then passed out; we squeezed her into a seat (the woman who moved refused to get up completely, however). Several women fanned her until she revived. If this were a short story, I guess that would be the foreshadowing.

About the time the train crossed under the East River into Manhattan and people started exiting, the train paused for longer and longer periods, and it finally stopped for nearly an hour halfway between the 50th and 42nd Street stations. The driver gave out one of those noncommittal messages famous on the NYC subway: “There is police action at the World Trade Center, so there will be delays. We’ll keep you informed.” The train moved a few hundred feet, and we heard it again. I was in the lead car, and a guy a few seats away said, “Just before I got on the train, I heard that a plane—I think a little plane—crashed into one of the towers.”

“You heard that, and still got on a train headed for the World Trade Center?” said the guy next to him, rolling his eyes.

“I just wanted to get off at 42nd Street.”

“You think it was terrorists?” I asked him. I remembered the bombing.

“Don’t know; didn’t hear enough.”

Nobody on the train knew just how bad it was. We waited fifteen more minutes, and then two guys from the Transit Authority—who had evidently walked through the tunnel from the previous station and then walked through the whole train—came through the car, opened the front of the train, and hopped out. Out the little window near the driver’s booth, we could all see the 42nd Street station about a hundred more feet ahead of us, but there had been another train parked there as long as we’d been where we were. The driver came out of his booth, and people asked him what had happened.

“Don’t know; there was an accident or something at the World Trade Center.”

The guy near me told the driver what he’d heard on the radio.

“You knew about this before you got on, and you still got on?” the driver said, smiling.

“I just want to get to 42nd Street.” He pointed out the front window.

The Transit Authority guys came back, hopped back in, and told the driver he could pull up to the very end of the 42nd Street station, just enough to open the first door. He did, they popped the first door, and we all filed out.

It wasn’t until we reached the upper level of the station that I realized that something serious had happened, but I—and I think many other commuters—were still uncertain what it was. There were police everywhere, bellowing, “No

downtown trains!”

As I walked along, and then came up through the Port Authority Bus Terminal, I caught little bits of conversation.

“. . . hit at the 90th floor.”

“No trains running.”

One big black guy put a fist into the air and crowed, “The revolution has come!” I couldn’t tell if he was joking or not.

I passed by Madison Square Garden and the main Post Office across the street. Both had been evacuated, crowds of workers stood around looking confused, and there were police staking out all sides of both buildings.

“More planes still in the air.”

“Both towers hit.”

I thought about calling work to tell them I was walking the 25 blocks down Eighth Avenue, but there was a huge line of people looking frantic at every pay phone—and no one seemed to be able to get their cell phones to work—so I charged on. The streets were thick with pedestrians—everyone, I figured, who’d had to get off one train or another.

It wasn’t until I got to work on 17th, where they turned on CNN in the conference room, that I saw what everyone else had seen. I watched it for a few minutes, and then walked over to the window in the *Publishers Weekly* offices (we share a floor with *PW*) that faced the World Trade Center, a couple of miles south. We’d always been able to see it, but hadn’t paid it much attention. There was nothing there now but a huge cloud of dust and smoke. We stood and stared.

Heading back to my cube, I met a woman who works part-time a few cubes away from me as she came in, looking very upset. “You okay?” I asked her. Several other people in the office gathered around.

“You know we’re just a few blocks away from the trade center,” she said. She also works in a private school in the WTC area. “They closed and evacuated the school. As we were coming out, the second plane hit. People were stampeding. I got out of the way, but I looked up at the building and people were *jumping*.” She’d come in to her other job because she couldn’t get back home to Brooklyn. She started to cry.

We wandered around the office, unable to get home to Queens or New Jersey or wherever our homes were. I kept going back over to the big windows in the *Publishers Weekly* offices, looking at that big cloud where the towers had been the day before.

About a week after the attack, I had my regular appointment with my shrink, who has been treating me for diabetes-related depression. (I’m a Type I or “juvenile” diabetic; a recent study found what I have long suspected—that nearly half the people who are long-term Type I diabetics suffer from long-term depression.) My shrink is a diabetic too, and most of her patients are diabetics. We talked

about everything that had happened and the great anxiety that had hit the country. I said, “I don’t understand why so many Americans seem to believe that living can ever be *safe*. Living is always dangerous—you’re always taking chances and hoping for the best,” and she said, “I’ve heard the same thing from several of my diabetic patients.” She smiled. “Most Americans don’t know what it’s like to live 24/7 with a chronic illness that can sneak up and clobber you anytime.”

Although I do my best to keep my diabetes under control, over 37 years of nonstop efforts to sit on my blood sugars, it’s hard to do every minute of every day. I’ve slipped up more than a few times. I’ve passed out in embarrassing places, and walked the streets of large cities at night, not precisely sure where I was. I’ve been pulled over by a police officer who caught me weaving back and forth down Oregon’s Pacific Coast Highway and handcuffed me when I had waited too long to have lunch. (And I told him, after the EMTs had arrived and restored my consciousness, that I was glad he had. Once he realized I was a diabetic, he let me go without a ticket.) I’ve never felt safe, not ever, but I’m used to charging on and hoping for the best.

On September 20, nine days after the attack, I had a long-standing engagement to give two workshops to groups of librarians in Hennepin County, Minnesota. I guess because I have a chronic disease, I didn’t even think twice about getting on a plane. People in my office were asking me, “How can you *fly* right now?” The trial was getting through the nervous, slightly confused minimum-wage security folks at La Guardia. The process reminded me a little of the “Wheel of Fortune” tarot card—you’re shaken down before you’re lifted up. They made me check my carry-on suitcase because I had hypodermic needles (even though I had a note from my doctor that it was essential for me to keep them with me at all times), and a set of nail clippers (with no file) in it.

They didn’t know *what* to make of my insulin pump. Because I was wearing this little black box that beeped, I had to demonstrate that I really had injected this little plastic tube half an inch into my belly, and that I couldn’t remove it for a moment. Thus I was required to slowly revolve for two or three minutes while they scanned me up and down with a metal detector. But once aboard, the plane to Minneapolis had only had about ten people in it; we had lots of room to stretch out, and the flight attendants spent much of the flight reading because there wasn’t much for them to do. On the flight back, which was equally empty, I talked with one of them for a few minutes. She told me that *no way* would she want to fly in the same plane with anybody Middle Eastern right now, even though she wasn’t biased against anyone; “I mean, I’d normally ride with purple people,” she said. ▲

Ariel Haméon Trying to Stop

It was painfully obvious from the get-go exactly what this was about. Two planes, two towers, the Pentagon. And it feels dangerous to admit it now—even though el jefe's press corps deleted the phrase "You've got to watch what you say" from the official release—but my first thought was "Wow. Well done. These guys are good. No one's gonna ask for their deposit back on this one."

My second thought: "Holy shit."
Stop.

Phil told me first. He's the ABM Janitorial Services guy who's usually down by the elevator at the building on 40th Street where I work at a branch office of a large, national nonprofit. The building's owned by Silverstein Properties, the company that took over the World Trade Center a while back.

I went upstairs. Sandy was turning on the office TV, and as people trickled in, we gathered to watch the towers on fire. At a certain point, I couldn't watch any more and I went and fiddled around with stuff on my desk.

I heard Sandy scream. Tower 2 was down.

So I went and watched a little more. Steve, my boss, looked out the corner window at the Times Square ticker and said, "Look at the mob out there!"

"Mob? Shit!" My worst nightmare just came true.

"No, it's just a lot of people," he reassured me. The ticker carried one brief sentence about what was going on.

I went back to my desk and logged in to my database. But I got stuck on the little address field on the center of window, visualizing the words: "One World Trade Center. Two. Morgan Stanley, Fiduciary Trust, Cantor Fitzgerald . . ." That's our demographic. We were gonna lose people.

Stop.

Steve said, "How can you work at a time like this?"

I shrugged. I wasn't really; I just couldn't stand to watch TV. I told him I feared for the future, and that Bush was going to do something extraordinarily dumb. "When do they declare martial law?" I asked.

My mother was a high school student in Honolulu when the Japanese attacked. They drafted students for the cleanup squads, and she hinted darkly at finding body parts. But that wasn't what scared her the most. It was the aftermath, the camps. She said they all had to wear big buttons that said "I am Chinese!" because the *haoles* (that's Hawaiian for "gringos") couldn't tell them apart. The family was afraid that they would lose their home, their shoe store, everything, because *haoles* were . . . well, she never said what they were. She wound up marrying one, and I hope that made her feel safer.

I didn't believe or disbelieve her at first. I was always neutral, because she also told me

a lot of stuff that wasn't true. But later I saw an old movie with a bucktoothed guy wearing coke bottle glasses and that big button, so I believed that part of her story.

I was afraid for Muslims. This could get bad.
Stop.

Every night before I meditate, I read from some book I deem spiritual. I was currently doing the first volume of *Psychological Commentaries on the Teachings of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky* by Maurice Nicoll.

Nicoll was saying that now is a good time to be a little bit not of this world. That the influences that create mass events—like war—are not, at root, social, though the reactions to those influences will be. In times of such stress, mechanical thinking takes over, and it's the work of potentially conscious beings to deliberately avoid the mechanical. In that context, isolation from current events is not necessarily a bad thing.

Nicoll was writing from England in 1941.

They closed the office and I walked home. It was a beautiful day, but I was already pulling back. If you asked me what I felt—and I decided to be honest with you—I'd have to say nothing at all.

It was like something was telling me to watch and record. Don't project. No judgment. Just be there and remember.

I saw people gathered around pay phones, punching useless cellulators, waiting. And they gathered around TVs in shops and car radios as well. Everyone wore the same mask of shock. They were silent—the only voices I heard in these crowds were coming in over the airwaves.

I heard a lot of sirens. Shuffling feet on the sidewalk. The cars were gone. The fastest things on the road were bikes.

Occasionally someone managed to get through on a cell. The message repeated: "I'm OK. I'm walking. The trains aren't running. I'll try to get to . . ."

Down near the former women's jail there was a silver Jag in the middle of the street with the radio on. Top down, white leather, it was a beautiful car. A crowd had gathered, and a young blonde in a halter-top was taking pictures in the sunshine.

No one was hassling.

The weird thing was what I didn't see as I walked down Sixth Avenue: that both towers were down. I just saw smoke. I didn't look beyond that. I only realized that they were both gone when I got home and it was on TV.

Stop. Stop.

There's a valuable moment when you realize just how unreliable your mind really is. It's little things often, like when you decide

not to be angry or fearful and realize you can't.

After twenty years of meditating, that's all it came down to: an attempt to wrest some minimum amount of control over my own thoughts. Variations on that single theme showed up in every discipline I'd ever delved into: from the Gurdjieff stuff to the Sufis, who arguably had a great influence on him; from Buddhists and reformed Cabalists to Master Shanta in Hackensack.

There is an exercise I try to do. They all recommended it. It is, simply, that whenever you see yourself getting negative or mechanical, you stop.

"It's simple, but not easy," as Shanta said.

You have to keep at it: stop.

I went east on Houston, the smoke behind me. I started to see people coming up from downtown. They wore painter's masks. They carried wet towels. A Japanese woman was crying. They were smudged and some of them were covered in gray dust.

I heard voices. Words like "death penalty," "Arabs," "retaliation." And I thought: "No, stop that. Don't go there, humans," because, if you do, a bunch of innocent people are going to get killed. Just because they're Muslim.

Stop. Reset. Step back and think. The mass mind is going to do a little flipping out now, so get ready. There is a strong possibility that things are gonna be really stupid for a while.

It occurred to me that the people speaking were just running through their tapes. That what they were saying was all mechanical response, based on whatever social/environmental script they happened to be playing out at the moment.

I was running through a few of my own. A lot of the thoughts that passed through my mind on that walk would turn up, again and again, over the next few weeks as people processed the experience. Random notions floated through the craniosphere.

This is history.

Everything is different now.

Now we're just like the rest of the world. We're not special any more.

Unimaginable? No. These visions are some of our most profitable cultural exports.

Welcome to the twenty-first century.

The mass mind in action, I guess.

I tried to stay neutral. I told myself: Don't buy in. Don't identify. An identity is the worst thing you could possibly have right now. But in my notebook, I scribbled: "It's like I'm looking at everything through Muslim eyes."

I saw some Muslims. They looked scared. I listened some more.

A young white guy on Lafayette was expounding on what we—we?—should do to respond. Something in his tone made me think, “Hey, that’s a sports analysis.” His tapes came from spectator sports, games for guys who fantasize themselves in management positions.

Stop—or I’ll run that tape on how the Western imperialist hegemony wants to pretend there are evil, global Communist—or do we need a new enemy now?—conspiracies where there aren’t any.

I wanted to talk to Dana when I got home, but I couldn’t, really. Her assistant, an NYU student, was there working. They were tuned to CBS and making calls, visiting websites, seeing which dorms had been evacuated.

Dana asked me how I was doing. “I’m very upset,” I said. But I wasn’t.

Shock is a good thing. Shock is your friend. It’s there to take care of you. Maybe that’s the good thing about a bad past: you think you know how to operate in a state of chronic shock. In a strange way, the worse things got, the more it felt like home.

I decided to go shopping.

I stood in line with other people withdrawing large sums from the ATM. We were mostly quiet, laughed nervously about things like having to walk fifty blocks in heels, tried not to talk about the obvious. But it came up. I tried to say something I thought was reassuring, like, it only takes a small number of people to pull something like this off, and it’s going to get taken care of. A woman with an Israeli accent said “You think so? Let me tell you, the Islamic Jihad is huge!” and that kind of killed the conversation. All of a sudden everyone’s looking around to see who is what, who’s dark, who’s light.

For some reason, I got very worried about keeping a supply of food, water, cash and batteries in the house. Not that I really expected things to go Sarajevo, but just in case, in case the city stayed shut down, right? I was planning meals a week in advance.

Oh, please stop.

In the early ’80s I went to meetings at a mosque in Soho with the Helveti-Jerrahi dervishes. A young, American-born sheikh there told a story about a guy whose donkey kept disappearing and reappearing. He broke it down:

La—there is.

Illaha—no God.

Il-allahu—but God!

The point, I guess, was that consciousness, and therefore what we call reality, is discontinuous. It comes and it goes.

I didn’t understand what he meant until twelve years later when I read an article on neuroscience. The gist of the article, I guess, was that consciousness is discontinuous. Someone had measured its electrical pulse in the brain. It’s on and then it’s off again.

That seemed pretty accurate in terms of how I experience things. There are days and

weeks I can’t remember at all. Stop and start again.

When I got home, Dana told me you could get around the phones being down by using cheapo long distance cards. The companies buy up cut-rate circuits, and those weren’t overloaded, while all the main carriers went down.

I was thinking about Pinochet. It was so near the anniversary of the Chilean coup. My suggestion to myself: that’s why you’re thinking of Them—capital T Them—coming to round people up, bring ’em to the stadium. Set up the camps. Probability? High? Low?

Part of me was really afraid.

Dana’s family from Israel was in town. She’d been in touch. “Yeah, this is what it’s like,” they said. Dana had canceled a trip to Israel earlier this year because it was getting too weird over there.

She’d also been online with some Israelis, who mentioned that this was the anniversary of the Camp David accords. There was speculation that the plane that went down in Pennsylvania was headed for Camp David. Later, this particular association was mentioned in the Israeli Hebrew press, but not in the English on-line versions.

“Why not?” I asked Dana.

“It wouldn’t serve any purpose. It’d just stir things up.” She knew what I was thinking. Her face was grim. “I told you about those people.”

Yeah, I know. But I want to stop thinking like that.

I went out again.

In the street, I looked up, and there was a fighter plane overhead. A young man with silky long brown hair pointed a video camera skyward.

Somehow, that was a perfect moment, sufficient unto itself.

And a third time. I could not watch the thousandth rerun of the second plane hitting, the clouds of debris driving down narrow streets like a dust storm raking across a Midwest plain, the tops of the towers sinking, sinking.

I grabbed a digital camera and headed downtown. It felt better to be walking, looking, listening. Anything but watching TV.

There were lots of other people out as well, so many with cameras. The sun was sharp, the smoke so white against an incredibly blue sky. It was a beautiful day as long as you kept looking up. On the street, as you looked down Broadway or Greenwich, though, the air got dirty, yellow and gray like a storm coming in, low and on the ground.

I saw open cafes that were packed. Soldiers in the street. Kids wearing filter masks sitting on the stoop, lifting them to drink sodas. Hundreds of people queuing to volunteer for the clean-up on Hudson Street. Workers in fluorescent orange vests hefting crates of bottled water. Cops all over, but they were incredibly cool. Helpful. Some were even smiling, encouraging people to keep their spirits up: we’re all in this together.

It was friendlier out there than when the

blizzard shut the city down. And people walked in the middle of the street.

Stop and shoot.

By the end of the day, we heard stories. A cab driver was dragged from his taxi and beaten because he looked Middle Eastern. (Later, I would see a new bumper sticker: “Proud to be a Sikh American!”) Two Arabs were arrested in Liberty State Park, across the Hudson from downtown Manhattan. They were watching, and celebrating.

Welcome to the world of thought crime. We are now at war with Oceania. We have always been at war with Oceania.

Maybe I’m lucky that I managed to map post-traumatic stress disorder on to a mystic philosophy. Things don’t seem real? That’s O.K.—*they’re not*.

The way to stop is to stop.

On Wednesday, offices were closed because Giuliani said so. He wanted to keep the streets clear. George Bush was on the TV screen. He looked lost.

I couldn’t watch. I went out and walked around the East Village wearing my filter mask. I’d been carrying an industrial quality 3M dust mist mask since the mid-’80s because I’m chemically sensitive, and for once I didn’t feel strange about putting it on in public. Someone even asked me where I got it. The only cars around were official: ambulances, police, black sedans with smoked-out windows. Disaster means you can walk in the middle of the street, and a lot of people did just that. Cops were staking out the mosque on Eleventh, and I felt good about that in a weird way. One of the religious guys in a long tunic was walking in front of me; a hospital worker in scrubs passed him and said “*Salaam aleikum*.” I wondered if he would have said that on any other day.

I was going to go up to Union Square to see what was happening, but the state troopers at the checkpoint on Fourteenth Street said I’d need picture ID with an address to get back down again, and I didn’t have that, so I turned back.

Checkpoints: an interesting experience. For some reason, I flashed on this scene in one of my favorite movies, *The Battle of Algiers*, in which the paras closed off the Casbah. It didn’t work.

We were numb, our brains were fried, but we were back to work on Thursday. People in other parts of the country seemed more upset.

