

I am OK, though I have definitely been affected.
I saw the plane crash into the building! My eyes saw the most unimaginable horror.



I was speaking with a new intern, Ben, in my office when I heard a noise and felt the building shake.

We were on the 21st floor of **290 Broadway** and the sound had the echoing effect I had often heard during thunderstorms.

Ben stated that I looked nervous. I said, "I heard something that sounded weird, and it made me nervous. I think it was thunder." He said that was impossible, because it was clear outside." We both looked out the window (uptown) and saw a beautiful blue sky.

Moments later, my boss, John, rushed in and exclaimed, "**The World Trade Center is on fire!**"

We ran to the windows on the other side of the building and saw fire
and a huge hole in One World Trade Center.

My initial thought was, "**BOMB!**"

The hole was 10 to 15 floors tall and looked as if it was a peeled-open can, with metal dripping down the sides.

Fire was pouring out the hole. Shattered glass filled the air,
and large objects (including people) were falling from the hole.

It reminded me of a ticker-tape parade. My building was eight blocks north of the Towers with a spectacular, unobstructed view. I called Matt, my husband, to let him know I was OK. He was in a meeting, and I don't think he understood the gravity of the situation. One of my co-workers rushed in and said it was a plane that hit the building! She was down in the lobby a few minutes before and said people were in shock downstairs.

I hung up with Matt and stared in disbelief at the flaming building. How could a plane crash into the building? I asked. I was sure it must have been some accident.

I repeated, "Are you sure that it was a plane?"

Just then, around the backside of Tower Two, I saw a big black plane come out of nowhere. It looked to me like a cartoon plane, or an oversized army plane. It struck into the building with a tremendous explosion. I thought I was watching a movie. I felt as if planes were going to come flying from all directions, like in those movies from Pearl Harbor!



I ran. I ran back to my desk yelling, "GET OUT OF THE BUILDING!" A co-worker asked me something and all I could say was, "Get out of the building!"

I grabbed my jacket and backpack and ran.

I squeezed into the elevator. I felt cowardly and scared as I stood shaking with chills on the ride down. It seemed like forever until I saw the doors open to the lobby.

I had caught the last elevator before they were shut down.

Dazed, I went outside. It smelled funny and as I crossed the street I felt sick. I ran down the block toward the **Chambers Street** Subway stop. Burning, the Towers stood in front of me with gaping holes torn in their sides.

Tower One was struck higher with a smaller hole. The middle of Tower Two was engulfed in flames.

People and debris were falling from the massive hole about twenty to thirty stories high and three-quarters of the width of the building.



Realizing the subways were closed, I ran back down the block to a Duane Reade drugstore to buy water and a disposable camera. I returned to the corner of **Church Street and Duane** and started walking northward, glancing behind me in shock every couple of steps.



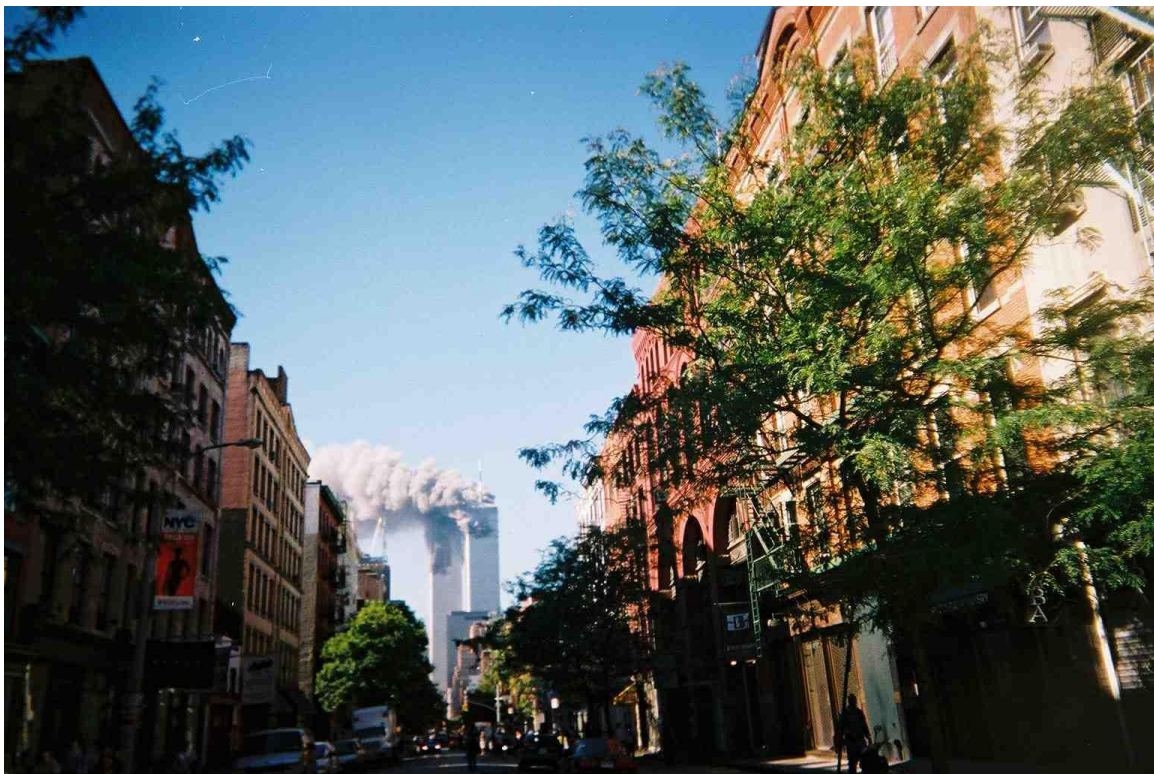
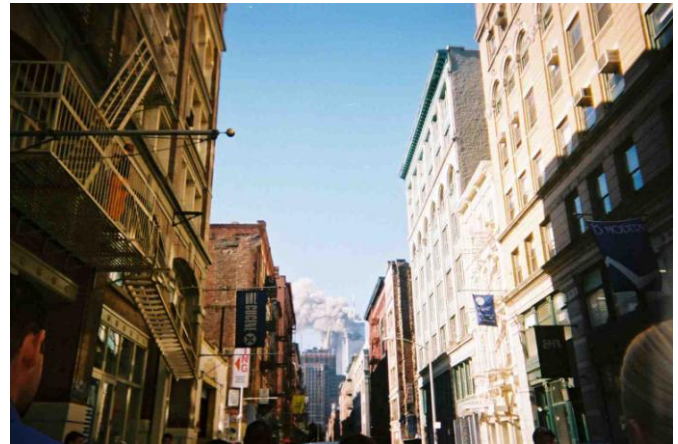
At one of the pay phones, my co-worker who sits next to me called my name. Billy lived in Brooklyn and was trying to call his parents. He couldn't get a line because all the NYC phone lines were in use. I had unsuccessfully tried my cell phone already and was thankful I had called Matt after the first explosion. Billy asked where I was going. I said, "I am walking to Penn Station to get a train to Jersey." A girl in line was also going to New Jersey. "Let's go," I told her.

