

# 9/18/01

Tuesday. A week after the two planes crashed into the World Trade Center, another plane crashed into the Pentagon and another one that crashed in a field in Pennsylvania.

I wake up before 8 am. Alarms blaring. Urgent sirens. I leap out of bed. Pull up the blinds. Turn on the radio immediately. Nothing but the usual noise we've become accustomed to. Back into bed. I'm exhausted. Drained. Sore.

I'm not sure if I dreamed it, but I think that I've I called work at 8 am. That I left a message telling my partner that I wouldn't be in. That I called my boss, Audrey, with the same message. That I then I fell back asleep. At 9:30, I wake again and call Audrey, leave a message. Then I call Christine, talk to her. Tell both — for real this time, I think — that I'm not coming in. I brief her on a 10 am meeting with the client. Tell her Keith can handle it. I babble. Hang up. Go back to sleep. Wake up at 11:30 am.

Finally, I go downstairs. Check my mail. Buy papers.

NEW YORK TIMES:       **WALL STREET REOPENS SIX DAYS  
AFTER SHUTDOWN; STOCKS SLIDE 7%  
BUT INVESTORS RESIST PANIC**

NEW YORK POST: **Bin Laden Wanted Dead or Alive**  
GIANT POSTER inside today.  
See center pages.

Subhead:               **\$590B HIT  
Terror sinks the markets**

I'm lethargic all day and spend most of it horizontally. It gives me time to program phone numbers into the memory. People I'd want to contact in an emergency. I enter my parents, brothers and sisters, aunt, uncle, cousins, friends in Ireland, Scotland, England.

Unfortunately, I cannot reach Lynn at the Federal Office Building. She is due back at work today, but the phones aren't working. No surprise there. I called 5 times and each time got an odd recording: "If you're calling to buy tickets to a Mets game, please call blah. ... blah..." I check to make sure I've got the right number. Yep. Call David, her boyfriend. He tells me they're having problems at her work with the phones. He also tells me that the relief effort may need archaeologists. Lynn may be asked to help. She'd have to sift through the rubble at Fresh Kills, a landfill on Staten Island where they're carting the debris from the Twin Towers.

Around three in the afternoon, the sirens blare again. Out on the balcony, I see two, then three and then four fire engines. False alarm? We're so skittish in the city that any time we hear sirens or see aircraft that seem too low in the sky, we get anxious.

Two trucks start to leave but a woman runs toward them and redirects them across the street. Another engine pulls up. Firemen get out. Obviously from different companies, they walk up to each other and hug. A long hug. My god, what they've been through. Then an ambulance shows up. I hear another siren a block away, but it must be heading to a different call. After ten minutes, the area clears out.

Finally, at 4:30, I decide to get outside and walk over to Fifth Avenue. Mayor Gillian tells us we have to get back to normal. To shop. To eat. To help keep the economy. I wander through a few stores, but everything seems so insignificant. Retail therapy is not working. I call Rich and check in with him. His wedding is still scheduled for Saturday. Then the phone cuts off.

No more shopping for me. I decide to see how far south I can go. The mayor opened up downtown on Saturday, east of Fulton Street. Loads of rubbernecks clogged the streets over the weekend, trying to get a glimpse of the aftermath.

I catch the R train down to 14<sup>th</sup>. Switch to the 6. Head down to the Brooklyn Bridge. Barricades everywhere. Above ground, I'm funneled — along with the other pedestrians — down Fulton Street, past Wall Street.

There's dust everywhere. Barriers. Blocked streets. City Hall is cordoned off. I finally get a glimpse of what's left of the twin towers. Shards of metal that seem nearly 100 feet high are all that remain. Along with a mountain of detritus. Even here, it's still unbelievable. Surreal.

Cops. National Guard. Construction Workers. Wall Street traders walking against the tide of tourists after a long day. They opened up the trading floor yesterday and are still trying to recover. Past Bowling Green, Battery Park. All barricaded.

I trudge south to the Staten Island ferry. A battalion of soldiers are in formation, ready to embark on the lower level. Then I see another unit. They, too, march onto the ferry. As we sail off, the ferry's practically empty. The sun is going down. It's around 7 pm. Most passengers favor of the boat to stern side to get a view of the skyline.

Amazing. The sun is setting. Purple. Orange in the sky. A crescent moon hovers over Lady Liberty. It's the first place my eyes focus. Not on the city. We're too close to have any perspective. Finally, as we move out into the harbor, I reorient myself to the island. A terrible view greets me.

Smoke is still rising from the ruins. The night sky is lit up with floodlights over Ground Zero. Cranes hover precipitously. The southern part of the island east of Broadway is lit up and beautiful. The skyscrapers are lit up on each floor. It's familiar. Expected.

Above the ruins and on the west side of the lower island, however, is eerie. All the office buildings are dark. All power has been cut, except for the floodlights. A glow emanates from where the towers once stood. Eerie. It becomes even more unreal as we get farther and farther from Manhattan. Just, as they've been saying in the news, like a scene from a movie. Only this is real.

On the ferry, people are silent. It's unnerving. Some are taking pictures. Others whisper. A group of soldiers at the far end of the boat are snapping pictures with the Statue of Liberty as backdrop.

Amazingly, the farther we get away, the Empire State Building, lit up in red, white and blue, begins to peek through the skyline. It is a beautiful, horrible sight. Still unreal. It's comforting to see it still standing, though.

On Staten Island, I pick up a special issue of Time Magazine. Head back to Manhattan. Sit again on the Western side. Am somehow numb to the unreal view. But I'm also numb to the special issue rushed out by frantic editors.

Back on land, I retrace my steps through lower Manhattan. This time my head rarely turns toward Ground Zero. I've seen enough. Still, people are out with video cameras. I stop at a phone booth to make a call. Of course they don't work. I jump on the 6 train. My ambitions of walking all the way home are quenched. I simply don't have the energy.

At home, it's 9:30. The stack of barely read papers from the last week is now over a foot high. I pluck out the non-tragic sections. Even my favorite "styles" section is tainted. Instead, I scan the New York Times book review. It's a safe bet. The travel section. Works for me. I check my e-mail. I check voice mail. My new cell phone is now charged and ready to use.

At 11, I'm nearly asleep on the bed. But I pull myself up and start writing at the computer. It keeps me busy. Gives me an outlet. Finally, at 1 am, I unwisely call my sister-in-law. The conversation disintegrates soon into accusations. With seven brothers and sisters, only one called me — on Saturday. And Dad called me on Friday and Sunday. Otherwise, I had to pick up the phone to check in with them.

It's now 2 pm. I must go to work the next day. Tomorrow I will be all business. Now maybe I can sleep.