Our board checked in one by one, by voice mail, e-mail, cell phone, fax. We jokingly call these guys Masters of the Universe, because in the *Bonfire of the Vanities* sense, that’s who they are. They’re CEOs of this and that and the up-and-comers are Managing Directors of Global whatever. Our particular Masters were all OK, though some of them knew people who were not.

This conversation would be repeated over and over: who knew someone who was there, or not there anymore.

We were careful with anyone associated with Cantor Fitzgerald. We dropped the month's mailings—nothing much happens in September anyway. Certain zip codes were pulled from pieces in progress, though it was my opinion it wouldn't make any difference.

Then we heard that someone had phoned in 90 bomb threats: all the bridges, all the tunnels, all the major transportation nodes. Silverstein closed the building—they were a bit jumpy—and we had to walk home again.

In the lobby, Phil was really depressed. Seventeen of his coworkers from ABM were missing. They had worked downtown.

Keep going.

Why do I bother? Thinking, that is, trying to turn my mind around, to disassociate from however it is I'm supposed to feel these days.

Gurdjieff's power as a teacher, and Shanta's for that matter, was simply that they managed to convince a number of fairly literate people that it was indeed possible to change. So I believe: change is possible, just not very probable most of the time. I try to keep the faith.

In a sense, I have been promised paradise, that things do not have to be this way. I have been taught that no social or planetary changes are possible without internal change—it's the only way. And that this requires total commitment. Single-minded belief. A willingness to give up everything you are. And constant, quiet unseen action. You keep at it. You do not stop.

According to some, the only appropriate metaphor for this interior process is war. Holy war.

This is the real jihad, and I'm all for it.

I recalled this bit I wrote about the book *Realware*, where Rudy Rucker has a couple of his characters talk after Jerusalem and Baghdad had been flattened. At the time, one character's advice that one should simply live their life as best as they could in such circumstances didn't seem satisfying. After the 11th, though, my gut told me that Rucker was making a lot of sense, and maybe I should take those words back.

But I won't. The day they started bombing Afghanistan, I was walking in the middle of the street again. There were 12,000 other people doing it too. The usual suspects had organized a peace march, and it seemed better than watching TV. Or maybe I just liked the strange experience of participating in a history that can be agreed upon.

I couldn't listen to the speeches. "The banners, they all fought in the last war" kept playing in my mind. I stepped back. I tried to take a planetary view. And the tape went like this: War is just another way of people getting together—so you have to be real careful who you fight because you will wind up living with them. Your daughter will marry one.

Salaam aleikum, y'all. ▶

Sean P. Fodera September 11th at DAW Books

Upon exiting the subway station on Varick Street, my wife Amy and I had a close-up view of the Towers burning. DAW's offices are a little north of the WTC. There, we joined Debra Euler, Peter Stampfel and Sheila Gilbert in a conference room to listen to the radio and watch CNN. When we heard the first Tower was falling, we raced out to the street; it was gone by the time we made it outside. Still at home, Betsy Wollheim provisioned her loft (one block north of Canal Street, about seventeen blocks north of the WTC site) to accommodate the DAW staff and other friends, in case we became stranded in Manhattan.

My cousin Ann Marie worked on the 61st floor of one of the Towers, so the morning was agony for Amy and me. In 1993, Ann Marie had been in the WTC during the bombing, seven months pregnant at that time, and had gotten out, shaken but uninjured. My father, who worked for the Port Authority for 30 years, lost two co-workers in the '93 bombing. On the 11th, my father, less than two years retired, was the only person in the family who might have known where Ann Marie was. Around 11 AM, we heard from another cousin that Ann Marie had run from her office as soon as the first plane hit the other tower. However, Ann Marie's brother-in-law, a WTC Observation Deck security guard, did not escape.

My father had been driving a limo in New Jersey that morning—his part-time job. He was unaware of events until after 10 o'clock. I left a message on his answering machine that Ann Marie was safe. When he heard what was happening, he rushed home; and was very relieved to hear my message. My father is not someone who usually shows signs of distress; hearing his tone of voice on the phone scared me more than watching the Towers fall. At this writing, a number of his friends remain among the missing.

I asked my father to pick up my two children and take them to his house. My mother, a nurse, was stranded on Staten Island, which had been placed in lockdown. My brother, an NYPD Detective, managed to get her back to Brooklyn by late afternoon.

Peter Stampfel had left the DAW offices around noon to take his daughter Lily out of school. After checking back in at the office, he took Lily home.

Betsy's eldest daughter Zoe was stranded at her new high school, Brooklyn Friends. When the Brooklyn Bridge was reopened to foot traffic, Betsy prepared to walk to Brooklyn to bring her home, not

knowing if they would be allowed back into Manhattan. Just as she was leaving the house, at half past two, she heard that the Brooklyn-bound F train was running. When Betsy got to the subway station, the A train outbound service was about to resume, so she caught the first Brooklyn-bound A train returned to service. The packed train crept very slowly through the tunnels and the closed and abandoned Chambers Street and Broadway/Naussau Street stations. As the train moved through the area perilously near the collapse site, there was dead silence on the train. Betsy could see through the train windows that the stairwells at the Chambers Street station were filled with business papers, like drifts of snow. A woman in Betsy's car fainted. The train did not stop until it reached Brooklyn. Betsy took Zoe home by a more circuitous, and therefore safer, route.

About 3 P.M., when we heard that the F train had been restored, Amy and I took it halfway home, where my father and the kids met us. Debra and Sheila stayed at the office until almost normal closing time, leaving as the area was being barricaded and searched for bombs. They headed down to Betsy's loft, to join Betsy, Peter, their children, and other friends seeking refuge. It was wise of Betsy to provision her home, since she and her family were in a barricaded zone, and for three days the air was so noxious that they could not leave the house.

Late that night, Debra made it home to Long Island. Sheila could not get out of Manhattan until the next day. For her and her brother-in-law, who had also stayed at Betsy's on Tuesday night, the walk through the barricades and checkpoints and up to the West 4th Street subway station made the changes wrought by the destruction all too real. The air, breathable on Tuesday, now smelled toxic. There were many fewer people in the streets in a normally bustling neighborhood; those who were out couldn't keep from staring at the clouds of brown smoke that the wind shift was spreading over the city.

There were no cars except for emergency vehicles. Once they reached the subway, getting home proved easier than expected. NJ Transit was running quite a few trains out of the city and was not collecting fares. They found the sight of the city from the other side of the river was most shocking of all: The sight of clouds of smoke and the skyline forever-changed was unforgettable. ▶

Additional details provided by Betsy Wollheim and Sheila Gilbert.

Jack Womack

Autumn in New York

Wednesday, September 12th, 2001

I'd only been in the office at Harper-Collins for a couple of minutes when I heard the TV on and everyone going in. We were standing there watching the first tower burn when the second plane hit the other tower. No one knew for sure what had happened at first. From the angle we had you could only see the flames pop out of the second building, and only after they took away all the superimposed animation at the bottom of the screen could we see, on the replay, the plane. Even then I had no idea how big it was; with no scale other than the towers themselves, it looked like a Piper Cub and only later, in replays from different angles, could you see what size plane it was.

The moment when I first felt the adrenaline flowing into my stomach was when they started talking about people starting to jump. There are a couple of photos in today's papers showing guys frozen against the still-standing tower wall. The option of no option.

But right after that the towers collapsed, one after the other. I figured that both would be entirely burned out. Just before the first collapse, I saw smoke coming up from the bottom and imagined the chimney effect would take hold of both. I even figured that there'd be a partial collapse, eventually. But like everyone else I never expected that the things would just fall in on themselves, completely, after only an hour and a half (sooner in the case of the second tower hit).

This makes me realize that even in a nonnuclear postwar Manhattan, very little would be left other than two to three hundred feet of rubble, and it makes the place feel even less secure than it did.

The absence of the Towers hasn't begun to sink in yet. I haven't been below midtown, and from 5th and 59th the cloud is visible but nothing much more. On TV, from across the river it's still very hard to get a grip on exactly what shape things are in.

There were some old buildings on almost every side of the towers, including St. Paul's church, the oldest structure in Manhattan, and a small Greek Orthodox church that was the only building in the middle of a small parking lot, right next to the South Tower. The latter I'm sure is smashed flat.

They're showing some footage from down there this morning, and the only things that come to mind are Berlin after the war, Stalingrad, London in the Blitz. No other comparisons, and in places this is probably worse. They're saying rubble is one to two hundred feet deep down there.

This morning they're just really starting to get to survivors. There are apparently some with mobile phones. The notion of what these conversations contain, and the conversations

of the people with the mobiles on the airplanes, are haunting. Of all the things going on, I seriously have not even tried to imagine what these might be like.

Giuliani says it'll take a week before final totals are known, but I suspect by the weekend it'll be pretty clear.

Anyway. Yesterday after I left the building I walked home. Took about an hour and a half. Yesterday the weather was beautiful. The crowds were heavy, but not crushing. Many people standing around talking, everyone with a mobile trying to use it, groups gathering around TVs in bars, in stores, looking at the windows on the street at TVs inside. Walking up Broadway was like walking to or from work during the subway strike in 1980. I stopped at Fairway, crowded but not overwhelmed, for some groceries. There were a few buses running, all full, but no subways. The bridges and tunnels were sealed. Got to my house. Went back out for groceries around the corner, and that was so crowded that we had to stand on line to get in. But finally in, out, and by evening that had lessened.

With all flights canceled the only aerial sounds you hear, here, are F-16s. You can't always see them, only hear them.

At 5:30 I walked over to St. John the Divine to attend the prayer vigil. On the way I passed several cafes and on the other side of Amsterdam Avenue several firemen were walking, and everybody applauded. Sat up in the Choir, up at the front, as I got there early—almost five hundred people eventually showed up. Very lovely organ music and then the priests etc. came up, all in black robes except the main guy who was in cerise. Readings from Isaiah and Luke, and prayers, and then another lovely organ piece. Much stillness, and crying. Then out—

Back home to find Valeria had made it back. She was calling many people, as was I, the rest of the night.

This morning came to work. Very creepy feel on the streets. The only time I've ever seen the streets so empty of people and cars has been on Christmas morning, and I swear I think this is even more so. New York's white noise is very different this morning—no sirens, no airplanes (save for the occasional F-16), very few buses, taxis and next to no private cars. There are cops stationed at all major intersections and subway entrances. The subway was one-third full; my line is the one that goes under the Trade Center and is currently stopping at 42nd.

Here at work only one entrance is open, and there are only four people in my department in today; and our boss says, having come in, we can basically leave when we want to. There were 48 e-mails here, almost all expressions of concern and worry, and only one of which actually requested a galley of the new John Crowley whilst condoling.

A Very Merry War

Thursday, September 13th, 2001

Yesterday I left around 12:30 P.M. and started walking downtown. The weather was beautiful again, as it's beautiful again today; weather so perfect that there is no weather. I walked down through Grand Central, where the taxi rank was closed on Vanderbilt. There were plenty of cops inside and not many commuters. Mostly tourists, it looked like. I'd say the ones who came here this week have been getting their money's worth.

On 5th I turned south. From 5th and 42nd the Towers were once readily visible, and now for the first time I was looking at a vista where the absence was utterly unmistakable. At 34th Street I had to go over to Madison and then walk south two blocks, as the area around the Empire State Building was sealed. Last night some idiot called in a bomb threat, and the building was evacuated, which didn't take long. Considering the few people around, there was nothing to it. When I got back to 5th, at around 27th, I realized that I was seeing a very strange thing. South of 27th on Fifth, the buildings are all, pretty much, no later than 1930. The cornice line is fairly straight and the main things that stood out, in this vista in my experience, have been the Flatiron Building at 23rd and then, some fifty blocks further south, the Twin Towers. And now, of course, the towers were both gone, and clearly gone; the wind had shifted and the cloud wasn't overhanging the spot at that moment.

It was as if I had suddenly been transported into the past, and was looking at the scene as it would have been in the late 1960s (or earlier, of course; but that way the blurred color of street traffic etc. at the bottom of the picture matched perfectly). It was one of the weirdest feelings I've ever had in my life. A couple of times later that afternoon, I reexperienced it, seeing a vista in real life (because it does not come across on TV) changed beyond my expectation.

I think the closest comparisons I can come up with are thinking of Paris without the Eiffel Tower, or Seattle without Rainier. I say Rainier rather than the Space Needle because the former gives you more of a sense of permanence than the latter, and it as was impossible to imagine that the Trade Towers would ever go anywhere as it was to think that the moon, one day, would turn blue and stay that color.

Traffic is moving in New York above 14th St. At 14th, which crosses Manhattan at its widest point, every Avenue is barricaded with light police barriers and yellow tape. No traffic is moving between 14th and Houston, a distance of maybe a twenty minutes walk. None of the stores were open in that area, save for fast food places, pizza joints, ice cream places . . . the combination of readily available snacking products and lightly clad youth on rollerblades, bikes, etc., hanging out, the

occasional Frisbee in the park etc., combined with the somber cast of most faces, people asking me where I'd bought my newspapers, and so forth, gave the entire scene a remarkable air. I think of what was said of the urban events that occurred during the progress of Lincoln's memorial train—half circus, half heartbreak.

At Houston, there are further barricades, and these are well secured. Cops and State Police checking IDs and only letting through residents. On the block nearest Sixth, where I was, there were rows of orange bulldozers, maybe twenty in all. (Almost 10,000 tons of debris have been carried out, thus far.) Hundreds of people standing, staring down Sixth toward the absence.

From this far down it was clear exactly how big the cloud was, or is. If I turned and stared north, uptown, the sky was clear blue and cloudless; then I'd turn south and stare directly into whiteness. Or, rather, whiteness with a distinct undertone of yellow-brown, like the bowl of air over LA when you're getting ready to land. I could vaguely see the silhouette of the Woolworth Building, which must be damaged at least so far as the facade goes. A number of the surrounding buildings will need to be brought down, it's fairly sure. One Liberty Plaza, for which the Singer Building was torn down in 1968, is one of these—it may collapse of its own accord, yet—in which case the powers that be have exerted justified architectural revenge. Next door, the Millennium Hotel is in similar shape. (The spelling of Millennium is deliberate; after the hotel chain imbeciles misspelled the name, they claimed they meant to do that). The skyline will change further, no doubt.

This far down in Manhattan, the light as noted is tornado light. At some point further down from where I was able to get, of course, the no-fly zone must begin, though I am not sure exactly where: probably everyone who lives between Canal and Broadway has been evacuated. (There's been nothing in the media, near as I've seen, regarding what is happening to the people who haven't been able to go home.)

Down there the air smells heavily of burned plastic and rubber with a strange undertone that isn't fully developed yet, that I would prefer not to think of as decomposition but very well may be. The wind shifted last night and blew north, so we had to sleep with our windows shut. I had a terrible headache through most of the afternoon into early evening, and have been coughing more than usual. There are of course God knows what toxins in the cloud (and part of it is powdered glass, asbestos, etc.) but I don't see how we could have kept from breathing them.

The rain is supposed to start tonight, by midnight, and continue through the night; I think that will at last settle the dust, and put out the remaining fires. It doesn't look as if there are going to be many more survivors found.

Yesterday I told you they were using 18-wheelers to carry out the dead—who seem to be almost entirely in pieces, thus far—and this

morning comes word that Giuliani's ordered 11,000 body bags. I should think that everyone in New York will at the least know someone, who knew someone.

As of this morning, here is my personal tally:

1) My HarperCollins colleague Dee Dee's brother-in-law, in the South Tower, not heard from since Tuesday morning.

2) A writer-colleague's nephew, who worked in Windows on the World, the restaurant at the top of, I think, the North Tower.

3) A social worker colleague of Valeria, whose cousin's wife is missing.

Most everyone is back at work this morning, though mostly people are just talking about it. Valeria just called to say that school was about to open; she had to go in a couple hours early to get ready for the day. Here at HarperCollins no one calling, no e-mails. Very quiet. I think it may have sunk in to the couple of people who yesterday were calling for things that maybe we're not at our most efficient for the nonce.

Day 3, and This Morning

Friday, September 14th, 2001

This morning it's raining, very hard, a frog-strangler. I don't think it's rained this hard this consistently all year. My pants are still wet and the tie's soaked through. This has made rescue attempts pretty much impossible, today, not that at this point anyone is really expecting survivors—they were saying on the news that the dust down there, wet, has the consistency of oatmeal; and that with every half-inch of rain that falls, several additional tons of weight begin pressing down on everything. The subways down there have also all flooded, even before this, what with water main breaks in evidently several locations. (This water of course is also soaking into foundations throughout the area.) It's also turning much cooler—somewhere in the 60s today, and yesterday afternoon it got up to the mid-80s, I think, and was humid enough to notice.

It came to me this morning that the reason 30,000 body bags are on hand for what appears will be 5,000 casualties is that the 5,000 are all in pieces, and each piece of course will need to be bagged separately.

This morning, coming out of the subway, I was maybe one of three or four people. After yesterday, which at moments almost felt like a normal day (or, rather, a day in the gone world), today seems much more like Wednesday did, except far more grim due to the rain. In the rain New York's color goes, essentially, gray. Very gray. And that's how it looks today. With luck, it will at least finally clear the dust out of the atmosphere (it struck me yesterday that one of the many interesting things we've all been breathing in the past few days are bits of infinitesimally powdered glass). But if the other buildings start falling, the cloud will come back.

In this sort of weather in the past, of

course, the cloud cover overlying New York would generally be so low as to hide the Trade Towers from view, and it was pleasant to be able to fantasize, at such moments, what downtown New York used to look like when they weren't there. I was reading, somewhere, that some European is already saying that he and others will get all European nations to help rebuild at least one of the towers if not both, bigger and taller and clearly even more of a hideous target. Thank you Europe, but no, please.

Here are the ongoing bigger or more interesting changes in the event, that I'm noticing. I talked about some of these last night with Clute.

The first media memorial teddy bear site appeared. In Union Square, which is right at 14th Street where the No-Traffic Zone begins. Some workmen brought up a piece of steel from the Trade Towers and wrapped it around a stele, or flagpole, or something—they never pan up of course to show you what the thing is, focusing instead on the flowers being left. The one good thing is at this point, no teddy bears have appeared. It's mostly single flowers and pictures of missing people, so I'm actually not sure that a media-driven Mourning Zone will take hold. I suspect because everything in New York is a Mourning Zone, and everyone here is too much in shock, still, to even be thinking of those goddamned teddy bears.

The dawning awareness of New Yorkers, such as myself and Ellen Datlow (who I met for a couple of drinks last night, down in Chelsea, as she was finally able to get above 14th), that this is actually being paid attention to out in the country. A very funny thing, this—the sense I think held to varying lengths of time by people who live here that what has happened is in some ways just the mother of all water main breaks. It's impossible for me to really sense, that is, what the mood of a non-New Yorker living in the US is just now, because even now I cannot see it from a non-New York perspective. I always knew New Yorkers were the biggest provincials and this just proves it.