So we walked.



Nakita, as I learned her name to be, was in the Trade Center when it happened. She had been buying flowers and chocolates for her friend's birthday when the blast occurred. She said she threw them in the air and ran.

As we walked **north on Church**, we kept checking behind us in disbelief. There were crowds of people on every corner, looking over our heads at the burning buildings.



When we reached **north of Canal Street**, we tried another pay phone, but to no avail.



All of sudden, people started gasping. We turned to see a cloud of smoke in the place where Tower Two once stood.

Tower Two was gone.

We stood a few moments in awe as my mind tried to interpret what just happened.

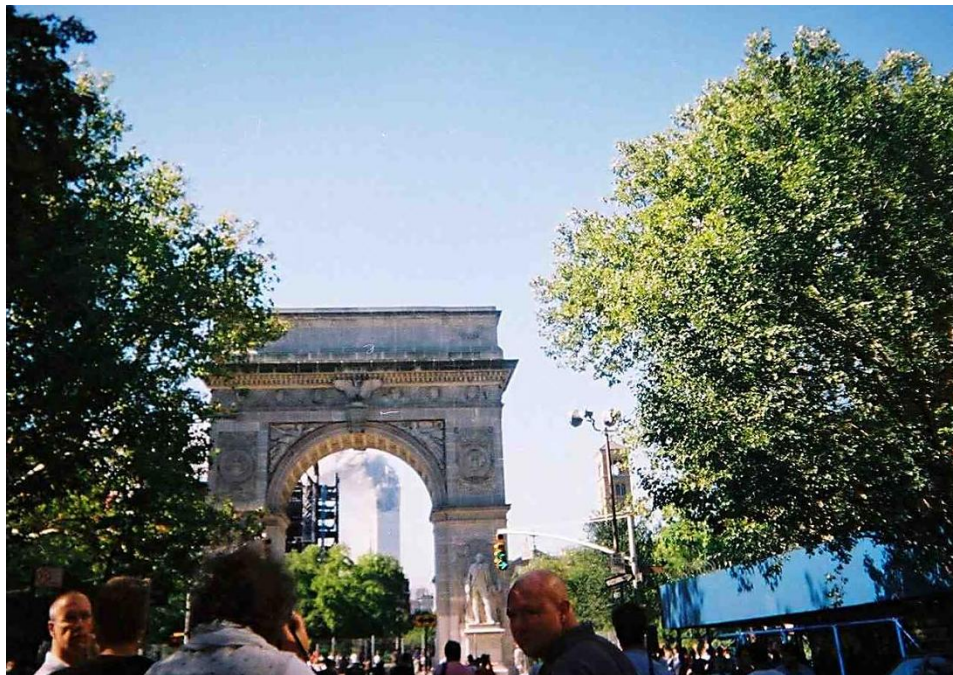
I remember thinking to myself, "I wonder what they will call them now— *the Twin Tower*—or maybe just *The Tower*?"

We continued north, trying to get as far away from whatever evil caused this destruction as possible.

We feared the Empire State Building, though, and the Chrysler Building, might be prone to terrorism, too.



When we arrived at **Washington Square Park**, I heard the crowd gasp again.





