Spring 2019 9/11 Readers’ Theatre

Protagonist: Teddy

Teddy: It’s incredible to think I’ll be arriving in New York, in just a few minutes. I thought by this point of my life I would still be stuck in my small town of Vancouver with no accomplishments what so ever. Now, I’m flying to New York to start my new job as an editor, and my love will be flying over there in just a few hours. A life together. It doesn’t even seem real.

A flight attendant approaches me and asks, “Miss? Would you like any refreshments?”

Teddy: “Umm. Yes, actually! May, I have a cup of cranberry juice, with ice please?”

Flight attendant: “You sure can. “

Teddy: (I look at my right shoulder and notice a female passenger next to me who is trying to hold back her tears.)

Teddy: “Miss, are you okay? Is there anything that I can help you with?”

Female passenger: “No, there isn’t. There’s nothing that you can do or anybody can do.”

Teddy: “You shouldn’t think like that. Every problem has a solution.”

The female passenger looks at me.

Teddy: “There’s always hope even if it might not seem like it right now. Don’t be afraid.”

The female passenger tells me: “It’s so hard not to.”

Turbulence begins to occur, but the two women don’t think much of it.

Teddy: “I know what that feels like.”

Smoke begins to appear outside the airplane’s windows, and the air begins to toxify.

Flight attendants tell us: “We have encountered a problem. Please remain calm.”

Teddy: I look at my new friend and tell her: “It’s important to not lose hope. Not now and not ever.”

(We hug and our close eyes.)

 Katherine

We were planning lots.

My head hurts just thinking about it

Almost like something hit it.

Mai said:

What if we get sick? Or hurt?!

I thought about how I tried to calm her

Telling her we’ll be fine, tomorrow

Our only worries should be where to eat and swim.

Only dust and dirt fell on my hand.

The coconut I tried to grab,

All a dream.

How do I tell Mai this?

She’s going to kill me.

My legs, can’t feel them with this debris…

I hate telling her she’s right.

Her worries sounded so ridiculous.

It’s a little stuffy in here…a little hard to breathe…

 Trinh

I woke up excited to skip school and to go to Six Flags

with my family for my sixth birthday.

I ran down the stairs

two steps at a time.

Mom and Dad were glued to the TV

hands at their mouth

They sent me back up to my room.

My sister said people were dying in NY.

As my sister and I came downstairs

My parents gasped, still watching

the

TV.

Are we not going to Six Flags? I said,

tears drowning my eyes.

My mom wiped away her tears and mine.

No, my dad said, the parks are closed

today, all of them.

Why? My sister asked.

Because, my dad said,

Something

terrible

is

happening.

 Gianna

I awake to a world in chaos.

all I wanted to do was watch Arthur,

but all the channels are filled with images of smoke and flames.

I don’t know what’s going on but I can tell it’s bad.

Those around me are shaken.

But I just want for things to go back as they were

Little do I know that nothing will ever be as it was

In the days that follow everyone seems so angry.

Angry at what happened, angry with each other, angry that they’re so scared

We learn about what happened in school

but it still doesn’t make a whole lota sense to me.

I wonder if I should be angry.

I look at the postcard of the New York skyline that my friend sent me on his trip over the summer.

The towers are prominent on the 6x4 card stock.

Little do I know this is now a relic.

The kids at my school started calling Hassan a terrorist.

Last week he was just another classmate

but now he’s getting called names everyday

He hasn’t come to class in a while now.

I wonder if he’s angry too.

 William

We ran as fast as we could

Visibility low

Knowing full well our air tank

Would not last more than 20 minutes.

But our motto has always been,

We run in when others run out.

As fast we can,

We run the up the stairs

B Side

Triage

I go through the colors in my head

Black labels first

Red after

Yellow

Green

I hear orders being made ahead

But the masks make them inaudible

I assume we are told to go faster

Keep up

Keep up

Keep up

It sounds like the world is collapsing

Keep up

Keep up

Keep up

Never in this scale did we fight a fire

or be prepared for a triage this large

stay alive

stay alive

stay alive

keep up

keep up

 Steve

(My father’s perspective – a 3rd grade teacher)

The day had barely begun it felt like,

With my students still in lukewarm seats

that hadn’t fully warmed to their body

after coming in from P.E.

The news came over the announcement speaker.

What talk there was quickly faded to silence.

I turned on the television.

I didn’t know if it was for the best for the kids to see this,

But it was impossible to turn it off.