On the way down to Chelsea I saw a large group of people gathered around the front of a souvenir shop, and realized they were going through the postcards buying any with the Trade Towers on them. I saw people standing out in front of hotels, clearly not flying out anywhere again today. And on all the mailboxes, in telephone kiosks, on parked vans, on walls, the more the further down I got, saw photocopied flyers with a photo and a name and a number. We see dead people everywhere.

Anti-Arab action increasing, in Brooklyn, but still I think on a smaller scale than what seems to be happening in Michigan and elsewhere. On the day of the event the Uzbeki guys' frame shop in my neighborhood and Samad's Deli immediately closed. The poor guys were obviously terrified they were going to be overrun—like anyone at either place would ever have time to be a terrorist; they're always at work. Most New

Yorkers I think aren't buying into this, however.

A shrink, around 11:30 last night on ABC, was saying that it is completely possible to get PTSD (posttraumatic stress disorder, no longer "syndrome.") through constant watching of the event on TV. So not only will I be living in a city in which nearly all the citizens, myself included, will to some degree be affected by this for months or years, but a good percentage of everybody else in the country, and the world, as well. I feel myself at moments, for one of the few times in my life (the other being at certain times in Russia, and at the Galleries Lafayette food hall in Paris) at absolute sensory overload—that if I know another sensation, just at that moment, I'll become ill. At that point I leave the room, or change the channel to something else. *Forbidden Planet* was on last night, and I much enjoyed watching it. It was science-fiction not set on earth—

Monday Morning

Monday, September 17th, 2001

Yes, Monday morning.

Took longer than usual to go as far as 72nd as the local is now running on the express tracks and the express is running on the local tracks. Have assumed, as with everything that has so far occurred, that this condition is now permanent.

Here at work my colleague Dee Dee is back today; she came in with her husband, Gavin. It's a typical story, now. He was on the 104th floor of the South Tower. When the first plane hit the other tower three guys in his office got up and immediately went downstairs, catching the elevator to 75 and then taking the express down. By the time the three guys got to the lobby the second building had been hit. Her brother-in-law called her sister twice, the second time to say smoke was filling the floor and he was on his way down. "He fucked up," Dee Dee's brother kept saying. He was working in the World Financial Center, across the West Side Highway from the Trade Towers, was outside when the second plane hit. Says that dozens were jumping, you weren't sure what they were at first. When the first tower collapsed, everybody, he said, started to run. Uncontrolled mass panic on the part of everyone, swarming up along the river walk to the highway. (There've been plenty of reports of injuries suffered by people trampled in the two stampedes away from the collapsing buildings). By the time he got to the Village, the second tower collapsed. As you might imagine he's got a combat-level thousand-yard stare; I'd forgotten but now remember older brothers etc. looking like that, back in the late '60s and early '70s, after they came back from Vietnam.

My neighbor, across the hall, a young Latina woman is fine (and her seven-year-old son, too), although she worked in a building across the street from the Towers. Again, she was outside when the first one started to come down. Her particular crowd streamed eastward as far as they could go, then up. "I guess you'll be seeing me around the

apartment the next few weeks."

Friday night Valeria read what I'd written so far. "You are describing events," she told me. "Not emotion."

And she's absolutely right. So let me say how I'm feeling this morning, and how I've been feeling.

The first thing I want to make clear is how gratified I was to know that Valeria was all right, last Tuesday; how overwhelmed with happiness, how comforted. We weren't sure we were going to see each other that day, but once the trains to Brooklyn began, she was able to get back. We have spent as much time as we have together, since.

I feel deeply blessed and feel as guilty. When I think of what Ellen and Ellie and all those of our friends who live south of 14th went through (and in the case of Ellie, still going through; her place might not be accessible again for weeks, at the least; she's headed up to New Hampshire.) I know we came out very, very lucky. We came out easy, in fact.

I'm feeling terrible nostalgia for buildings that I never found attractive, except sometimes at a distance. I think of all the times I went through the mall underneath the towers, on my way to the PATH station to go visit Valeria when she still lived in Jersey City. During the past three years I became very familiar with everything down there. I remember Valeria and me meeting her mother down there, at the head of the escalators that went up from the station. She'd stand and wait in front of Godiva, which was next to an HSBC branch. I remember being down at the Border's WTC branch back in June (last time I was there, in fact) when Gaiman had his tour kickoff appearance. I remember walking with Katya and Carrie and Robert Legault across the

bridge that led between the towers and World Financial Center, en route to Ellie's apartment, for the wake after the memorial service for Jenna Felice, April 6. The orchid show was going on and the bridge and Palm Court downstairs (also destroyed, pretty much, though the palms are still standing) were full of orchids. On our refrigerator is a little card of a Boston bull terrier Carrie sent us a month or so ago, thanking us for brunch: she'd bought the card in the mall underneath with Ellie.

Any of us might have been there, and but for the grace of God, or synchronicity, or something, we weren't. Not this time, at least. This isn't a comforting feeling, still.

Familiar landmarks vanish constantly in New York—they're getting ready, or have been getting ready, to build a new Columbia building around the corner from me at 110th where D'agostino was—but never before have so many vanished so quickly, so awfully. I cannot begin to imagine what the place will look like, once it has finally been cleared.

I haven't looked at a newspaper since Saturday morning except just to glimpse headlines and pages (I did save them, though). I haven't turned on any of the news programming except at the request of others when they've come to visit. The more I saw the worse I was feeling—jittery, irritable, unable to focus or concentrate, all the anxieties that signify low-level signs of PTSD—so I stopped watching. This morning I read the *Daily News* on the way down, and have been keeping up with things on the internet. I think I'm probably able to handle print again but I'm not sure if that will last.

Last night, in a dream, I looked up through the sunroof of an automobile and saw a thin dark tower three times taller than the Trade towers.

Betsy Mitchell

Warner Books is located in Rockefeller Center, in the Time-Life Building, which after the Pentagon was bombed began to feel like a target, so at about 10:45 our president said any of us who wanted could go on home. Unfortunately, with all the bridges and tunnels shut, many people couldn't get home. Like me: no way to get to Brooklyn without walking, which I wasn't ready to do that early in the day. On the other hand, nobody was working; we were just watching the many televisions in the office and freaking out. So a friend of mine from Manhattan took me and Sara Ann Freed, head of Mysterious Press, home with her.

The trek of about a mile to my friend's house would normally take maybe 25 minutes; with thousands and thousands of people on the streets it took much longer. We stopped in a grocery store where lines ran from the checkout counters to the back of the store, everybody buying what might be necessary in a full-scale attack: water,

bread, of course the Manhattan necessities of bagels, deli meats, and bottled water. The store was accepting cash only, as the ATMs and credit card lines were apparently down. It took almost an hour to get through the line. When we finally got to my friend's house, we demolished a bottle of wine and watched the local news all day, which gave numerous horrifying close-up views.

But there wasn't what you could call panic, at least in midtown. People were telling their stories and commiserating and offering their cell phones and suchlike. At about 3:30 the subways to Brooklyn started up again and I took the train home. The train went over the Manhattan Bridge, which offered a perfect view of what had once been the WTC. Today I saw nothing but smoke. Not even a stub of those two beautiful towers. That used to be my favorite view in all of Manhattan, and it will never be the same again. ►

I'm terribly sad. And I'm terribly angry, and nowhere of course to strike out with said anger. And ergo have the same sense that I suspect everyone has, that of being buffeted by events. This of course exacerbates the sorrow, and if turned inward, becomes depression automatically.

The emotion I'm feeling now that is the strongest and most disturbing because newest is fear. Fear of a very particular sort.

I was just too young to consciously remember the Cuban missile crisis (although some of my most powerful memories in my life are of the Kennedy assassination, a year later) so have no direct familiarity with genuine, immediate, and justified fear over ongoing current events. For years of course we all grew up with the possibility, however remote at times it seemed, of there being nuclear war, but that was always something at the back of the head (although I think that fear, suspicion, call it what you will, influenced the middle of the last century far more than has been understood or admitted).

This, however, is a different situation. The fear of a nuclear, chemical or biological event that *may very well, and probably will, happen*, somewhere, if not New York. Fear that genuine, and in our new context justified, will influence this century as greatly.

This doesn't have entirely bad effects. It may sound like a cliché, or at least reminiscent of what our parents or grandparents have told us, but I really haven't felt so alive in my life.

It's getting harder for me to talk about what has happened, when friends call (Judith Clute called last night). There just isn't anything more to say about what happened; only what will happen.

The most fascinating thing about all this is that today, for the first time, I can feel, I know, that the event has become contextualized; that we now expect smoke in the air, train delays, the papers full of rising body counts (though still ~5,000); that the fear in the front of our heads has settled into the middle; that the bar has been so lifted for imagination as to be scarcely understandable, still. That these are aspects of reality that are, now, real and therefore not as shocking in some very real way as they initially were.

To the Day

Tuesday, September 18th, 2001

As I start to write this, I look at my watch and realize that one week ago, just now, I'd just seen the first tower go down. Here in the new world it seems like a year, two years, a hundred years. Time has taken on a rubbery quality.

Toward the end of Burns's *The Civil War* documentary, years ago, there was a single phrase read aloud; written by either a Yankee or Confederate some time after the war, thinking back on his experience, and I keep hearing it in my head:

"Were these things real?"

Even as I go through each day, so much of it still refuses to settle into anything remotely resembling reality. Last night we

watched Letterman, who was on for the first time after the late news, and it was extremely strange, and vaguely unsettling. He didn't make any jokes, of course, but this most hard-shelled of all contemporary performers revealed depths of sadness, and fear, and uncertainty, and anger; and then Dan Rather came out as his guest and broke down in tears twice.

Extremely unreal.

Yet, on the other hand, Valeria and I went over to Jersey City late yesterday afternoon to have dinner with her mother and celebrate the new year (praying, as every year, to have one more year). On the way, as we went up Palisades Avenue, which runs along the top of the Palisades (which, in this area, are utterly urbanized) and so I saw all of lower Manhattan from the Jersey side, and the absence of the Towers, and the smoke that continues to rise therefrom.

That, conversely, now seemed normal.

Valeria's mother, who is 68, was extremely happy to see us. Jersey City has a large Arab population (and Indian, and Philippine, and . . .) and she was more than usually suspicious—relating stories of how two had been arrested (I have heard this on the news as well), etc. She's holding up very well, though; of course, this is a woman who grew up in Soviet Russia during the Second World War, and under Stalin, and didn't leave the USSR until 1981, so she's had considerable experience, living life under conditions that are only now beginning to become imaginable.

Besides the absence of the Towers from a distance there are many things that are

beginning to seem normal to me now. Leaving the house fifteen minutes earlier because my subway now becomes express at 96th, and therefore no longer stops at 50th (unless I transfer). Seeing at least one policeman at every subway station, and many more at the larger stations. Hearing, along with the occasional airplane (I gather airports are becoming rather ghostly, at present), the occasional F-16. Phone service, especially long-distance and cellular, that comes and goes. Police barricades along Fifth, metal barriers at the Channel Gardens at Rockefeller Center, the sight of US flags everywhere, attached to car aerials, hanging from windows, photocopied and taped onto doors. The occasional Army humvee parked on Broadway. New York crowds, thinned out to a level I haven't seen since the late '70s and early '80s, when no one wanted to come to New York on a bet, save for the likes of me and my people.

I'm not as scared today as I was yesterday. I can't imagine this will last; today is Rosh Ha'shanah, New York is quiet yet again—this time, for better reason than has recently been the case—and, clearly, something is in the air. But I don't know what, and until that something occurs, I can only do what I have been trying to do for some years—since I came down with TB, really, back in early 1997; and again, after Jenna died, back in March—and that is, live one day at a time. The thing is, I have been *trying* to do this; and I think, now, I finally am.

It is the most real of all unreal feelings, to be doing so.

Jamie Blackman

On Tuesday morning I woke at around 9 A.M. and turned on the television, which I never do. I saw the World Trade Center with both towers on fire. *Both* towers, I thought. . . . Then they showed a plane hitting the tower, and said it was a small, private plane. No, I thought, that's a passenger jetliner. . . . I then thought, why am I watching this on TV? I stepped twice to my left and saw the same scene from the living room picture window (my view is an unobstructed one of lower Manhattan from almost due south at maybe 4 miles—the WTC is, was, an enormous and obvious feature, as is the World Financial Center, Staten Island ferry terminal, all the way up to the Empire State Building, Chrysler Building, Citicorp Center . . .). I looked at the camera on the TV console, but never touched it. I thought—wow, that looks awful, I am going to have to see those nasty black marks on the Twin Towers. I wonder how long it'll be before they can clean that up and make it look all shiny and new again. I called my Dad. He said, "This is just the beginning, they're going to do more." 2 WTC fell as I watched, sending a billowing cloud out over what looked like a fifteen block radius. I was and am, to this very

moment, unable to believe anyone in that area is alive. How did they breathe? *What* did they breathe?

I thought, oh my God, there's only going to be one WTC tower! Then I realized that everyone above the plane strike had no way to get out. The plane strike was only *halfway* up the tower. How many people did I just watch die with my own eyes? About eight seconds later, I heard and *felt* the shockwave. It was by no means deafening, but very noticeable. I looked at it for another few moments and then, illogically, felt I needed to take a shower. I come out, dripping, wrapped in a towel, and looked out the bedroom window in time to see the other tower go the way of the first.

I still haven't begun to process the emotions. I am furious. I am calm. I am terrified. I am brave. Yesterday I sat trembling on an express bus after two young Arabs got on carrying bulky shopping bags. I later realized that if I was scared of them, they were ten times as scared of me, and everyone else around them. I felt guilty. I feel guilty every time I try to enjoy myself. ▲

Waiting

Wednesday, September 19th, 2001

Waiting, today, for whatever is going to happen next.

It does seem as if considerable thought is going into whatever the response will be. Reports from Indian and Pakistani newspapers are saying that the special force units (Rangers, SEALS, Green Berets, several other groups including one we have never heard of before, "Night Stalkers"—this goes into my phrasebook of new terms, along with "Frozen Zone") are already moving into place.

The windows of stores on Fifth and 57th are filled with flags, or memorial bunting, or black curtains. Police cadets (having not yet been graduated) are keeping an eye on traffic in midtown, and regular police as ever, everywhere. Military humvees heading down Fifth Avenue along with delivery trucks and stretch limos.

I am furious at the perpetrators of this horror. At the hijackers and at all who consciously helped them.

I am furious at the US, for having let intelligence slip to such a level that this could have happened.

I am furious at airlines that cut corners on security and hired guards at six dollars an hour.

I am furious at pundits, who are presently coming at us from all directions; whether they be Jerry Falwell saying that liberals and gays brought about these events, causing God to turn Its back; or Susan Sontag saying in this week's *New Yorker* that courage is "a morally neutral virtue," and that the hijackers were, in context, courageous; or Howard Fineman in *Newsweek* writing about how baby boomers, such as himself, have always been too prone to self-loathing, prior to his saying immediately thereafter that the rest of our lives are going to be miserable and we deserve it for having been miserable selfish bastards; or the local idiot newscaster on Channel 2 (a notorious idiot, who has bounced from station to station for the past twenty years, always landing on his feet) who said "we've got a heartwarming story coming up," immediately prior to going to the burn unit at Cornell Hospital; or that coke-addled reprobate Taki in the *New York Press* saying that we wouldn't have this trouble with the Arabs if it wasn't for the Jews.

I am furious at God, if God there be.

I believe there is God, in some form. God leaves us to our own devices. And I believe there is good and evil. That most of the time, things are a mixture of both, to one degree or another; but that some people, some actions, some events, contain nothing but evil, in the truest and classical sense.

I believe that what happened last Tuesday was an evil act, unjustified and in no way the moral equivalent of anything the US government has done in the past or is doing now.

Valeria and I had an extremely long discussion last night that often became an argument, lasting until one A.M.

"What about Hiroshima? Or Nagasaki?

Or slavery, or what happened to Native Americans?"

Yes, the US has done terrible things in the past. Some have arisen from arrogance, some from ignorance, some from both.

Some, such as slavery, or giving smallpox-laced blankets to the Cherokees, should not have been justified in the past and cannot be justified now.

Some, such as dropping the bombs on Japan, seemed to be the only thing to do at the time. Perhaps it was, perhaps not; strong arguments can be made on both sides, and will be made from now for the next hundred years. Some, such as rounding up Japanese-Americans after Pearl Harbor, was a dreadful action that even at the time some (though not enough) felt to be wrong.

"They [meaning the hijackers, specifically] believed we're evil," Valeria said. "It's the way they see things. We have to understand that." To which, really, I could only say the easiest of responses: "Hitler believed Jews are evil. It's the way he saw things."

Point being that yes, you could say the hijackers believed themselves to be justified. You could say Hitler believed himself to be justified, or Lenin and Stalin believed themselves to be justified. And in historical context, their rise to prominence can be understood; the reasons why they did what they did can be comprehended, at least in basic outline; their actions demonstrate intelligence, and purpose, and rationale. You could call them all geniuses, in their own particular ways, and not be technically incorrect.

But the premises from which they began were horribly, horribly wrong; and at some point, through their actions, they crossed the line that separates all of Civilization, however small or advanced the civilization—whether it be Western, Eastern, Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Asian, African, Australian—from the monstrous. Making a conscious decision, at some point, to stop seeing people as people (whether they be enemy or not) to seeing people as disposable tools, or vermin; or to seeing them not at all—not simply for the duration of an emergency, or a war, but forever. Seeing light, yet choosing dark, thereafter actively working to switch off light wherever it may be found.

Because that's where these actions differ from others. That once the choice is made, that's the end of discussion. The US has at least tried to correct the wrongs it has done in the past, however belatedly, however ineptly, however badly; or however well, or however thoroughly. (As have many if not most other countries as well, some of course doing so far more effectively than others.)

In other words, we realized we were wrong, and did awful things believing they were right, *and then began trying to make amends for what, many times, was unforgivable*. And thereafter at least tried to do better, the next time.

Were we not to have at least partially learned from some of our mistakes, for example, the government would today be issuing edicts to round up all Arab-Americans, to be resettled in the deserts in the West. *All*. But that isn't

happening, neither will it happen under present circumstances. And were it to be tried, even in what has become wartime, the protests would be enormous, and effective.

We are, slightly, more civilized than we were; and considering human history, this is progress.

