

Two

Early Bird

SEPTEMBER 11, 2001

Josh Anderson never believed in being any later than five minutes early. Leaving his hotel room, he decided to walk the mile or so to the World Trade Center. It was a crisp fall morning and the air felt good as he breathed it in.

After rounding the corner from Church Street and turning onto Vessey, Josh entered the South Tower and then headed downstairs to the coffee shop. The waitress recognized him from recent visits and started making his decaf, non-fat latté before he even sat down.

“Here’s your ‘weak skinny,’ Mr. Anderson,” she said.

“You’re pretty skinny yourself, Joanne, but you sure don’t seem weak,” he retorted. She winked at him as she moved to the next table.

He sipped his coffee while thumbing through the *New York Times*. He missed the *Times* since he and Emmy had moved to the District of Columbia. The *Washington Post* had its own special political character but the *Times*—there just wasn’t another paper quite like it, at least not in Josh’s opinion. He felt good being in Manhattan, absolutely the city of cities for him.

About 8:30 AM Josh headed up to Larry Bancock’s office on the 56th floor. Larry was the community relations manager for Morgan Stanley and was meeting with Josh to determine the extent to which his company would help fund the world hunger program about which Josh had convinced them to contribute when he was with Amnesty International. Even as a staff member of the State Department, Josh had continued his efforts for peace by addressing people’s most basic needs. Peace would be a natural outcome if the “haves” shared their resources with the “have nots,” Josh always preached. The morning meeting was an extension of his convictions.

Sitting at Larry’s desk, Josh checked his email. Soon, one of the secretary’s came in to let him know that Larry was on his way up. Josh decided to go to the elevator to meet him. The elevators, located in the core of the tall tower, were the geometric center that gave the structure its needed support. While standing at the elevator bank waiting for Larry, Josh heard an odd sound, a kind of clanging as if something was falling through the elevator shaft. Then, through the crack in the doors, he saw a poof of dust.

Just then, a man rounded the corner, frantically yelling, “Number one just blew!”

Josh ran to the north side of the building’s perimeter and saw the top part of the twin

tower ablaze. Other Morgan Stanley employees were grouping around him, and everyone was incredulous. Rumors began flying about a private plane errantly crashing into Tower One. Then the loudspeaker system assured everyone in Tower Two that they were safe. “Stay where you are,” a man’s voice intoned. “There’s a problem in the North Tower.” More people came rushing out of their offices and raced to the north windows, mesmerized as they looked out at their twin building ablaze. The voice on the loudspeaker returned: “If you choose to leave, do so by the stairs.”

Instinctively, Josh wanted to get out. He spotted Larry in the crowd and told him, “Let’s get out of here. Now!”

Suddenly, there was mass pandemonium. Larry and Josh made their ways back to the elevator and took it down to the sky lobby on the 40th floor. Rick Rescorla, the head of security for Morgan Stanley, was already there with a bullhorn directing everyone toward the stairs. As they passed by Rick, Larry told him how glad he was that Rick had prepared the employees for an emergency evacuation. Going down the stairwell was fairly orderly at first, though the stairwell was packed tightly with people. There was a kind of communal spirit. Everyone assumed there had been a light aircraft accident—maybe the pilot had a heart attack. Those moving more slowly stayed on the inside, by the railing. After 15 or 20 minutes, the escapees reached the 10th floor, just in time for what felt like an earthquake. The building began jiggling like a bowl of Jell-O. Josh thought maybe a huge chunk of the North Tower had fallen onto the South Tower. For the first time, he felt a real sense of panic. Smoke began to fill the stairwell. Josh encouraged those around him to use handkerchiefs or their jackets to cover their faces when suddenly the lights went off, and everything went black.