Tower One collapsed and in its wake left a cloud of dust and smoke.



The Twin Towers were gone.

A silence fell over the crowd.

Nakita and I continued northward. We would occasionally stop by cars where people gathered to hear radio reports on 1010 WNDX. When we reached Penn Station, we were confronted with the crazy fact that we were stuck in Manhattan because all trains off the island were stopped.



I asked a police officer how we should get to New Jersey and he replied, "Go to Central Park and sit there and read a book."

This was the kind of direction NYPD was offering when what we needed was guidance. But, we had nothing better to do, so off to Central Park we went.



At Times Square we watched the Panavision sets hoping for some sort of information. Pictures of the crash and the crumbling buildings flashed across the screens. I was not able to digest the event I had just witnessed.

People were all around talking about where they were when the event occurred.

A reporter from CNBC interviewed me and Nakita and asked us questions about how we felt.

I don't remember my responses.

I bumped into John, my boss. He looked as frazzled as I felt. We exchanged our relief at each other's survival and spoke a few minutes. I said, "I forgot to turn off my computer. What should I do tomorrow?"

John assured me it was OK that I didn't shut down and told me to call the emergency hotline to find out about work. Looking back,

I can't believe that I said that.

John said he was going to catch a movie. Nakita and I walked on. We walked to the **tip of Central Park and then down to Rockefeller Center**. Along the way we bought water. We also stopped into a drugstore to buy essentials in case we had to sleep in the city. I bought a toothbrush, toothpaste, soap, deodorant (I stank from so much walking - by now we had been walking for about five hours), and hand cleanser. I wondered where I would sleep.

I racked my brain for people to call. Where would I go? Hotel? Do I have any friends in the city? I tried to call my friend, Cindy, and got through.

She was OK and on 49th and 1st. I was on **51st and 3rd**—so close yet so far. Cindy said she was waiting for her sister, Jill, and then going up to White Plains on Metro North out of Grand Central Station.

I now had an out! I could go to White Plains and get out of this horrible city. Nakita and I walked to **Grand Central Station**, and I called Cindy again. She was still waiting for Jill so I said I would wait at Grand Central for fifteen minutes and then call back.

I unsuccessfully tried Matt on my cell and then found a pay phone and got through. I told him I was going to Dave and Cindy's in White Plains to get out.

He said that my Mom in Marblehead saw that the ferries were running to New Jersey from pier something at thirty something street. Later, I found out that she had heard about the ferries from my Uncle in Long Island. Image that! Information from Long Island passed to Massachusetts to New Jersey and back to Manhattan.

I called Cindy back to advise that I was going to try to take a ferry. She had connected with Jill and was making her way to Grand Central. We wished each other luck and a safe trip home.

Nakita and I could not imagine walking across town without confirmation that ferries were indeed running. We asked three police officers if they knew whether the ferries were running or not. They would not even speculate and told us to walk across the closest bridge to go anywhere outside the city. I felt that the ferry had to be worth a try. If I went to White Plains it may be a day or two before Matt could pick me up. The highways and the bridges were closed. We hailed a cab to drive us cross-town.

We sat in the cab for about twenty minutes or so while the cabbie navigated the gridlock on **42nd Street**. My feet were pulsating. It felt so good to sit down. The radio was talking about another plane at the Pentagon and one in Pittsburgh. They spoke of bombs in the State House and fires on the Mall. Having just moved to New Jersey from Washington DC, I thought to myself that I would have been in the thick of it wherever I lived! Our ride ended when only busses were allowed **west of 6th Avenue**. We walked the rest of the way to the waterfront.

At the pier, we realized that we were late in our comprehension that ferry service was available. The line was at least a mile long and twisted back and forth, bending upon itself, winding around walls and street corners. For a few minutes we searched for the end of the line and tried to discover where the ferries would ultimately take us.

After we got on line, we waited for over two hours to board a ferry to take us to Weehawken.



As the ferry pulled away from the pier, we could see the smoldering ash and a gaping hole in the New York skyline where the towers once stood.



The whole trip **across the Hudson**, people on the ferry gazed open-mouthed at the southern tip of Manhattan with their eyes affixed to the spot of the disaster.



After off-loading from the ferry in **Weehawken**, we walked emotionlessly to the end of the another hour-long line for busses to take us to Hoboken where there were NJ Transit trains and busses to carry us home.

Nakita and I sat on the top level of a red double-decker tour bus that brought us to the train station in **Hoboken**. I remember tree branches scraping close to our heads as we rode through the quaint town of Hoboken. This was my first time in Hoboken, and my first double-decker not in London!

We got off the bus in traffic and made our way to the **Lackawanna train depot**.



Nakita lived in Pavonia, which is walking distance to Hoboken. Exhausted, she and I hugged goodbye as we separated from our 8+ hour journey out of the city. We both appreciated each other's companionship so much. She took my e-mail address, and I hoped that she would write me. (She never did.)

I took the Gladstone Local back to the Millburn train station where I got into my car. I remember sitting in my car for a few minutes trying to process everything I had just seen. I couldn't believe I made it.

I only wish that everyone could have been so fortunate.