By 12:30 A.M. Valeria and I finally began to understand each other again, and went to sleep at peace. We are married, and happily married, yet the discussion of these things is hard, painfully hard; and angry, at times. It is remarkable, I think, that the discourse thus far has been as restrained as it has been, imbecile *New York Post* editorials and certain pundits notwithstanding. By having written this, I am feeling much less angry.

A Heavy Heart, Lighter

Thursday, September 20th, 2001

This morning, I am in fact even less angry than I was after writing my letter of yesterday. I realize that New York is only beginning to secure itself. There are, presently, for example, no new checkpoints anywhere within Rockefeller Center, either in the major buildings or in the concourse that runs underneath them all. This strikes me as not good. Police are stopping and checking all trucks coming into New York through either the Lincoln Tunnel or the George Washington bridge, but not those that come into town from the Bronx, or Brooklyn, or Queens. Some buildings have, clearly, tightened up security that was previously lax (these you can spot by the long lines of employees coming out onto the street). Others, as clearly, not.

Yesterday afternoon Valeria met her friend Marina and they went downtown. Presently, the only Frozen Zone remaining is west of Broadway and south of Canal, that is to say the area in which the Towers stood and the area most immediately affected. East of Broadway, the subway stations are open, in places, and pedestrians are now allowed to walk freely. Valeria said they got as close as the far side of Broadway (noting that neither Trinity nor St. Paul's churches survived without damage). She said that she can no longer tell where anything really stood; and that as everyone has been saying, it looks far different in real life than on TV. "It's so big," she said of the site. "So big."

She found something, down there, that she brought back for me; and what she found enabled me to move forward, a bit more. The following is laughable, in some respects, and I accept that. Laugh, please.

Background: I like chihuahuas. Like is perhaps not the most exact word. The side of our refrigerator is covered with various photos of the yappy little critters. I had a chihuahua when I was a child, which my grandparents fed until it became the world's largest chihuahua (35 pounds). She was always my favorite dog; I haven't had a dog, since.

As I noted earlier, throughout town, attached to walls and telephone booths and mailboxes and lampposts and cars are homemade flyers bearing pictures of the

missing, with their names, their descriptions, numbers to call. These are heartbreaking and numbing; there are so many different people, so many. They have been up for over a week now, and there have been no happy endings in any case.

Other things have been put up, as well: the WANTED DEAD OR ALIVE poster insert of bin Laden provided a few days ago in, of course, the *New York Post*; downloaded pictures of US flags (I have one of these on the door of my office, and one on our apartment door—someone in our building printed out a stack and left them downstairs for the taking); notices from PETA and the ASPCA telling where pets whose owners have been lost etc. can be brought; where blood can be given, donations be taken, supplies be brought, etc.

Valeria found something different and brought up the second copy she saw, and gave it to me last night when she got home. It was a flyer made up by Nancy Corday (I don't know who she is): a thank you flyer for everyone who has helped, in whatever way. The color photo thereon is of her dog (I assume, it's not a professional photo). A chihuahua, wearing a small flag tied around its neck, and what would seem to be a tiny nurses' cap with gold star.

The moment I saw it, I finally cried.

When I was a child, I cried freely, for a variety of reasons; over time, and with beatings inflicted at school for so crying, I stopped. I can remember, literally, all the times I have cried since 1987—once, then, when my girlfriend left me. Then, ten years later, in the hospital; then, during a group therapy session in February; and last March, two weeks after Jenna died. That's it.

Sadness turned into anger, and vice versa, and both grew ever more contained, with time.

I have no idea why the sight of this little dog finally allowed me to get out what I've had inside, since last Tuesday. Well, I imagine it evoked something from childhood, back when I was able to cry without hindrance, and triggered the reaction.

I cried for twenty minutes, while Valeria held me. All those people, I kept thinking. All those people. All those people.

Today, as said, I finally feel far less numb than I did, and less angry. The stages of grief, as I remember them, are shock, anger, sorrow, acceptance. I think I'm getting closer to the last.

Within the next few days, I think, as more people finally accept that their loved ones are gone, the city will become much sadder.

An English friend asked yesterday, by e-mail, if people in New York and Washington were less bloodthirsty than people in the rest of the country. I have an inkling but no direct experience of how the rest of the country feels (another friend, who with his wife drove here from Seattle—they moved here—arrived at the New Jersey border on the 11th, and said he could not understand why all the electronic signs were saying "ALL ROADS TO NEW YORK CLOSED"), so I don't know that I can really say. Some are, some

aren't, I assume.

But I don't feel bloodthirsty, no. That was my reaction on Tuesday the 11th, but it passed. I am, as I said yesterday, furious; but each day growing better able to deal with it, and wanting now only that whatever happens next be, however long it takes, effective.

Valeria tells me that I will be getting a chihuahua, for my birthday.

In the New World

Friday, September 21st, 2001

At the corner of Madison and 53rd, near the HarperCollins building, there are three tables set up on the sidewalk outside. All are selling flags, flag pins, flag buttons, photos of the Trade Towers, and T-shirts emblazoned with a variety of slogans, etc. One table is overseen by a middle-aged Asian guy who might to some look Muslim, and to others Hindu, and who ignores the next salesman over, a middle-aged white guy who was halfheartedly offering the come-on, "Buy from a veteran, not from the ones who caused it." And next to him, two young Dominican women who say nothing but smile, as best they can, and sell similar merchandise. Passersby buy from all three in equal proportion, it looks like.

The true spirit of New York indeed reveals itself in many ways.

Yesterday after work I went downtown, and saw for myself. I rode the subway, the East Side local, as far as it goes, to Brooklyn Bridge station, and got out. When I came out of the subway, what I noticed were the soldiers. About fifteen of them, walking down the street.

Police barriers, yellow tape, rebar etc. are placed throughout the streets downtown, demarcating where pedestrians may walk. (No private cars, buses, etc., are yet allowed below Canal Street, and I have a hunch they may never be allowed in parts of downtown again.) Yesterday it had been raining all day, and the sky was still gray and drizzly.

Everything, still, is covered to some degree with ash and dust. The streets and sidewalks feel gritty underfoot, the facades of every building are coated, to a greater or lesser degree, with a gray-beige film. On windows of closed shops, messages of the sort you'd expect (positive and negative) have been scrawled in the dust. The leaves of the few trees downtown are still coated. Many of the smaller stores were open; downtown workers were heading home. Everywhere were police, and firemen, and soldiers. The moment I turned onto Fulton Street and headed east, a terrible odor hit me, and for a few minutes I began to think it was coming from the site, but no; only the rotting garbage in the bags piled along the street that ordinarily would have been picked up, nine days ago; and the rotting food in the restaurants that haven't yet reopened. Some windows on the upper floors of buildings had been broken out; the ones at ground level that so suffered have all been boarded up.

I walked over to Broadway, which is as far as you can go, and looked over at what could

be seen. There were plenty of people around, taking photos—somehow, that didn't have the ghoulish feeling to it that I would have thought it might. I even heard one soldier telling a photographer, "you'll get a better shot if you stand here," pointing out a space between a dust-splattered mailbox and a concrete planter.

From Broadway I could see the one building of the complex that's still standing, number 5, no more than ten stories high, and black (and every window blown out) that housed the aforementioned Borders; and the huge pieces of the walls of the Towers. They resemble a pile of waffle fries, except that they're silvery on the outside, and rust-red on the inside, and of course fifty to a hundred feet high.

The tops of some buildings are already covered in blue plastic, I suspect to keep debris from tumbling loose. One Liberty Plaza, which last week was thought to be in danger of collapse, is actually solid, although a number of windows are blown out and it is as gray-beige as it is black. A good thing too, as I realized that had it come down that would have caused a terrible amount of damage on Broadway.

With the buildings gone, more light will pour through downtown, at sunset.

It's bigger than it seems, on TV. Much bigger.

Nothing else, really, to say.

I didn't immediately head home. . . . Phillip lives on E. 27th, near Lexington; a block away from the Armory at 26th. This was the Armory that, indeed, held the Armory Show in 1913. It was built in the last part of the 19th century, some time after the Draft Riots during the Civil War that were, prior to this, the most awful thing to have happened in New York. Carved into the walls of the facade now are the lists of battles in which its particular regiment participated, from the Civil War up through World War I.

Here, for the first few days, this is where people in search of their lost would come to report them missing (over the weekend—I think it was over the weekend; a long time ago, anyway—the pier at 54th Street, which is much bigger, was so designated, and everything moved over there). The walls of the Armory, and of the apartment buildings surrounding, and the telephone booths and the lampposts, are blanketed with flyers, and pictures, and messages. Has scar on left shoulder. Wearing gold wedding band. Blue eyes. Born 1978. Worked for Aon. Worked for Cantor Fitzgerald. Please call. Literally thousands of them, shingling the walls; all soaked in the rain, their inks running, trickling down, the faces slowly fading away. Rained out candles by the score lining the lower part of the Armory's facade. Scattered bouquets of dead flowers.

I looked for a long time, as did other people; sometimes reaching out to touch the faces on the flyers, as people do at the Vietnam memorial in DC. I have seen so many flyers for some of the people, around town, that they are now familiar to me, although I never knew and will never know them. On the one hand

I can't imagine what I would be feeling, had I needed to put up a flyer for Valeria; or for any of my friends. And on the other hand, I can't help but wonder if I will need to do so in the near or not-so-near future, or that the same must be done for me. I pray that it won't be, and then move on, a day at a time.

I went home, and waited for Valeria to come home; and she did. Every night she comes home (or, when I come home, and find her there) I am thankful in a way I have never been before.

Postscript

Friday, September 28th, 2001

Even though I know too well how unreliable memory can be I am trying to recall, precisely, what my emotions were as I stood with my co-workers in Debbie's office three weeks ago (today, I realize) and looked at the TV. When I do I realize that there were several emotions I felt that I (we, all of us, I think) believe I thought I knew, that I realize I'd never known until that moment.

Surreality. Stunned, seeing first the smoking hole in the side of the front tower. The sense that what I was seeing could not be real, even though I knew it was. I can only compare it to seeing one of my own dreams, on television, and wondering how the hell that was possible.

Disbelief. Not believing my own eyes, or

not having enough time to let one image become believable before the next one hit. Watching the second plane fly into the second tower, actually *watching*, then seeing the flames burst through the walls, and being unable to process what was coming in through the senses. (I'm sure my colleagues felt this as well; one said, "Was that a replay?" and instantaneously I thought maybe, although LIVE was clearly in the upper left corner, and I knew, intellectually, that it wasn't.)

Fear. Not as I'd expected—calmer, but deeper, than I'd have ever guessed. I remember walking—not rushing—into my office next door and starting to try and call Valeria (got through on the first try). Taking time to e-mail a response to Jen Brehl, who'd sent e-mail about Terry Pratchett. (Mine: "go to the TV." Hers: "I have.") But a physical sense of adrenaline pouring into my stomach (this latter reaction I recognized, having felt it last fall during a group therapy marathon, after a truly stunning release of anger), and continuing to pour; though not to the level where I threw it up. First felt when they said "people are jumping from the towers," and suddenly realizing my God, of course they would, what choice was there?

However, had I been Ellie, or any of the others running from the cloud while actually down there, the feeling of fear would undoubtedly be greater; I think the

distancing effect of TV, with its inherent unreality, kept this emotion deeper than it would have been, on site; although it's interesting to hear people who were there making no note of that. I suspect the affectlessness as to aspects of the event is still in place and may always be in place with those who were actually near there.

Horror. Maybe the emotion most different from the expected or foreseeable perception.

I was in my office, away from the TV, when the first tower collapsed; came back in to hear them saying it had collapsed, but seeing only the enormous cloud of dust and the other tower still standing. But when the second tower collapsed, I was watching, and realizing—no intellectual defenses, no distancing felt, imagine the previous sights had broken down those resistances—that what I was seeing was real, and realizing that (as David said) it was the most awful thing I'd ever seen.

Nothing fictional, seen or read, has even hinted at conveying that sense of real horror.

Nor, any visuals of actual events seen after the fact, once the immediacy is removed and the image has become history—not the Kennedy assassination, not the SF earthquake in 1989, not the LA riots; not war footage, not concentration camp footage, nothing.

I no longer believe that actual horror can in fact be conveyed in print. ▲

Jim Kling A New Day

Wednesday, September 12, 2001

I write at a unique time, on a morning when the sun illuminates a landscape changed forever.

I write to the sound of jet fighters circling above Washington, DC.

I learned of the attack after calling the building maintenance man. The lint trap in the clothes dryer had jammed, and I had been frustrated in my attempts to remove it. I had gone on using the dryer for awhile with no obvious signs of trouble, and now I reached a finger into the trap to remove some of what was there. The lint was densely packed, with different colors forming readily distinguishable layers—like the strata of geologic time visible on a washed-out riverbank.

Darryl, our affable and talkative handyman, knocked on the door a moment later, and asked me if I had been watching the news. No, I told him. I'd done little more than read my e-mail and check the day's sportspages on the web. He said something about planes hitting the Pentagon and the World Trade Center, and so I walked to the television as he began working on the dryer. I think we already knew it was terrorism, but I envisioned a small, private plane. It was only after a few minutes of watching that the true, shocking nature of the attack became clear. Two airliners, one after the other, flown into two towering cities.

Darryl and I just watched. We made a few

jokes. "What would ever possess someone to do something like that?" I asked him. He just shook his head. Neither of us really believed it yet.

Darryl had work to do, and so he left. I remained, dumbstruck, watching footage of smoky chaos in Manhattan and a gaping, fiery hole in the side of the Pentagon complex. And then I suddenly remembered: I had been walking outside the Pentagon building, just three days earlier. I had gone to a Friday night meeting of the Washington Science Fiction Association, and a friend had dropped me off afterwards at the Pentagon subway station. Only, after he had driven off, I hadn't been able to find the entrance. It was 12:30 Saturday morning, the place was deserted, and I walked along the perimeter of the Pentagon, admiring the architecture but feeling a bit nervous. After all, I was new to this city, I was alone, and I was confused as to the inexplicable difficulty I was having in finding a way in. But I was never really frightened. I was outside the Pentagon, the symbolic and physical home of our nation's defenses, and the place was deserted. What safer place could there be?

I had moved to Washington, DC, from the west coast, from Bellingham, Washington, after having lived there for five years. Although in many ways I loved the serene beauty and the distant wildness of the Pacific coast, I had been restless for some time, feeling drawn to the bustle and activity of the east. The past couple of

years brought leaps and bounds of personal growth, and in the spring of 2001 I felt ready and capable, even desperate, to move into the thick of things, and Washington, DC, turned out to be my choice.

So in June, I loaded a VW van with my worldly possessions and my cats and drove east for a week. Until the end of September I would live in a two bedroom, luxury apartment courtesy of my friend Karen Fox. And the move was worth it. I spent the summer exploring and meeting new people, and writing fiction like I never had before in my life.

My new life wouldn't really start until I found a new place to live in Washington, DC—only when I had a new, permanent home would the new era of my life begin.

And on Tuesday, September 11, 2001, my new life began. I had looked at the apartment, and it turned out to be just what I was looking for. So on Tuesday, September 11, I was to meet with the landlord and sign the lease. I was finally to be a permanent resident of Washington DC, and the life-change that had taken years to initiate was about to be complete.

And on Tuesday, September 11, jet airplanes slammed into three American landmarks, one of them just a few miles away from my new home. After Darryl left my apartment, I turned off the news coverage and walked to the roof of the building, where I

could see clearly the billowing smoke to the south. The rest of the city seemed calm, and despite news reports, I could see no sign of fires in the direction of the State Department or the Supreme Court. Connecticut Avenue, where I've been staying in Karen's apartment, is a main artery leading away from downtown Washington DC, but there was not an unusual amount of traffic on it. The city appeared to be calm. But as I watched the smoke, my eyes narrowed and I felt determination wash over me. The United States of America is an idea, a phenomenally successful one, born two hundred and twenty five years ago and still strong. We are a flawed nation, just as humanity is flawed, but if there is hope for human dignity and the raising of the human spirit, America is it. We are a nation founded on an idea, not a perfect one, but it is the best thing going. And as I watched the smoke and listened to the sirens and the helicopters flying over head, I had a new thought: I will fight for this idea. I will die for this idea if it comes to it.

And then I walked back down to my apartment and switched the television on again. Trivial matters left my mind. What could I do? I felt no desire to lash out or cast blame, I simply wanted to help. Those who know me know that I am not generally a very civic-minded man. I keep to myself. I help my

friends when they need it but you won't find me at soup kitchens or hospital wards tending to those in need. It simply isn't my way. But on this day, I wanted to join with others to try to help mend the awful damage to our buildings, our populace, and our psyche. It was the news anchorman who told me what to do: Give blood.

So, mistrusting the subway system, I set out to walk down Connecticut Avenue towards the Red Cross building, stopping only for a quick lunch at McDonald's, which remained open as if nothing had happened. There was little talk in line regarding the bombing, but the man directly ahead of me snapped at his son to "shut up," for no apparent reason. We walk a thin line in times like these, I realized.

I got my food and ate it as I walked, watching the cars streaming northwards, away from the city. Still, there was no panic, only slowed traffic. It looked like rush hour, but at 1 P.M.

I walked the rest of the way to 1915 Eye Street, just a block or two north of where the city police had cordoned off the area surrounding the White House. There was a line stretching along the street, with perhaps 200 people in it. I took a place at the end and waited for an hour or so, before finally being told that the Red Cross was understaffed—

Kevin J. Maroney

The Rise on the Thruway

Our pet rats—Fawn and Buddy—had been on antibiotics for two weeks but they weren't sneezing any less, so we made another appointment for them at the vet's for Tuesday morning. I placed the cages in the car, started up, and immediately turned on the radio. Since it was still early morning, I switched to my default morning listening, just in time to hear WNYC's Mark Hilan say, "We're interrupting Morning Edition to return to what appears to be our continuing coverage of the events at the World Trade Center. We've just heard that a second plane has collided with the building..."

I tried calling home, but my mobile refused to make a connection; I assumed that if the towers were on fire, that would interfere with all broadcasting and communications. Actually, in retrospect, it seems that mostly it was just that the network was immediately overwhelmed. So I drove off to the vet's without being able to alert Arthur and Bernadette. I figured (correctly) that Bernadette's sisters would call her and tell her about it soon enough.

The vet's office was playing a Lite Music station that periodically gave utterly inadequate updates on the progress of the catastrophe. One of the other visitors was in phone contact with his wife, and announced to us when the south tower fell. In retrospect, I don't really miss having been flooded with information and misinformation during the first hour.