The students quietly moved to the floor below the TV.

We just sat there and watched.

 Madison

Screaming. Running. I’m running; There’s no time.

I’m running. I don’t know why.

There is a crash; I trip.

If this was a dream, I’d have woken up by now.

It’s not a dream; I can feel the pain in my foot from

when I tripped.

There’s a crack in the stairwell.

People are streaming over me, but I can’t move.

If I were small, I could hide in the crack.

The stairs break; I am flying.

Over the sea of people and brick and fire I go.

Will I die?

Maybe my ghost will tell my story. She’ll have more time.

 Ana

“The Channels”

i don’t remember much

of that day

that tragic day.

i was only five years-old,

i had stayed home from school --

or had i gone and come back? --

and all i wanted to do was watch

cartoons.

my mom sat at the table

and took control of the

remote, but instead of a

talking sponge or the iconic mouse on the television

we saw the twin towers on fire --

a mini sun engulfing the metallic skyscrapers.

my mom changed the channel, there was the fire,

changed the channel, fire, channel, fire

this was all that was on.

at the time i didn’t understand what was going on

i was upset i couldn’t watch my favorite cartoons,

it wouldn’t be until i was much older

that there was reason

this was played on every channel.

 Hayley

A blur –

something, a time

that impacted our nation so much

is a blur.

To me at least.

I remember being in my classroom and

my teacher, Mr. Smith, stopped

class and turned the classroom TV on.

“A movie?” – I thought in my young

ignorant mind.

I remember turning to my best friend

Hannah and faintly, I remember

her eyes shot wide open.

I remember turning to the little 30 lb. TV that sat

at the top corner of my elementary school

classroom.

Smoke.

The planes.

I don’t remember or recall what the

reporters were saying on TV.

I don’t remember any other images shown.

But, something I didn’t forget –

Something that I still remember till this day

Were the tears rolling down my teacher’s cheek.

I wish I’d been old enough to comprehend

the impact this had at the time.

My young mind couldn’t grasp the

concept of the hate, the loss, and the amount

of pain that was experienced

through this.

My eyes filled with tears even though I couldn’t

understand, but what I felt that day still

haunts me, so does this blurry memory.

 Jessica

I remember being picked up from kindergarten

early that day.

“Woo! No more school!” shouted James.

“I’m so hungry,” Emily griped.

I said nothing, waiting for my parents, an unexplained pit in my stomach.

Mom’s face was red with tears, her lower lip quivering.

Dad’s face was sunken, eyes dead, and his lip a line.

“We lost a lot of people in New York, Joanna,”

my dad said.

“They bombed the twin towers” Mom clarified.

I remember not understanding. Who did this? Why?

My parents recognized the confusion on my face

and bent down closer.

“You know how Mommy and Daddy are firefighters,

right?”

I nodded.

“Well, a lot of firefighters like us tried to save everybody

from the bad guys but it was so bad that

they couldn’t do it.”

I remember not understanding. Firefighters always

saved the day.

“A lot of people’s and firefighters’ lives were lost,

Joanna.”

I remember feeling devastated for those people

and those firefighters in New York.

I remember being grateful we didn’t live in New York.

I remember feeling forever afraid my parents

would not come home when they went to save the day.

 Joanna

I did not see it happen

but I was the first on the scene.

Maybe you know it was horrible

but you had to see it to understand.

How do I help everyone

when there’s only one of me?

The woman screaming from the 12th floor,

the old man on the 15th,

I helped one survive

but the other didn’t make it.

They say it was a national tragedy

but it’s a personal one, too.

How many people lost somebody,

including me?

 Kevin

I was too little to understand

what was going on. I just

remember seeing it everywhere

on TV

2 buildings,

Fire, smoke, fear,

I didn’t know what I was

watching,

a scary movie?

an action movie?

anything except reality.

I didn’t know what I

was watching, but I remember I wanted it to

stop.

 Jacky

I was six.

It was past 10:00 p.m. Hanoi time and

we were about to go to bed, but my dad

turned on the TV.

It was the first time I’d seen a burning

building, but I was not scared because

it was morning there and night here.

I wasn’t scared.

I didn’t understand.

I was a teenager. I see my father standing

Somewhere with the towers in the background.

Those were once there.

I am twenty. I pay thirty-five USD

to view New York from Freedom Tower 1.

I’m safe in this day and age though,

as I head to the subway, I think about how

once in New York is enough for the rest of my life.

 Neilson

I see the building we are heading towards

From this small square of an airplane window

I hear frantic commotion

voices screaming

uncontrollable crying

and the sureness of this plane not slowing down

or stopping

And I wonder

if I told my parents this morning I loved them

 Danielle

I was 4 years old –

it didn’t really make too much

sense to me – that is,

until,

the next month at the airport

My dad and I were stopped

from boarding our plane

because “Galou” is our surname

and our surname is Algerian

and the TSA

security said, “Well, we can

never be too safe – lotsa

terrorists from those parts.”

Me – a 4-year-old –

My dad,

harmless and annoyed.

What was really upsetting

was how they are two completely

different ethnic groups –

North Africans and Middle Easterners

but the White guy

digging in my father’s pockets

and taking off my pink

plastic headband to check

for hidden bombs knew no

difference.

He was instructed to check

everyone who wasn’t

named “Bob Smith” or

“Jane Doe,” my dad said.

We ended up at the

airport for 18 hours that

day,

but what they’ll never

know is how close

those 18 hours brought us –

so, I guess the joke is

on them.

 Alex

Hospital nurse

people coming in to my hospital one after another

they say we are being attacked

they say we are at war

All I can think about is helping the patient in front of me.

I don’t have time for anger

I don’t have time to process

people on the ground

people in the hallway

people that are dying

people that are dead

All I know is that I have

patients that need to be cared for

and our hospital doesn’t have enough supplies.

 Irving

I am someone who loves deeply

and doesn’t like goodbyes

On September 11, 2001, I was teaching at

Western Carolina University in NC.

I was in the Eastern time zone.

When I went to teach my freshman

writing class, I was oblivious

to what had played out in NYC and

at the Pentagon.

Even though two different colleagues had

stopped by my office sharing news

about the Twin Towers, I’d simply

nodded and gone on to prep for my class –

I mused, where were the Twin Towers?

My class met in a computer classroom

the previous professor had left CNN playing

Live, in front of my students and me

The second plane crashed into Tower Two.

People jumped to their deaths.

Later on, in the news replaying those horrific images

I heard about passengers on the doomed flights

calling loved ones to say goodbye; to say “I love you”

I didn’t have a cell phone in 2001.

 Dr. Warner

The bank is particularly hot today –

broken A.C. – man, why can’t it be October already?

You would think the damn thing

would be fixed

by now.

Never, not in this wannabe city.

All I want to do is deposit a check.

Loud voices echo around,

calls being received,

and banters over at customer service.

There is so much going on

I don’t figure any more is going on

than usual.

That is when I get the call.

My husband on the other end asks if I’ve heard.

I say, “no.”

And then I hear.

The sweat on my back feels colder

and the bank goes silent.

 Kaitlyn

The school bell rang and

I had just walked inside

my classroom. Not 10 minutes

later and my first grade

teacher lined us back up.

We all walked outside and

I saw every class with

teachers, staff, and workers --

everyone walked out.

“What is going on?” I

asked my friend in line

next to me. “We get to

go home early! Yay, no more

school!”

We all cheered as we sat outside.

They opened a bungalow holding

food, drinks, and other stuff that

looked like camping things.

Flashlights, blankets, blue tarp.

I was just happy to go home.

My dad picked me up. He looked

normal. I got home and changed

into my pjs. My cousin was

over and he had gotten me

lunchables. My favorite.

I excitedly opened it up and

ate it. The TV was already on.

It was the news. I hated the

news. But my family had their

eyes glued to the screen.

I saw smoke covering up two tall

buildings. Oh no. As I took another

bite of my ham, cheese, and crackers

and sipped my fruit punch,

I wondered what happened.

At least I have no school.

 Victoria

I wish most things went according to training

I didn’t learn what to do after feeling a “BOOM” that threw me off my feet.

I didn’t know how to react to an entire city of terrified, screaming people.

I didn’t know what to think when I saw the plane in that building.

I couldn’t know what to say to those we found in the wreckage.

I only knew that I’m glad I had not been trained for this.

I would not be able to experience this twice.

 Johnson

September 11, 2001

Two towers standing

one and one

together

towering over the city

and up to the sun

I am a child

careless yet curious

oblivious to the violence

9/11

One tower flaming, combusting

the other trembling

one and one

a part

falling into pieces

across the city

I see the news

it feels like a dream,

time stops and we freeze

9-1-1

Save us, it is a state of emergency

While I may be safe at home,

the nation surges with urgency

 Lydia