The rats and I headed home (the vet assured us that the rats were breathing healthily and that the sneezing was probably just very mild allergies). About a mile south of my house

on the New York State Thruway is a small rise from which the Manhattan skyline is very visible on clear days, and September 11 was a beautiful day in lower New York, vibrant blue skies with no clouds. I was speeding south on the Thruway when the radio told me that the north tower had collapsed. I reached that rise thirty seconds later to see the Chrysler Building, the Empire State Building, and, all the way to the right, a tower of white smoke a mile high where the two loose teeth of the WTC had been. I would very much have liked to have been a minute earlier and gotten a chance to see at least the north tower one last time.

I arrived home a few minutes later and turned on the TV. The lower end of my cable dial is mostly broadcast stations, but on channel 6 is HBO. The broadcast stations were all, of course, showing nothing but the catastrophe; HBO was showing *X-Men*. I didn't find the movie more unbelievable than the news.

I spent most of the remainder of the day online. E-mail and Usenet were much better sources of the news I needed to hear—how my friends were. The answers, in order of importance, were "alive," "home," "scared," and "angry." I signed in on Bill Shunn's "New York people check-in page" many hours before it was overwhelmed by the hundreds of thousands of people flooding it with requests for help. By mid-afternoon, the sentence "The right wing has their Reichstag fire now" had given words to the fear in my head. Salon.com's note that "The space station commander could see the smoke rising above New York"

there were only three people there to draw blood and they had supplies for only 50 donors. So I resolved to come back later and walked to the subway station, which I now knew to be running, and took the train back to my apartment.

There I learned that three towers had collapsed in New York, and that a fourth plane had crashed near Pittsburgh. Thousands were feared dead. The magnitude of it overwhelmed me. When was the last time a plane was hijacked in America? I couldn't recall an incident. And now four, within an hour of one another. The realization was terrifying.

I did a little work and watched a lot of television, and slowly the day's events sunk in.

I turned off the television at 12:30 A.M., almost four days to the minute after I had been wandering the outer shell of the Pentagon, and I went to bed, exhausted. I don't remember falling asleep, and I did not dream.

I awoke to the alarm at 8:00 A.M., Wednesday, September 12. The voice of a National Public Radio announcer talked about the aftermath of the devastation in New York City. For a brief moment, I had awoken thinking that perhaps I had dreamed after all, that the world was still the same as it had been when I woke up the day before. But I knew it was all changed. The voice on the radio told me so. ▲

confirmed that I was, in fact, living in the future, and not one I had hoped for.

I returned to work on Sept. 13. At that time, I was working in Manhattan, reasonably far from the WTC, but travel into the city was difficult and discouraged. Here's something I posted to the newsgroup rec.arts.sf.fandom (rasff) that evening:

Today was the first day back in the office for most of us at Unplugged. I got in later than usual (subway problems), but one of my officemates was even later. He walked in looking glum but solid, and I gave him a high-five (hey, we're alive; it could be worse). He walked two more steps to his desk, sat down, and immediately started *wailing*.

I yelled, "What? What's wrong?" and turned around. He was holding a business card from his desk—I didn't see the name, but I immediately recognized the Sun logo on it. Before he could say anything, I said, "They're all alive. Everyone from Sun made it out safely. Janice said so on rasff."

Thank you, Janice [Gelb]. Thank you, Jim Ellis and Steve Bellovin. Thank you, everyone.

Saturday, I posted this:

For the last several days, the gallows-humor factory in my brain has been suggesting unlikely scenarios for Tuesday's abomination. Foremost among them are:

A. Someone wanted to buy the land of

World Trade Plaza at fire-sale rates from the Port Authority. Culprit: Donald Trump. (I originally suggested Lex Luthor. Trump has less realistic hair, though.)

B. Racist baseball fans wanted to stop Barry Bonds from breaking Mark McGwire's record.

C. Deranged railroad boosters wanted to keep people from flying. (Amtrak has reported that its business has doubled in the past three days.)

D. For the last few days, the Nattering Nabobs of Cable News have talked about only the abomination, taking attention away from . . . Gary Condit!

Other people suggested "Owners of the Empire State Building wanted to take back 'Tallest Building in New York'"; "One of the Marvel supervillains, to prevent the release of the Spiderman movie"; "The city fathers of Carthage, in a long considered revenge"; "The computer industry. Lots of companies will need to buy new hardware"; and "The estate of Irving Berlin. 'God Bless America' is still under copyright." (This last proposal was rendered far more sinister when it was pointed out that Berlin assigned all rights to "God Bless America" to the

Boy Scouts. I don't even want to think about the merit badges involved.)

Sunday, I posted this:

The biggest problem facing the US over the next few months is managing to respond to the 9/11 abomination in such a way that it doesn't leave us permanently in a state of undeclared war against everyone and everything.

I still fear that. Never far from my mind is the irony of an unelected president lecturing the world on the damage done to democracy worldwide. I have, however, stopped flinching at the American flag; I have finally learned, again, to love it as the symbol of *my* country, not just the right wing's idea of my country.

On September 11, in Mamaroneck (a Westchester village on the Sound) the owner of an Amoco gas station was verbally harassed—the assailant threatened to come back and blow the station up. Apparently rumors had spread that the staff of the Amoco had been celebrating the catastrophe, waving the Afghan flag, etc.

The owner of the store is Italian, though born in Argentina, and has lived in the US for 31 years. None of his staff are Arab or Asian.

I visited lower Manhattan a week after the

attack. The twisted hulk of the south tower already seemed like a beloved landmark, because I had seen it in so many photographs, the perfectly artful curve of the last remnant of the perfectly rectangular towers. The plaza looked like a construction site; what was truly unreal, and unnerving, was everything around the wreckage—shining buildings with hundreds of broken windows, streets empty of all traffic except armored cars, delis closed at midday with an inch of that awful yellow-grey powder standing on the three-dimensional lettering of their storefront signs. And everywhere police and soldiers, not threatening, quite polite even, just keeping people moving up and down Broadway. The stench of burning plastic and wood and bodies had already faded.

And today, October 13, I write this:

I think that three unthinkable things have happened:

The world has realized it loves the US.

The US has realized it loves New York.

And New York has realized it loved the World Trade Center.

Peace to you and yours. Life continues; mankind endures; hope prevails. ▲

Constance Ash Look & Listen Log

Primary Day

Tuesday, September 11th, 2001

All that day we did nothing, nothing but listening to the radio, going out to the street, taking photos, and hanging online, reading and posting. It was while out there, about 7, we ran into David Georgi, a young Sicilian American friend of ours, about 32, from Buffalo originally. He had been trying to get down to Ground Zero, and, of course, not allowed. He wanted to dig. He is—an elf, without the elf's tensile strength. He was wearing a sleeveless t-shirt and sandals, and carrying his NYU backpack—he's an adjunct teaching Medieval French poetry.

I learned about what happened by going online and opening my e-mail after breakfast. Just as I was opening my first mail message the box begins flooding with messages from people all over the country asking if I'm o.k.

Ned (Sublette, my spousal unit) then announces the water coming out the bathtub faucets is filthy.

I go to the New York *Times* site and see a plane has hit the World Trade Center.

We go outside and hit the street just seconds after the second tower falls.

And we stand there, with everyone else, just staring and going what the fuck? While our neighbor Albert is crying because he just quit his job last week as receptionist in the Towers, at Cantor Fitzgerald, and he's all alone in this city, in this country, being here from Surinam, and can't go home because it's likely he won't be allowed back in the States if he goes.

We walked with David to his place on Mott. He offered some dinner. We hadn't eaten. Hadn't thought to.

And David didn't want to be alone. Phone link to those outside the Frozen Zone wasn't what he needed, though he would not say so. Those further away were not his people right now. We are, for we are all in the Zone together.

David and Ned eat. I take a couple of bites from Ned's fork, but I don't want a plate of my own. I have no appetite.

The horrible dust. The horrible ash. Ash. Growing up on a farm we set fires deliberately. We burned off fields in the fall to consume weed seeds and release nitrogen more quickly into the top soil. We burned last year's leftover hay and straw to keep them from spontaneous combustion disasters. We burned the weed trash in magnificent bonfires in the fall. We burned our flammable trash in a barrel. We even burned coal and wood for heat. We smoked meat. Ashes remained, to be spread and hoed into the garden soil. Ash was a dove grey, edged with white. Tissue thin and fragile as a moth wing, floated by heat currents only—for you burn only on windless days. Ash was black and called soot.

This stuff. But this stuff. It's colorless. Ugly beyond description, it sucks all color from the world. It's a no-color, the color of death, of sterility, hopelessness of resurrection. It's toxic. It's poison. It's the post-industrial ash made up of elements not found in nature. It's sticky and oily, like the finest powder of cremains, what the funeral homes call the remains now, after your loved one has been cremated. It is the color of evil. It

gathers inches deep along the curbs. It colors the streets. It's covering our windows. It is falling on us.

This dust is the World Trade Center Towers.

We are breathing the WTC. We are breathing the dead.

About 10:30 we left David, walking on Spring towards home. How empty, how quiet it is, being Frozen out of the rest of the city, the country, the world. No honking. No cars. No taxis. No trucks. No tourists. No tourists at all, here in SoHo that has been colonized and carpetbagged for so long by people who do not live here to the point that we longtime residents stay off the street, leaving our own neighborhood as fast as possible when going out. Without the tourists, only those who live here, and who are young—early 20s to early 30s generally—are on the streets. What's open? The Spring Street Bar is ass-to-crotch packed with people drinking. There is the indecipherable roar of voices, but uncharacteristically, no laughter. Balthazar is steel-shuttered shut. Most places are. Only a few of the most trendy bar-restaurants are open. The few people in them appear to be perhaps from the four hotels that opened here, after years'-long battles between our community boards and the developers to get the zoning laws changed to build them.

We are in our most intimate home neighborhood, rather less than a mile from Ground Zero. Our vision cannot adjust to seeing this horrible billowing pillar rising rising rising, thick thick thick thick, lit from below in the night, in the place of my

weather gauge, our geographic anchor, landmark, signpost.

Toxic chemical stench and smoke and particulate haze suspended in the quiet, humid night air. Irritated eyes, throat, lungs and skin. All of this is aggravating Ned's already bad allergies, and the symptoms of my nine-weeks-and-counting respiratory infection that will not go away no matter what I do.

Nevertheless, stoopidly, compulsion determined, at West Broadway Ned and I turn south, walk across a Canal Street that is shut down, without any traffic for the first time ever, down as close to Ground Zero as allowed before being stopped by police barricades.

In a life of reading and writing, I've encountered so many descriptions of walking in a post-catastrophe deserted major modern city, beginning with Daniel Defoe's *Journal of the Plague Year*, an account of London in the bubonic epidemic in 1665. The post-apocalyptic city is The Trope of the Science Fiction-Fantasy disaster novel. The destroyed city is a literary subset all its own, maybe beginning with the New Testament's Book of Revelations? As well, from the beginning of living here my own imagination has often and often turned to a Manhattan catastrophe, and especially destruction devastating the Towers—the latter giving me such heebiejeebies that by the end of the '80s I refused to work for any company that was located in them. Nevertheless, at least once or twice a week, and often every day, I'm in the concourse, in the subway and PATH stations below, in the Plaza between, or in the aerial walkway between the World Financial Center and the WTC 2, or just walking past. I mean I was, not am. Not anymore. Ever.

This landscape is nothing like those scenarios, though this is a catastrophe, it is a major city, and there is no normal activity. But there is a great deal of action and movement.

They've just begun the effort to find survivors in the rubble. (Rubble. It doesn't begin to convey the depth, the breadth, the height of the Pile.) We hear that some survivors are calling out via their cell phones. If so, then why is it the cell phones of those who survived above the Pile aren't working? So many questions. How much is fact? 300 plus firefighters were lost when the first tower collapsed.

The firemen. Firemen splayed all over the street and sidewalk in the dust. Exhausted. Covered with cremain dust. Staring into nothing. They do not touch each other. They do not look at each other.

An occasional credentialed vehicle driving up West Broadway, trailed by a broad ribbon of that cremain dust, lit up in the floodlights, blowing off the inches-deep dust-enveloped vehicle, wheels throwing up another horizontal cloud of the cremain dust from the street.

I'm starting to guess that maybe the final figures of those killed will top off at 10,000. But that's only a guess and without any foundation other than so many did manage to get out of the towers between the impact and the collapse.

It's going to take days, if not weeks, to

establish the final figures. How can it be otherwise, considering how little, if anything, remains of so many of those who perished. I mean, over 150 truckloads of debris had to be hauled out, the debris that had to be gotten out of the way *before* anyone could begin to search for survivors. Doing this while the fires burn.

No one can say how long we're to be cordoned off from the rest of the city. Or the city from the rest of the nation. The nation from the rest of the world. We are within the ring within ring within ring of isolation. The nation shut off from the rest of the world via air and shipping and any other border we can cut it off. The nation from the city. Then within the city, 14th St. cuts you off unless you live here. Below 14th St., Houston is another cut off.

We are below Houston, between that checkpoint and the final one to Ground Zero. It's surprising how isolated it makes you feel, being cut off this way.

Isolation to keep our horrible contagious disease of terrorism from spreading.

Unlike so many people, we have each other, and we are together, not separated by a continent when the planes were grounded as others we know are; and though we have no phone service and our water is seemingly contaminated, our internet provider's not even hiccupped, and the radio's on 24/7, and still giving real information, mostly, though our usual public stations have gone off the air, due to loss of transmitters when WTC Tower 1 collapsed and evacuation. And I know we're not going to starve, for pete's sake.

Yet I feel we are to be shunned as a community will shun someone who has suffered tragedy or divorce for fear of the rest catching it. Totally stoopid, when all the evidence is that people everywhere care. That people keep asking me to post more, to send more e-mails, prove that we are not being shunned, even on this most private and personal and individual level.

I am so grateful. Your concern and responses are helping me keep it together, to keep me in mind that I have no cause or right to lose it in the first place. I have not lost anything, except making a living. Which was something we realized within the first couple of hours.

Friday, National Day of Prayer and Remembrance

Friday, September 13th, 2001: Time was standing still; those days were all one endless day; things changed so constantly, and we were still in the first stages of shock.

A faint facade of normalcy. The Zone was moved down to Canal St. at midnight. We are part of the city again. I cannot believe how much this has raised my spirits. Which must mean others too were getting depressed.

Around midnight too, the rain moved in. It allows me to breathe again, but turns up the tensions on the fears of adverse effect upon the rescue efforts. For the victims and for those racing against time to discover survivors.

Cannot sleep. Drinking tea by 7 A.M. Ned, who could not sleep at all last night is

now sleeping in. Why not? Nothing doing at his office, not even a telephone line.

Can't stand being still. Don rain gear and grab umbrella, shove camera and notebook into a water resistant bag. Go out to the streets, called by the faint, yet renewed normalcy of traffic rumble. And once on the street it's like television is for others. Once I hit the streets I can't leave them, but walk and walk and walk, looking and listening, in a hypnotic trance, at how it all has changed, while superficially seeming almost the same as Before.

First thing though, is I look south, to the Towers, as I have done and still continue to do, to check the weather. The Cloud. A pillar of smoke by day, a pillar of fire by night. . . . Unlike for the Israelites, there is no hope in this pillar for us. Only grief, mourning, and, well, terror.

Roy is opening Le Bistro les Amis. Living in New Jersey, he wasn't able to get here in the days before. He and his family are from Egypt. Roy's married to Karen, a former cheerleader, from Boulder, Colorado, another blonde who isn't what you expect. They have two kids and are working on the third. Though Roy speaks very fine Arabic, of course, he and his family are Christians. We've come to be friends during the four years they've been on our corner here. Like them a lot. I tap on the window and blow him a kiss. He invites me in for coffee with steamed milk. He and his brother Habib and I discuss the situation. They are in favor of bombing Afghanistan to hell. I am not, as I staunchly maintain, as even I did Before, the fact that Afghanistan has already been bombed to hell, and this is what we have gotten out of it. We respectfully disagree, kiss goodbye and I'm off.

Ah, the liquor store on Spring still hasn't reopened. Owned by Koreans, I assume they live in New Jersey and haven't been able to get in.

Continuing up Thompson Street, I encounter Mamoun, a beautiful youngish man from Syria, who owns the Pet Bar, the first pet food and supplies store to open in this part of SoHo some years back. His cats are so fat! Periodically Mamoun puts them on diets, and then relents. The cats spend all their time in the windows, in various baskets and kitty houses, dramatizing to all the world why they are gold medal champions in the Feline Sleep Olympics. Last week Mamoun had said to me, "Please do not be offended, but every week all summer I watch you getting more beautiful, more sexy, all the time." He is already regretting, he says, the coming fall and winter when we are all going to cover up again. I wasn't offended, because he said it with such delight, not in the least bit sleazy. Mamoun had recently brought his younger brother here, and opened a trendy label shoe shop across the street from the Pet Bar. The Pet Bar is open, the only shop on this block of Thompson that is. Residents are gathered around the place with their dogs, all close together, all talking about our only subject now. Mamoun and I hug each other hard. I move on.

Fleets of trucks and heavy earth moving equipment are still lined up on West Houston

and Avenue of the Americas. Police barricade saw horses, dismantled now that the former Houston check points are down, splay unorderly in puddles, the rain beating on their blue and white paint. Sagging yellow plastic tapes, "Police Action Do Not Enter," fluttering in the wind.

On Bleecker and Sullivan and McDougal, the small businesses owned by Muslims from India, Pakistan, various countries in the Middle East, Muslim refugees from the ethnic cleansing set off by the fall of the former Yugoslavia—were shuttered on the 11th and never reopened. I do not know if it is because the owners live outside of Manhattan and thus couldn't get down here, or because they are feeling endangered. But all the Italian restaurants and French coffee shops and so on are open, though empty.

The fire station at Avenue of the Americas is bustling. But the men themselves do not look at anyone or anything except each other. They most especially do not look at the memorial bouquets, candles and messages of condolence and gratitude piled up in front.

Flowers and ribbons are wrapped in the mesh fences of every pocket park and playground, with posters of the missing, messages to the missing, the rescue workers and the world, candles on the cement at the bottom. Altars have bloomed everywhere even as the Stars & Stripes. My personal favorite Stars & Stripes is in a tiny shop window on Thompson that features custom-made, "colonial-retro" sort of clothes. A rear-viewed ankle length denim skirt in the window, its kick pleat a froth of red, white and blue ruffles. I imagine the owner-seamstress fretting in the empty crisis days of this week, filling her anxious hours with her own creative gift, envisioning and sewing this skirt. (Betsy Ross!) I think of all the clothing and other objects in the Fraunces Tavern Museum collections that incorporate the flag of our nascent nation. The younger a nation we are, the more anxious we are, the more familiar and comfortable a thing becomes the flag. I am feeling very close to the city I lived in during the time I worked at the museum, of how I imagined NYC under the long dark, destructive years of British occupation during the Revolution, which culminated with the Brits setting fire to what was left over when they finally evacuated, weeks and weeks after Cornwallis's official surrender at Yorktown.

I wonder at the marvelous generosity of spirit, goods and aid that have poured from everywhere for the victims and the city. Is that the contemporary way of sacrifices and gratitude to the gods, that, "It's not Me/Us, this time. . . ." Whatever the impulse(s), it is wonderful. Not to mention really practical and useful.

Later in the day, after the sun comes out again:

It is bizarre, isn't it, how normal the other parts of city have become already again, by comparison to down here, below Houston, it's not in the least normal seeming, even though we

aren't even in the Zone anymore.

This immediate neighborhood remains eerily empty despite no longer being in the Zone. The trendy SoHo bar-restaurants on West Broadway are mostly open, with no one in them. Signs are up that say "Cash Only," which isn't the case in the East or West Village. Everywhere I see young people pulling their wheelee suitcases, looking for transportation, now that the subway stations at West 4th and West 14th streets are open, or just walking, to get out of here. (You see *no* cabs.) Some of them had been stranded at the hotels. Others are going home to mom and dad Elsewhere. My own building has all the empty vibe that it gets over Christmas holidays.

Lower Broadway, unlike lower Ave. of the Americas which is filled with heavy equipment, feels almost normal, especially once above Bleecker St. Again I notice as I have all week the people I see in the streets here in the majority by far are in their 20s, 30s, and early 40s. I'd guess the bulge in the late 20s—early 30s. Young, sleek, lookin' good, prosperous and professional, no matter what ethnic origin. Very few h. s. age kids; college kids yes, around NYU and Cooper Union. Little kids no, at least not until this evening, and that's in the West Village. However, oddly, all week, I have seen many young moms and dads out with their infants in snugglies and strollers, along West Street even when the wind is blowing the toxic smoke up our way.

The East Village is densely packed with international and U.S. youth, multi-cultural-ethnic-sexual-gender-orientation the default setting, all out, all smoking, talking, even laughing a bit, but not with any sick jokes that I can distinguish—eating, drinking, and looking to get laid. Or as ever, as consolation prize, to at least dance again, and get drunk.

Amazing, how much the guys are "looking" today, which wasn't so the last three days, except among the Con Ed guys. For three days the sexuality of one of the five sexiest, most pheromone-sensitive antennae cities in the world had flat-lined. Until it began reviving, I hadn't noticed it was gone. Our household had flat-lined too. (The other four sexiest cities are Havana, Rio de Janeiro, Santo Domingo and Lisbon—at least among the cities I've experienced—all walking cities too, like NYC.)

Eavesdropping on two guys walking together behind me, one talking on a cell phone while carrying on a conversation with his companion. Cell phone just stops and goes—"Hey! Check the bod on the chick over there! Oh, man! Awesone! Let me have some!"

NYC's life force is resurrected and risen.

On a feminist list we were speaking of Oshún, the orisha of sex, romance, creativity, prosperity, glamour, etc. in connection with the god of war, Ogún.

There are many Yoruba tales of the other orishas sending Oshún to "bring down" Ogún with her seductive fascinations from his war/battle fury when those are no longer

needed, or are antisocial. She dances seductively, weaving a spell of glamour with her fan. She coats his lips with honey (one of her "things")—and even his machete. Within the Religion there are many rituals to "cool" Ogún after wars and battles. But you have to divert his berserker focus first, so they send in Oshún, doing her bit for the war effort.

What I'm seeing on the streets is Oshún coming out to distract, I hope. Hopefully, she could distract the saber-rattlers and blood callers and those who want to carpet bomb a bunch of sand dunes and civilians to convince themselves their machetes are bigger than the terrorists'. Distract and cool them long enough for Obatala's cool wisdom to penetrate their heads. Oshún has managed to soothe Ogún on an occasion or so when his pathological camino committed rape—which he did on his own mother.

So, finally, I see here the story I can contribute to a particular theme anthology that doesn't feel stoopid in these times to write. So much is revealed to the walker.

I'm playing the new Bob Dylan album, which is much cheerier than the last one released four years ago. It's the first time a CD has been put on in this house since *It Changed*. This, in the household of a music professional, who is writing a book about music, and writes journalism about music, and writes music and plays music and sings, and runs a band and record label. No music playing 24/24/24/almost another 24 from CD, radio or guitar has never happened here in all these years, except three times. Once when my baby sister died. Once when my dad died. And one other time last year.

Ned tells me about being in Two Boots pizza over in the East Village. "This gorgeous black woman is at the counter while I'm snarfing the pizza. She's about 19, I'd guess. And just perfect. Dressed just right, a personality that is really attractive and easygoing as she's talking with the guy behind the counter. I find I'm staring at her ass and can't stop. Then I notice every guy in the place is just staring at her, can't take their eyes off her. I realized until then I hadn't had a sexual thought in three days."

Why I'm seeing only men doing the Ground Zero work, I do not know. I do not even know if that reflects the reality of who is doing this work. It's the bucket brigades I see on the television screens that stab me to the heart. A sequence where a part of a desk is sent down the line Sometimes I see groups of these men walking to Ground Zero, and groups walking up from Ground Zero. They often march as they did in the military, chanting their sound offs. Their spirit and ability awes me.

Constance, this weekend get hold of t-shirts, sox, underwear and non-drowsy allergy over-the-counter medications to donate to the rescue workers next week.

It's soon going to stop being All Ground

Zero All The Time in the mass media, and we New Yorkers got to hang in there, take care of our own. I'm awed and humble and so grateful to the rest of the country, and will continue to be, because I know it's going to remain there for us. But we New Yorkers especially must show the Rescue and Recovery teams how much we care about them and what they are doing for us.

I don't suppose offering my body to every guy wearing a utility and/or tool belt would answer so well as shirts, sox, underwear and non-drowsy allergy medications? But, you know, it's war time and sex gets fast, loose and lax

I tell ya, those Con Ed guys, so many of 'em AfAm, stay so jaunty (unlike the firefighters who all have the 1000-yard stare—oh man, what they are going through)—and *all* these guys: cops, firefighters, rescue workers, sanitation workers, steel workers, construction workers, telephone workers, etc. are all in their prime and in really good shape. Just FYI, ladies, just in case you are thinking of later in the year visiting NYC and want to contribute something then. . . . They are going to be working here a long time.

Saturday, September 15th, 2001

A mosque—the Stars and Stripes draped on the fence out front, next to a very large red sign that says,

We Pray For Our Nation
Five Times A Day.

Sunday, September 16th, 2001

A beautiful, beautiful day, which doesn't match my spirits. To spare Ned my aura, I decide to go out. Walking the city, compulsively, extensively and constantly, is my normal response to emotional distress.

Residue of the toxic smoke and particulate have retired my older jeans until laundry can be done. Skirts bare more flesh to the toxin-laden air than one wants to do since the Event. I pull out the two pairs of size 6 Calvin Kleins that I found for \$14.95 in August and haven't worn, thinking to save them until the temperatures get chillier. They fit perfectly body-hugging snug, allowing me to bend, sit, wiggle, climb, etc. in perfect comfort.

These jeans are no longer that perfect snug fit, but rather loose. Well. So I pick the denim, not the black.

Hit the street. Look south. The Cloud is still there. But above, the sky is pure, perfect blue.

And now I'm at the George Washington Memorial Arch in Washington Square Park.

The Arch is an altar. It's fenced around by that wire mesh, evidently put up for last night's candlelight meeting. Stars & Stripes, flowers, posters of the missing and long swathes of paper and cloth with various art and messages completely cover the fencing. There are containers of crayons and colored markers attached intermittently so you can add your own message. Many are doing so. On the ground candles and photographs and flowers and more messages on brown butcher paper. Some neighborhood mothers and their

young daughters are among the candles and flowers. Making order, removing the dead stuff and burned out stuff. A large group is saying the rosary. Others are kneeling and tending to the photos of their own loved ones. I walk slowly round and round this carousel altar. Messages of love and grief predominate. There are more messages calling for measured consideration and pleas not to kill innocents than there are messages calling for vengeance, retaliation, and punishment. There are also messages that are none of the above. The one that most strikes me is this one, an individual expression-reaction, carefully and clearly handlettered, homemade:

New York City is the closest to
Paradise that any Terrorist will ever
get. Joe Randall.

I took a photo of that.

There's a crowd of sightseers who clearly are not New Yorkers, taking photos. Several Asians ask me to take photos of them standing and smiling in front of the message fence. This is not intentionally obtuse. And like all of us New Yorkers, right now I'm uncharacteristically patient and indulgent with tourists. And I do it without comment. But I do not smile back at them. Nor do I comprehend, but no doubt I've committed acts at least as stooped in my time here on earth. Alas.

However, as I move on to 8th St. I encounter a few U.S. young un's, disposable cameras in hand, or small point-and-shoots hanging on their necks, obviously heading down to the Check Points on Canal. They are wearing T-shirts that proclaim above a Stars & Stripes, "I SURVIVED THE WORLD TRADE CENTER TERRORISTS."

I hate them.

They may be U.S. citz but they are not New Yorkers, certainly. [Note, after this I've never seen those t-shirts again.]

I walk west on 8th Street, back into the heart of the West Village. Am stopped short at a place that sells army surplus clothes and gear to certain categories of trendoids, Uncle Sam's. Another altar. Lengths of brown paper, three strips deep, cover the sidewalk in front. Candles, but no flowers here. No grieving messages here either. Vows of vengeance and retaliation and patriotism that are hard to distinguish from jingoism. I take a photo of it. Such a contrast from where I was minutes ago.

But this weighs on my heart. So at Ave. of the Americas I walk north some more to 14th St. and then east, to the East Village.

I realize I'm reclaiming my walking neighborhoods, the neighborhoods that make up my most immediate NYC daily life. Washington Square Park and 8th St. are among my usual routes to the Jefferson Market Library, the branch library I have chosen to be my delivery branch for books I request from all over the marvelous, extended, public, multi-borough library branch system. All the library branches down here have been closed and are still closed (and stayed closed for more than a week after the rest of the system's branches re-opened—all you writers will identify with this aspect of

my distress).

I walk east along 14th to Union Square Park, which is also one of the major destination and transfer subway stations. Along 14th St. the usual merchandise is displayed. With Stars & Stripes and posters in support of what we must be in support of, displaying our support of our nation (this is a major strip for immigrant, legal and illegal, shopping and employment). Though there is a lot of pedestrian traffic here, not as much as usual. And none of it is going inside the stores. The storefront discounted/knock-off/cheap merchandise is being looked at but not being bought. The photograph I don't take and immediately kick myself for not doing so is a pyramid of cell phones, offered free.

If the altar at the Washington Memorial Arch stopped me in my tracks, this, this, this, knocks me, clobbers me.

Union Square has been for generations—from the later nineteenth century into the 1960s—a public place for "leftist" points of view.

Then it was taken over by the scum from everywhere, whether petty criminals, druggies, scammers, derelicts, or all of the above. It and the streets around it have been under construction for all the time I've lived here, and now that's more than two decades. No matter how much rebuilding, renovation, upscaling, traffic always screws up here. Though now the Green Market and the B&N and the Virgin Megastore and Union Square Cineplex and all the rest have evicted the scum factor.

But this. The entire park is a series of altars and a series of various spiritual approaches to comforting the bereaved first, and then the city as a whole. I think again of how much support we are getting from the other parts of the city and from the country and the world.

There was a major gathering here last night as well as in Washington Square Park. I knew well these were taking place. But I am what I am, and mass gatherings I have all my life instinctively avoided. I will admit though, I have often been among mass gatherings where all are dancing and singing along to a Cuban band or something, but that's something else.

First you encounter upon the crosstown 14th Street the candles and melted wax upon the contraction berms and blockades. Fluttering posters and messages. Flowers.

Within, the centerpiece of Union Square is the magnificent bronze statue of the mounted George Washington. (Anyone who has forgotten—George Washington is my hero. Just about the only hero I've got.)

The statue is enveloped with posters and photos and messages. These are all messages of love and remembrance.

The Hari Krishnas are chanting. Rosaries are being said. Hymns are being sung. Blessings are being sifted upon you from every possible spiritual direction except mine own of santería, and from other paganists.

Sandwiches and sodas and water are being pushed upon us all. I finally take a sandwich

and water, because I realize how much it matters to all these providers. For I too want to feed people in a crisis. And also, I realize again, Ned's and mine own economic outlook is quite desperate, so maybe eating when I can is a good idea? Or, I could save the sandwich in my freezer for when my appetite returns?

But thoughts of the lost and missing that so many mourned here last night are uppermost, followed by thoughts of George Washington, Commander in Chief of the Continental Armies of our Revolution, and how desperate things were for him all the time. And how desperate his thoughts were for this city for all of that War. And that New Yorkers have been here before. We came through. Especially economically. That's what this town's about, and has always been.

I move down into the heart of the East Village. Three hours on my feet. My back is starting to object, my spinal column with its two damaged cervical vertebrae and one damaged lumbar vertebra. My feet are starting to tear up too, as I'd not expected to walk this much when I went out and thus am not wearing the appropriate foot gear. But most of all, the damage to my spinal column, no matter how much I've recovered my physical abilities, doesn't allow for more time on foot without pain. But I keep going, thinking to stop at the right place when it appears and drink some coffee. I end up on Ave. B, crisscross Tompkins Square Park. Stop into the Kiev on 2nd Ave., but after 10 minutes when my coffee still hasn't arrived, in a place nearly empty, I leave again. End up on 4th St. and walk down from street level to the bar of Cucina Di Pesce, a glossy spot that I've never been in. It's empty, other than a couple indulging in brunch at the place's street level outdoor table.

I ask if it's o.k. to sit at the bar and just have coffee? The street to basement floor windows of the bar are open to the magnificent afternoon. Looks a good place to sit and regroup. The very young, attractive bartender says, "Certainly!" I ask if it's o.k. to leave my stuff at the bar while going to the powder room. "Certainly!" I come back and find the young bartender waiting. "What will you have?" he asks. "Coffee," I say. He shakes his head. He says, "You need a martini. It's on me. Do you prefer olives or onions? Do you prefer gin or vodka?"

I drink alcohol so seldom due to my back pain and thus ingesting ibuprofen and Tylenol p.m. But wothell. "A Kettle martini," I say. "With olives."

"How are you?" I ask.

The bartender's 22. He's a Muslim, Albanian, Macedonian refugee, who fled across Europe, all alone, when 17, in hope of reaching the US, and the US uncle-citizen who got him the money through a network series of contacts the U.S. suburban white middle class can't begin to imagine, that has been in place for centuries, just like the funds transfer system that the terrorists use, has been in place for centuries and depends not at all upon banks. The Chinese, I think, got one of those in place first, even before the "West"

"discovered" the "East." Nevermind, I say to him. I get sidetracked easily. He smiles. He's not sure anymore which years those were that he escaped, 95? 96? (trauma!) all alone across Europe, without English or any other language but that of his farm community. We talk farming for a while. Never before has he talked to a woman—or a man—here, who knows about by-hand laundry, how to kill animals and birds for food, and all that farm stuff that is universal around the world. He is not surprised at all that we can discuss Islam, and that for a nonbeliever I know a great deal. That's what it's like over here in the East Village. People know a lot about a lot of things all over the world. He learned that working in this bar owned by his uncle, to pay back what's owed his uncle for his escape.

The East Village has always been the entry point to NYC and the US of immigrants fleeing economic and military and political repression. That's why the East Village, of all

the parts of the city, feels the most normal to me. So many of the people here, even the young demo bulge, know what terrorism is.

He has beautiful big brown eyes, with wonderfully long lashes. Talking farming perks him right up.

When Bush comes on the television to address us, he pours me another martini and then leaves me, to watch, listen, and write in my notebook.

When the address is over, when I feel the need to move on, he gives me his card and refuses to allow me to pay for the martinis. I'm booze-buzzed. I never did get any coffee.

I head west again. My home. Back to the Hudson River and the Promenade or River Walk as I call it. No. I am still not allowed to the pier, or any of it, even though a resident here. My backyard is gone for the foreseeable or unforeseeable future.

I go down again, stopping in at the Ear Inn, where I receive no joy, unlike the way it

Ned Sublette

I keep thinking of the arc of experience in the modern city disaster and cities under war siege as charted in innumerable journals and novels. Most of the people we know are thinking about the Event in terms of the city destroyed in movies. Ned is the only one I know who is thinking of it in terms of Lovecraft. I'm going to quote from him.

—Constance Ash

The trope most often invoked is the disaster movie, but it reminds me more of H. P. Lovecraft, in whose "The Dunwich Horror" there is a vortex in New England which is a portal to unfathomable evil and horror that threatens the entire planet.

Wanting to know if I was correct in how I remembered it, I went to <hplovecraft.com>. I found the following quote, from a letter he wrote to his hometown paper, the Providence, Rhode Island., *Evening News* on 5 September 1914:

It is an unfortunate fact that every man who seeks to disseminate knowledge must contend not only against ignorance itself, but against false instruction as well. No sooner do we deem ourselves free from a particularly gross superstition, than we are confronted by some enemy to learning who would set aside all the intellectual progress of years, and plunge us back into the darkness of mediaeval disbelief.

Setting aside all intellectual progress and plunging us back into darkness is a pretty good definition of horror, and Lovecraft was one of the fathers of the modern horror tale. He referred in his work to imaginary books of his own invention, "ancient, mouldering tomes that contained secrets man was not meant to know." The most famous of these he called the *Necronomicon*, purportedly translated from

the Arabic work *Al Azif* written in 730 AD by a poet, the "mad Arab" Abdul Alhazred. Over the years many people came to think that the *Necronomicon* really existed.

In the penultimate paragraph of "The Dunwich Horror" I read:

It was mostly a kind of force that doesn't belong in our part of space; a kind of force that acts and grows and shapes itself by other laws than those of our sort of Nature. We have no business calling in such things from outside, and only very wicked people and very wicked cults ever try to . . . and if you men are wise you'll dynamite that altar-stone up there, and pull down all the rings of standing stones on the other hills. Things like that brought down the beings . . . the beings they were going to let in tangibly to wipe out the human race and drag the earth off to some nameless place for some nameless purpose.

Damn. Cheap pulp fiction, of course. A mile south of where I sit typing this, there is a place that not even Lovecraft could have imagined, a tomb of pulverized concrete and twisted steel where thousands of people are buried or dismembered, or were incinerated alive at a hotter temperature than a crematorium. There is a slag heap of smoking rubble some 60 feet high and steel beams that pierce down through the earth where they are "sticking up like spears," in the *Times* reporter's memorable phrase, from the floor of the subway tunnel.

There is a vortex of madness that was created by a team with a ninth-century worldview and a handful of \$4 boxcutters.

was the 12th when one of the owners was there, to Canal Street along Greenwich, which is densely packed with people who are not those who have lost or are missing someone. These are gawkers, save me from saying that but I do and I cannot help it. I am doing reconnaissance—I have checked out every subway station along the way, trying to determine what is running where, for, after all, I have to start looking for work, hopefully will be working, will need to get around the city and to Brooklyn—which I love almost as much as the part of Manhattan where I live. But these are people who want to just *see*. Well, after all, I cannot blame them. But still, knowing from the very first hours of this that our economic situation is not going to rebound resiliently from this setback—sometimes it's hard to be generous.

Nor can I cry. Except when I spot overlooked WTC postcards.

Except when I'm as close to my River Walk Promenade as I can get and I see a Monarch butterfly following its evolutionary dictated migratory path. The brilliant black and orange wings are in vivid relief against the Cloud, which today has taken on the Ivory Snow White facade, like the largest of a Gulf of Mexico cumulous billow.

I blow a kiss to this brave Monarch fluttering in solitary migration. "Successful navigation to your kind's traditional Mexico winter grounds," I wish for the butterfly.

It's not possible to photograph it.

And this day, if it hadn't all Changed, I'd have dropped yellow flowers into the Hudson in remembrance of my baby sister, Kris.

Monday, September 17, 2001

We are encountering and hearing from people we know, some of them for decades now, who have been displaced from their homes down in the Frozen Zone. Most of these live on John and Cedar Streets, on the blocks right there where the Towers were.

One of them, on Cedar St., had just gotten homeowners insurance six months ago. She's been moved into the SoHo Grand around the corner from us, which is why we've run into her. She's still shaking when she lights up her chain-smoked cigarettes seven days later. She escaped by wrapping a wet towel over her head, and running down the several flights of stairs from her loft to the street, where bodies and body parts, on fire and not, were falling all around her, and then she kept running, across Maiden Lane, and then uptown across East Houston all the way uptown to a friend on Lexington Avenue. Something like 60 blocks she ran in thin-soled slippers whose soles wore through very soon. She was drinking her breakfast tea on the balcony when it happened. Today she's still wearing shoes three sizes too large for her feet are still so swollen and torn up.

Another friend was building a stage in the WTC Plaza for the noontime performance scheduled that day. (Ah, the memories of Los Van Van and the Dixie Chicks playing that series in that spot! Such photos Ned has of the WTC Towers on those occasions.)

When the first plane hit our friend ducked under the stage floor. But when he saw body parts raining upon the ground, he got outta there as fast as possible. He ran and ran blind in the smoke dark until he got to Chambers Street, where he was found throwing up by another friend of ours, who books, and now also owns, the Knitting Factory.

Those are only two stories out of the ones we're hearing. Stories of people we know. We did not lose anyone we know. But we know many who did. And many, many, many more who missed getting caught in it only by pure serendipitous luck. The close call stories, like my temp agency scheduler, walking to work along Vesey, when the first plane flew right over her head, and then hit Number 1. Where the office was. No one in the office was hurt or killed. But they are all shaking, shaking, shaking.

New York City's Day of Prayer

Sunday, September 23, 2001

Yet again, a beautiful, sunny perfect day. I'm reading several days' issues of the *Times* all together, along with today's Sunday edition. There are three sorts of things I read in the papers—the reactions of the larger Islamic world to decrees and demands and requests of our nation and, hopefully, the other nations of the NATO Alliance, the biographies of the victims and—this is devoured with greed, the accounts of the heroism displayed by all involved, from the people who forced the plane down in Pennsylvania, to the PATH and MTA Train Masters' cool, quick and smart direction which resulted in the evacuation of every passenger and all personnel from the platforms and the work stations without a single death, or injury or anyone being left behind.

I decide to go out. To walk where I have not yet gone, even though the eastern parts have opened to pedestrian traffic again. To go below Canal, to go south, to municipal, county and state and federal government areas, the Financial district, down to Fraunces Tavern. Down Broadway to see if I can view the site.

I hit the street about 1 P.M. Look south. The Cloud is there. And I can smell it too. The wind is blowing up from there today.

I come to City Hall Park, which is closed to the public. We'd only reclaimed it from the mayor's bunker mentality for such a short time. . . . The stench from the Site is really strong. My throat is getting more and more sore. I'm blowing my nose all the time. The haze is thicker.

From here on the pedestrian gets funneled back to Broadway without even noticing. Suddenly I'm in a crush of people, all shuffling very slowly through a police barricaded passageway. The very thing I most dislike. I'm walking carefully. Despite all the cleanup since the 11th, that horrible dust, evil color-sucking stuff, dominates all surfaces, vertical and horizontal. The cops' uniforms are muted as the haze settles on them during their shift. They repeat endlessly, "No stopping to look. No stopping for photos. Keep walking. Hurry up."

And I'm watching where I step, stepping

carefully for there is still a lot of debris and lord knows what underfoot, and I can't see where I'm going because of the swirl of haze and smoke and the crush of the crowd.

And then, suddenly, a hole to my right opens in the crowd, at John and Cedar Streets—and it freezes me in the crush. The scale of even the tiny bit of the destruction that I can see stops my whole system cold. Even from this distance, right here at Broadway and John, the Pile is enormous. The dust and smoke are brutal.

The cleanup astonishes me but nonetheless, that horrible crematoria ash sludge colors everything.

I get to Wall St. and the Federal Building. I only get to glimpse Trinity Church, as I only glimpsed the devastation.

I move on as quickly as possible. And though I can recognize nothing, I do know this area very well, and zigzag my way east and south, always south, going to the Fraunces Tavern. I know it's just fine, but I want to see it for myself, and for the former Director. I get out of the crowd that continues to be a crush, that funnels itself into Wall Street. But I'm out of it. Going along William St., hang west to Delmonico's and then over to Pearl Street, and finally to the Fraunces Tavern Museum. I can breathe down here. Across the street the Goldman Sachs building is as usual with its view wells into the past available. There's a sign on the FTM's locked front doors that indicates it a food and rest center for the people working at the Site. [I hear later in the week that the FTM reopens.] Battery Park seems to have become a military campground and I'm not allowed there.

The residents of 33 Pearl St. are receiving their phone service still via a mobile Verizon phone truck. One of the Verizon switching stations is right there, and it's not back yet, evidently. It's also heavily barricaded with a lot of cops leaning on the blue police sawhorses. I'm writing descriptions of all this as quickly as I can in my notebook, making a big mess of it as I've got no surface to lean it on. I keep writing the entries over again, so that I can read them later. I keep looking up and around, to make sure I've the names right, and to decide where to walk next. It's after four by now.

A cop walks out from behind the barricades and asks me what I'm up to. I tell him. He keeps talking to me, asking me a series of questions that begin to seem quite odd. And then when he asks me what SoHo stands for, I get it, but can't believe how inept. If a person can answer that question correctly then he or she is supposed to be who s/he says, and does live there. Excuse me? Ah, the notebook. The camera. But—wouldn't a journalist have all those things? And then again, I'm not sure but that he's just using this as an excuse to come on to me. He's supposed to go on break. He offers to walk me back closer to the Site than I was able to go before.

And I go.

And it's Awe-full. And so, so, so horrible. The way the frames are still jutting up out of the rubble, around the pit, it makes me think

of the ruins of the Roman Coliseum, but bigger, so much bigger. And that dust. I don't want to stay there at all.

It makes me so grateful that I didn't see the planes hit, that I didn't see the Towers go down—and I could have, and should have, but just wasn't on the street at that time that day.

As it is this sight is like Pound's "Usura," the usury that gets between every good thing, even the bride and her bridegroom.

Back toward home along Mulberry and China town and Little Italy. Both areas are really busy, with people eating eating eating. This may be where the Ground Zero sightseers ended up. . . .

I'm still too hyper to stop, so I keep going past my own building. It smells pretty toxic up here too.

At the playground I run into the *maitre d'* of Lupe's East L. A. Restaurant with her best friend and roommate. Ileana's gotten blonder and blonder while here (she's from Spain), and totally gorgeous, with that high-colored complexion that is so Spanish, seeming to have a few drops of North African coffee in it. Her boyfriend is a professional rescue worker. He's been down at the Site

since the first night. He's not been having good dreams. Her novio's been taking photographs there lately, she says. She asks if I'm writing all this down. I say I try. She says, "You have to. We all have to remember this forever, so we don't keep doing what makes this happen."

I go back up beyond Bleecker St. again, into ye olde Walt Whitman territory on Sullivan. A nearly empty bar's bartender greets me on the sidewalk. Never saw each other before. She smokes. We flirt. She invites me in. My feet are getting torn up from the grit in the dust that's collected under my sandals' straps. I'm suddenly crashing really hard. The air here is better than in SoHo. I've passed this place hundreds of times. Never been inside. Never thought to. Order a diet coke. She puts that and a draft of Stella Artois in front of me. "It's on me," she says. "For a pretty woman with a big notebook who looks tired and sad."

Wednesday, September 26, 2001

I've stopped dreaming about the Event every night for most of the night. I never could recall too much of these dreams upon

waking other than how central a role in them Ellen Datlow played. Go figger. If you can explain it, I can't, other than perhaps she symbolizes all the other people down here that have gone, are going through all this together.

Sunday, September 30, 2001

I still look south first upon hitting the street. It still burns down there, day and night. Every other night, around 11 P.M., I walk down West Broadway to the Check Point. Check on whether or not the Baby Doll has re-opened. There continues to be no joy in that quarter.

The Holland Tunnel has been reopened for traffic to New Jersey, though still no traffic allowed into Manhattan via the HT.

The economy is front and center concern. Saturday night we watched videos uptown in some SF/F friends' company at Jack and Valeria Womack's.

Sunday I did not walk all over town. It was cold and raining, and I stayed in with Ned, doing very little but reading, writing and making a dinner fit for a chilly wet night early in Autumn. ▲

Pete Wolf Smith Mind's Eye or Elsewhere

I suppose I could start by saying that my train skipped Fulton Street. I work at 160 Broadway. Basically, you have the World Trade Center on the west side of Church Street; Church Street; an ugly black steel and black glass pile called 1 Liberty Plaza, which occupies the entire block between Church and Broadway; Broadway, and No. 160 on the eastern side, between Liberty and Maiden Lane, which is the building I'm in. So the building I work in is about fifty yards away from the eastern side of the World Trade Center.

Have, had. Is, was.

I've been working there about a year. I've been working downtown, within a few blocks of my present location, since 1991. I've liked it down there. I know where to go for a walk at lunchtime, or after work. I know where to go for pizza or falafel or to get a haircut or my shoes shined.

Claire and I both take the East Side express to Fulton Street, but we don't always go in at the same time. Take, took; did, didn't. That morning we left our apartment together, but I went around the corner to drop off the laundry. She went on ahead.

My train skipped Fulton and stopped at Wall. It was nine-fifteen. There was a woman crying on the train—a black woman with short gray hair in a neat grey suit and big gold glasses, sobbing and screaming about something terrible that had happened. I thought maybe she lost her job.

I got off at Wall and went upstairs. You come out in front of the church. It was my stop when I worked at 110 Wall Street and I must have climbed those stairs about two thousand times. I looked up; smoke was

pouring out of Two World Trade. The smoke was coming from a high floor.

I crossed the street and ran up Broadway. There were a lot of people clustered at the Liberty Street corner and I had to throw an elbow, push my way through, and then push through another clump of people standing around outside the McDonald's on the ground floor of my building. I went upstairs and went to my office—cubicle would be a better word—and called Claire's direct line. There was a beep, a click, and a busy signal. I tried the number again; same thing. I thought about calling the main switchboard; but I didn't know that number.

"My wife works in Two World Trade," I said to Rich, the guy on the other side of my pasteboard partition. He looked up, but didn't say anything.

I called home and left a message for Claire, asking her to call me at the office.

Rich and I are in an isolated little room at one end of the office. I went out into the main area, where the rest of the paralegals and secretaries work.

"Claire works in Two World Trade Center," I said again. "I don't know what to do."

Nobody said anything. The people I work with aren't very nice. Weiling, the office manager, looked at me blankly.

"I'm going out," I said. "I'm going downstairs. Maybe she's in front of the building."

"Okay," said Weiling. "But be careful, all right? There might be like debris or something." She didn't sound particularly concerned for my welfare, only that I might inconvenience the firm by breaking my leg.

Office managers tend to dislike me.

I took the elevator back downstairs. An old guy I've seen in the building, a stout, wheezing messenger in a greasy cap, got on at the second floor.

"My wife works in Two World Trade," I said.

"Oy, Gott. She call you?"

I shook my head.

I ran down to the corner of Church and Liberty. It was about nine twenty now, maybe nine twenty-five. In my mind's eye I had seen dazed evacuees milling around in front of Two World Trade Center—but that's not accurate. That's a picture taken from the images in magazines, a photo-after-the-fact. I'm trying to remember what I saw, in my mind's eye or elsewhere.

For instance, I do not remember exactly when I learned that two airplanes had crashed into the towers. I think I heard something about it in the shouting and chaos on the street when I came up out of the subway. Or someone may have said it when I got to the office. Mother says I called her on the way home and she told me; I do not remember that conversation.

But at this point, running down Liberty to the corner of Church, I may still have thought that it was just a fire; at any rate, what I was picturing in my head was something like the result of a building-wide fire drill—people milling around, smoking, waiting for the all clear. I figured Claire would be down there somewhere.

There is—is, was—a farmers' market in front of the Trade Center on Tuesdays and Thursdays. I bought apples there, zucchini, challah rolls, cheese. The farmers, bakers,

cheesemakers had set up their tents and begun to put out their merchandise. Now the tents were crumpled to the pavement, canvas bulging with the shapes of tables, crates of chard or Yellow Delicious; or they stood humiliated under dust, chunks of plaster and concrete, ripped by shards of jagged glass, all of which, and more, was scattered all over the street.

I looked up and the thick, black smoke I had seen before was now pouring directly over my head. Two traffic cops and an NYPD officer were standing a few feet away.

"Excuse me," I said. "My wife works in that building. Is there any way I can get some information?"

"What kind of information are you looking for, sir?" said one of the traffic cops.

"Well, you know, like, Is my wife dead? That kind of thing," I said.

"They're treating wounded at City Hall Park," said the NYPD guy. I'm pretty sure I thanked him; and I ran back up Liberty to Broadway. I couldn't tell you if those guys were still standing there thirty-five minutes later, or not.

I ran down the middle of Broadway—I'm not much of a runner anymore, but I don't particularly recall getting winded—dodging police cars, ambulances, and a few civilian vehicles whose drivers either hadn't managed to get out of there yet or else figured this nonsense didn't have anything to do with them. I admire such people, their persistent oblivion.

Nobody was treating wounded at City Hall Park. At City Hall Park there were a lot of people milling around, looking up at the smoke and the towers, exchanging rumors in the name of fact. There was one ambulance on Park Row, on the eastern side of the park, and a cop walking interference for it as it nosed its way through a fragmented crowd of people running in front of it in three or four directions.

"Excuse me, Officer? Are they treating wounded here? Officer? Officer, excuse me, my wife works in—"

"CLEAR THE WAY."

I cleared the way. Beekman Hospital—I think it's called New York Downtown now—was down the street, east of Pace; but the street was clogged with ambulances and police cars and I didn't think anyone in the Emergency Room would be able to help me.

A plane flew low over the buildings and we all ran from that until somebody shouted that it was an F-16. The smoke hung in the air. Not real thick, just visibly loitering in the sunlight; it was a nice day—sunny, warm.

In the park were my coworkers from my old office in the Woolworth building. Rafael, a particular pal of mine from my nine years with that firm, saw me first.

"Pete. What's up, man? You all right?"

"Claire works in Two World Trade," I said. "On a high floor."

"Oh, shit," said Rafael.

"Yeah," I said. "Oh, shit."

"How high?"

"I don't remember. Fifty, fifty-one? I just—I don't remember."

"Wow. Don't worry, man." He put an arm around my shoulder. "I'm sure she's all right."

"I'm not," I said.

"Peter?" That was Janet, someone else I'd known for a long time. "It was high up."

"Yes, Janet. I know that."

"It was fifty-one to sixty three. That's where the plane hit."

"Thank you." She was wrong, but I didn't know that.

My friend Mitch was standing a few yards away holding his cell phone to his ear.

"Hey, man, is your phone working?" He shook his head, and I wandered away from the group and left the Park by one of the Broadway gates on the western side.

I started to walk down Broadway, in the direction of my office, but the cops at the southern end of the Park were waving people back and screaming.

"DON'T GO BACK DOWNTOWN."

What's the matter with you people? You wanna get killed? People were shouting and pointing at the towers; I thought the fear was that the airplanes, which had been embedded in the buildings, were about to fall out.

One of my bosses had been giving me a hard time about deadlines. We'd had words about it the night before. I'd stayed at the office until 7:30 and come home knotted with anger, unable to sleep. Now, there threaded through my worries about my wife and the too-vivid impressions of smoke and shouting and scared people a nagging persistent rhythm, like a song you don't like but can't get out of your head, the thought that I was going to have to explain to David why I hadn't finished the work on the Vincent case. It was a little before 10:00.

The cops had closed off the southern end of Broadway; but I discovered, when I went around the north end of the park and over to the eastern side, that the City Hall subway station was still open, and the trains were running. The express skipped Fulton, then stopped between Fulton and Wall. We stood for a while. There was an old Chinese guy on the train and he didn't understand what was going on.

"Wha happen? Fire? Bomb?"

"Airplanes," I said. "Two airplanes crashed into the towers."

"How happen? Two airplane crash into tower? How?"

"You got me," I said.

He smiled and shook his head. "Crazy fucking people," said. I guess he understood it pretty well, at that.

I turned to the woman standing next to me. "Listen," I said. "I don't want to start a panic or anything. But do you smell something?"

"Uh huh." She wrinkled her nose and nodded. The lights went out, then came back on again. Smoke started coming into the car. The conductor left her cab and came walking through the car. She looked hassled.

"You have to give us information," a guy said. He sounded like he was going to be late for his tee time.

"I don't have any information to give you, sir. My radio's not working." She

continued walking down the car. "Soon as I know what's going on, I'll tell you."

"Boy," said the blond guy to no one in particular. "What an attitude."

The first shouted word we got was that we were to exit through the rear of the train, at the uptown end, closer to Fulton Street. We started in that direction, but it didn't look good—the smoke was thicker in the next car than it was in ours. A young woman with long red hair was crying softly, I took my handkerchief out of my pocket and covered my mouth with it. An older black lady put her arms around the girl with the red hair.

"Come on, honey, you got to stay strong," she said. "You start cryin' in here, everybody else gonna be cryin' too. Come on, now. Stay with it. Stay strong." Again came shouted instructions: turn around and exit through the front of the train. The redheaded girl was still crying.

"Come on, we're gonna be all right now," I said. "See? We're leaving. You got something to cover your mouth?" She was still crying, but she bunched up her sleeve in her hand, drew it over her face, and walked.

There was a knot of people at the door at the front of the car; those of us who had been in the rear had to wait before we could advance.

"Sh'ma, Yisroel," I said. "Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai ehad." Hear, Israel; the Lord our God the Lord is One. I repeated it a few times, then added, "Barukh shem k'vod malkhuto l'olam va-ed—" Blessed be his glorious Name forever—as I walked through the door, across the metal adjoining aprons, and into the next car.

The first car of the train had pulled in to the Wall Street station, and there was a guy in jeans and a green sweatshirt with a walkie-talkie in his hand, silently waving us through the open doors onto the platform. I suppose he was a cop; he sure looked like one.

The smoke hung thickly in the station, and the floor was an inch or two deep in tan dust. The dust was piled on the benches too, and heaped on the surfaces of the turnstiles. The redheaded girl walked ahead of me, crying. She started to run, weakly, ankles wobbling, holding her sleeve to her mouth.

The stairs were covered in the tan dust, too. Upstairs, on the street, the dust was thicker on the ground and hung in the air as well. I had taken a different exit than the one I had used previously, and I was facing downtown, away from the towers. There was so much dust it muffled the sounds of footsteps and voices. The sky was black. I felt chilly: there was so much smoke in the air that the sunlight couldn't get through. It was all still smoke and debris from the explosion, I thought; it did not occur to me to look over my shoulder.

The dust was falling steadily, and I was kicking through it as I walked. I slid a little, traversing a short incline, and had to be careful not to fall. It was like walking through a snowstorm.

The dust was settling on my shirt, on my hands and forearms, on my pants and shoes. I took off my hat to wipe my forehead—I was sweating through the chill—and saw that my

hat, a nice straw Panama I bought while walking with Claire in the East Village on a warm spring night, was covered with it too.

On Beaver Street—maybe it was Pearl—I tried a payphone; no good. A deliveryman with a pallet of big blue jugs of water, the kind they use for office water coolers, had opened one up and was pouring out water for whoever needed it. I had a bottle of water in my backpack but I figured I'd better save that, so I wet my handkerchief, washed my face.

At the corner of Water and Wall—I'd make that a little less than half a mile from the southern end of the Trade Center—I found a working phone. That was a peculiar thing: not that the phone worked, but that the one right next to it, operated by the same company, bolted to the same pole, did not. It was like that all the way uptown. I called my office and got the answering machine. So they were gone. It was 10:15.

The pay phone was under some scaffolding. As I hung up, I heard a crashing, rumbling sound, but it was hard to tell what it was. It is a fact of New York life that parts of town that are less than ten minutes' walk apart are nevertheless very isolated from each other. On the day of the first World Trade center bombing attack in 1993, I was in my office at 110 Wall, with a window on the twenty-sixth floor, all day—and I saw nothing, heard nothing, knew nothing about it until I left work that night around 7:00. I stepped out from under the scaffolding and started walking north on Water Street; the black smoke rolling low over my head, issuing from narrow Pine and Ann Streets, like the smoke

I had already seen and breathed, was still, I thought, from the fires.

They had been waving people over the Brooklyn Bridge, but the smoke over the Bridge was too thick, so now they—the cops, the firemen, some “they—” were waving people back off. I couldn't actually see the bridge; just the suspension cables rising out of the smoke. As thick as it was around the bridge, the smoke cleared just north of it, on Pearl Street across from Police Headquarters. Madison Street was closed, so I turned onto East Broadway, where I approached a cop.

“My wife works in Two World Trade,” I said. “Do you know where I can get some information?”

“Nobody knows anything right now, sir,” he said. He didn't say anything about the towers falling; he may have assumed that I knew. “But hopefully. . . God bless. . .” he clasped his hands together and shook them prayerfully in my direction. “Nobody knows,” he concluded.

I was on a little street now, off East Broadway, across from a public school. There was an office building, some kind of city agency, lines at the two pay phones in the low-slung vestibule. There were also people standing outside, talking on cell phones.

“They hijacked ten planes and crashed them all over the country,” a woman was saying. “Uh huh. That's right. They were military planes.”

I got on the line for one of the pay phones. The other one conked out in the middle of someone's conversation and all the

people on that line got on ours. I called home; some guy answered the phone.

“Hello?”

“Uh—yeah—hi—is this two one two—”

“Pete?”

“Who is this?”

“It's Neal.” Neal rents a room in our apartment. He has his own phone but had been listening for ours.

“Neal, did Claire call?”

“Yeah. Yeah, she did. You called, and then she—hold on a second here—” I waited while Neal pressed the button on the answering machine; after the beep, I heard my own voice, shouting and cracked. Honey, I love you, please call me at the office, etc. “Yeah, yeah, OK, that's me. I know what I said.” I said.

“Yeah, wait, hold on—”

“Tuesday, nine eighteen A.M.,” said the digital voice locked in the machine.

“Yeah, here it is—”

beep

“Sweetheart, please call us. Oh my god, I'm so worried. Please call us. Please. We love you. Goodbye.”

“That's not Claire,” I said.

“Yeah, I know. I thought it was her. I guess it's—”

“It's her mother,” I said.

“Sorry,” said Neal.

“Tuesday, ten-oh-seven A.M.,” said the phone.

“That's OK. Could you just—”

“You want me to stay here?”

“Yeah. Yeah. Could you do that?”

“Sure. Where are you?”

Ben Indick Requiem

. . . Like the baseless fabric of this vision,
The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous
palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve;
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep.

—*The Tempest*

This first week of the catastrophe of blind and evil murder and destruction has been exhausting, as we helplessly watched the horror, and realized the casualties would be more than we can bear, as Mayor Giuliani, a figure of great strength when it was terribly necessary, so heart-breakingly put it. New York City has those who love it and those who hate it; there is no middle ground. Those who love it do so for its eternal youth and hope. Artists and philosophers, businessmen, writers, actors, dreamers, all are drawn here, because it has something for all, and room for hope for each. It reaches undreamed-of pinnacles of beauty as well as depths of despair. Its like does not exist

anywhere else in the world.

Many of us took the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center for granted. We may not have particularly liked them, bland but in-your-face assertive. We had dinner and parties in Windows on the World, the dining room at its peak, and admired the colossal view, but were unmoved. Yet, we are here, the towers stated simply, like us or not. Now, in retrospect, we realize what we have lost, a proud and marvelous, unparalleled symbol of all that is finest and daring in even the meekest and least ambitious of us. The thousands of individuals lost in this calamity knew and shared this. The volunteers who have come from everywhere in the nation to help know it, even as they labor in the void.

We have wept unashamedly at the images flashing endlessly by us, at the wives, husbands, parents, and children pasting photographs of their lost loved ones on walls, desperately hoping they might yet be found and returned to them. E. B. White prophetically wrote in 1949,

In the mind of whatever perverted
dreamer might loose the lightning,

New York must hold a steady, irresistible charm. The city, for the first time in its long history, is destructible. A single flight of planes no larger than a wedge of geese can quickly end this island fantasy, burn the towers, crumble the bridges, turn the underground passages into lethal chambers, cremate millions. The intimation of mortality is part of New York now. But we have heard the last messages of those within doomed airplanes and towers, defiant, loving, never despairing. We can do and we will do no less.

It is still beyond our spirit to return to this marvelous city that has filled so many of our dreams, but we shall. We pray that it is spared further terror, together with Washington, DC and Oklahoma City, and all of our nation, but it is part of the essence of our souls, and we shall always love it and return to it. ▶

From *Ben's Beat* #64

"I'm in Chinatown."

"But you're OK?"

"Yeah, yeah, I'm fine. Just—"

"So if Claire calls—"

"Yeah, yeah. I'm all right. I'm fine. Just tell her to, tell her to be careful, and just get home as best she can, all right?"

That must have been when I called my mother, too. But as I say I don't remember doing that.

I stopped for coffee, and figured some dough might come in handy, so I crossed Bowery and got a hundred bucks from an ATM. The sidewalk of the Bowery was crowded as I approached Canal; but not much more so than usual.

There is a parking lot on the southeast corner of Canal and Lafayette, and a crowd was gathered in front of the attendant's hut, listening to a radio that was cranked up loud.

"They're treating wounded at White and Broadway," said Imus. Canal was closed, except for an army truck turning in to the block at Broadway, so I ran down the middle of the empty street and then crossed to the southern side. There were soldiers and barricades at the corner of Broadway and Canal. A woman in a black outfit with a pashmina shawl was screaming at a corporal.

"You don't understand. I have to get in there. It's very important."

"I can't let you through, Ma'am. I'm sorry," the corporal said.

"Let me speak to your supervisor," said the pashmina shawl. I got a private's attention, but he didn't know anything about wounded at White and Broadway.

"Nobody knows anything, sir."

"Yeah, I know."

"Who do you know down there?"

"My wife."

"How long you been married?"

"Eight months."

Good luck," he said, and I turned and walked north on Broadway. At Prince Street I

found another working pay phone and called the apartment. Neal hadn't heard from Claire. At Eleventh Street I turned off Broadway and went into an office building.

"Dr. Blumenson, 236," I said to the guy at the desk in the lobby. "I'm a patient."

"You have an appointment?"

"No," I said. "I want to use the phone." I went upstairs and down the hall to Dr. Blumenson's office. The door was open. There were three guys in the office, two workmen and a guy in shirtsleeves and a tie, who I'd never seen before; also a desk, bookshelves, and a lamp that were unfamiliar. I had forgotten: Dr. Blumenson had moved. At least the combination for the men's room was still the same.

At Park Avenue South, on the eastern side of Union Square, was another working phone. I waited, along with several other people, while an old man with a satchel slung over his shoulder offered someone a lengthy explanation of his whereabouts.

"There are so many people—and a taxi, maybe I could get a taxi, but you can't get a taxi. . . ." he gave it a few more minutes, ending with, "All right, if I get a taxi, will you reimburse me? Okay," then hung up and shuffled away, looking bewildered. A Hispanic woman with several children in tow tried several different phone cards, until one of them worked. As she moved off with the kids, one of them said, "Mommy, can we go to McDonald's?"

"I'll give you McDonald's in your behind," she said.

"Mommy—"

"Ramon, walk. Just walk, all right?"

Someone tugged my sleeve as I dialed the number. It was the old guy who'd been kvetching about the taxis.

"Mister," he said, "can I get in there and make a call? For one minute?"

"No," I said. "Claire?"

"Yes."

Claire had never gotten off the train at Fulton Street; when she got there, the people on the platform were screaming at the people on the train to stay inside. She'd been on a Bowling Green express; someone had suggested to the conductor that in light of the circumstances, maybe he could take them all to Brooklyn.

"There's a number four going to Brooklyn right behind me," he had said. "This train stops at Bowling Green."

In Brooklyn, she'd walked to her old synagogue, on Remsen Street, and called my office from there.

"We're leaving," she had been told.

"But where's Peter?"

"He went downstairs to look for you."

She took the F, which was still running and circumvents the financial district and runs east-west, more or less, through the Lower East Side before turning north-south on Sixth Avenue, to West 4th Street, which is where she was when all the trains shut down. From there, she walked home to our apartment on East 79th.

I hung up the phone and stood bent over with my head down and my hands on my knees. Two young Latino guys were looking at me.

"Sir, are you all right?" one of them said.

"Yeah," I said. "Yeah. I'm fine."

Then there was nothing to do but walk home.

"Honey?"

"Yes, sweetheart?"

"Can I ask you something?"

"Sure."

"If you called home and left a message for me to call you at the office, why did you then leave your office and go downstairs to look for me?"

"That's an excellent question, sweetheart." ▲

About the Contributors

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Douglas J. Stone

1947 – 2001

Douglas J. Stone, 54, of Ford's Landing in Dover, New Hampshire, was aboard American Airlines flight 11, the first plane to strike the World's Trade Center. He was the co-founder of Odyssey Press, which prints and mails *The New York Review of Science Fiction*. Stone was on the last of one of several monthly flights to California, where he was doing consulting work for a printing company run by his ex-wife, Beth Stone. The couple had one son, Zachary, who is starting his first year at UCLA. "His son Zach on the West Coast was a focus of a lot of his attention and devotion," said Odyssey Press co-owner Tad Parker of Durham

Stone was born in Beverly, Massachusetts, February 26, 1947, the son of Kathryn E. and Richard S. Stone Sr. He graduated from Dover High School with the Class of 1965 and received his bachelor of science degree in accounting from Long Beach State College in Long Beach, Calif., in 1973. In between, he spent two years at Southwestern Law School in Los Angeles, California. Stone served in the United States Army from 1969 through 1972 and was stationed in Germany. From 1967 to 1987 he worked in finance at Trend Offset Printing in Los Angeles and, from 1987 to 1989, as the comptroller at Capital City Press in Montpelier, Vermont.

Odyssey Press, founded in 1989, employs more than 40 people, manufacturing textbooks, legal journals, medical books and other publications. Co-owner Tad Parker of Durham said he and Stone met in 1985 when both were working at another printing company in Montpelier, Vermont.

"I would characterize Doug as possessing all the qualities I would value as a business partner," Stone's demeanor was sometimes a little "gruff," Parker said, but he was "fair to a fault. He was a good friend of mine and he'll be sorely missed. . . . He had kind of a gruff exterior, but once you got to know him it was a facade." Parker said that Stone took care of the production end or their business, printing science, technical and medical journals, meeting proceedings, and some books and legal documents, while he handled the sales and marketing. To ensure orders are filled correctly, explained Parker, employees must read the entire "job ticket." But in the early days of the company, employees weren't doing that.

"He went down and told everyone to gather for a meeting," said Parker. "He got dressed up like a job ticket and he came out and said, 'Hello, I'd like to introduce myself. I am Mr. Job

Ticket.' and the place cracked up."

Stone went on to explain the importance of reading the entire job ticket before starting a job, said Parker. From then on, employees remembered and they also instructed new employees. The company hasn't had that problem since.

In his spare time, Stone was a sports enthusiast, said Parker. "This was his time of year," he said. "He was a fanatic—college and professional football was his passion." He was also an avid movie buff. "He knew everything about almost every movie ever made," said Parker. "from the '40s and '50s through to the current ones."

One thing Stone would not have liked, said Parker, was all the attention his tragic death has generated. Nearly every client the company has had has sent flowers, condolence cards or called with offers of help. "He was not a guy that liked notoriety at all," he said. "If you sent him a birthday card, he'd kind of snarl at you."

He is survived by his former wife, Beth, and son, Zachary, both of Fountain Valley, California; a sister, Jane Puhn of Pittsfield, Massachusetts; four brothers, Steven S. Stone of Lewiston, Maine, R. Francis Stone of Lee, Massachusetts, Albert E. Stone of Barrington, New Hampshire, and Matthew R. Stone of Dalton, Massachusetts; several aunts, uncles, nieces and nephews.

A scholarship fund will be established at Dover High School in lieu of flowers. Donations may be sent to the Douglas J. Stone Scholarship Fund, c/o Odyssey Press, Inc., 113 Crosby Rd., Dover, NH 03820. ▲

Extracted from *Foster's Daily Democrat* of Dover, New Hampshire, <www.fosters.com>. See also:

Obituary: <www.fosters.com/obits/2001/september/obits%5F0918%5F01.htm>

Family struggling to cope with loss of Dover businessman: <www.fosters.com/news2001c/september/13/do0913m.htm>

Residents cope with deaths of five local persons: <www.fosters.com/news2001c/september/12/do0912m.htm>

Friends and neighbors remember Seacoast victims: <www.fosters.com/news2001c/september/16/do0916e.htm>

James Morrow Apologue

The instant they heard the news, the three of them knew they had to do something, and so, joints complaining, ligaments protesting, they limped out of the retirement home, went down to the river, swam across, and climbed onto the wounded island.

They'd always looked out for each other in times gone by, and this day was no different. The ape placed a gentle paw on the rhedosaur's neck, keeping the half-blind prehistoric beast from stepping on cars and bumping into skyscrapers. The mutant lizard helped the incontinent ape remove his disposable undergarments and replace them with a dry pair. The rhedosaur reminded the mutant lizard to take her Prozac.

Before them lay the maimed and smoking city. It was a nightmare, a war zone, a surrealistic obscenity. It was Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

"Maybe they won't understand," said the rhedosaur. "They'll look at me, and all they'll see is the berserk reptile munching on the Coney Island roller coaster." He fixed his clouded gaze on the ape. "And you'll always be the one who shimmied up the Empire State Building and swatted at the biplanes."

"And then, of course, there was the time I destroyed Madison Square and laid my eggs in the subway tunnels," said the mutant lizard.

"People are smarter than that," said the ape. "They know the difference between fantasy and reality."

"Some people do, yes," said the rhedosaur. "Some do."

The Italian mayor approached them at full stride, exhausted but resolute, his body swathed in an epidermis of ash. At his side walked a dazed Latino firefighter and a bewildered police officer of African descent.

"We've been expecting you," said the mayor, giving the mutant lizard an affectionate pat on the shin.

"You have every right to feel ambivalent toward us," said the rhedosaur.

"The past is not important," said the mayor.

"You came in good faith," said the police officer, attempting without success to smile.

"Actions speak louder than special effects," said the firefighter, staring upward at the gargantuan visitors.

Tears of remorse rolled from the ape's immense brown eyes. The stench filling his nostrils was irreducible, but he knew that it included many varieties of plastic and also human flesh. "Still, we can't help feeling ashamed."

"Today there is neither furred nor smooth in New York," said the mayor. "There is neither scaled nor pored, black nor white, Asian nor Occidental, Jew nor Muslim. Today there are only victims and helpers."

"Amen," said the police officer.

"I think it's clear what needs doing," said the fire fighter.

"Perfectly clear." The mutant lizard sucked a mass of rubble into her lantern-jawed mouth.

"Clear as glass." Despite his failing vision, the rhedosaur could see that the East River Savings Bank was in trouble. He set his back against the structure, shoring it up with his mighty spine.

The ape said nothing but instead rested his paw in the middle of Cortlandt Street, allowing a crowd of the bereaved to climb onto his palm. Their shoes and boots tickled his skin. He curled his fingers into a protective matrix then shuffled south, soon entering Battery Park. He sat on the grass, stared toward Liberty Island, raised his arm, and, drawing the humans to his chest, held them against the warmth of his massive heart. ▲

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