



::issue::04|03::.....

## Infamous

Jennifer Shatwell

### Where were you the day America fell down?

Even giants trip,  
                    stumble,  
                                    fall,  
on shoelaces larger than life,  
the gravity of superior minds.

Their structure gives way,  
                            buckles,  
  collapses,  
and they go down in a cloud of smoke...

taking everything with them,  
burying everything underside.

Barrett gives the copy machine another swift kick in the side. It's 8:30 Tuesday morning, and the CEO of Cantor Fitzgerald will be looking for his reports by 9 a.m. sharp – the directors' staff meeting.

Outside it's a beautiful, crisp mid-September day in New York City – the kind of day Barrett imagined when deciding to move back to New York, and the kind of autumn he'll remind himself of all winter. It isn't too often the city sees a cloudless sky.

Despite itself, the Big Apple is just as big a bitch as ever this morning. Traffic on the Jersey Turnpike has never been so slow, but then, Barrett has never been so late. He was brutally reminded of East Coast driving etiquette (there is none) and thought deciding not to park the car and hop a ferry across the Hudson was his worst decision yet. He shovelled out \$6 to cross the GW, \$20 to park all day in some proximity to the Trade Center and \$3.50 for a large black Coffee of the Day, just to take the edge off. By the time he passed the *USA Today* stand on his way up to the 105<sup>th</sup> floor and read the blurb "Today is National 911 Day", all he could do was laugh.

Now, Barrett's growing sick thinking about his boss's seedy nouveau riche smirk, the one he'll have to patronize in under half an hour's time if he doesn't get the damn copy machine working. It's only been a few months back, but it's times like this Barrett reconsiders the LA office. The lateral move to IT manager wouldn't have been so bad; he'd still have a big city, a slower pace, a beach.

"Is upper management really worth this?" he wonders aloud, looking around for signs of his administrative assistant. He frantically loosens his tie, then presses the mint-green "Start" button again. He presses it longer

this time, until a series of beeps and clicks ensues. Barrett can only move his hand in agony as he waits – down the side of his face, across his mouth and over his eyes. He can see the wall clock from between his fingers: 8:36 a.m. It's hopeless.

"Morning Barrett," says Mike on his way in.

Barrett takes a moment to relax from his copying efforts and affords his colleague a friendly nod and smile.

"Why don't you try the one downstairs?" Mike adds with a hint of sarcasm. He always has answers.

The stairwell down to 104 seems more jammed than usual this morning, and Barrett overhears someone mention an IT conference going on at Windows of the World. It reminds him of Joanna. Manhattan's highest restaurant is where he met Jo, during one of his first luncheon meetings after the transfer. She waits there part-time to help pay the bills while she finishes her law degree at NYU. Barrett isn't head over heels for this one like he has been in the past, he's decided. He doesn't have time for a relationship now, anyway; he's got to solidify his career at Cantor. Something about being with her is just easier, though, more comfortable than the rest. She laughs at his jokes to make him feel funny and smiles even when there is nothing to smile about. They've only been out a few times; today's lunch date will make four. Barrett lets a quick smile escape as he remembers their plans – only four more hours.

Cantor Fitzgerald territory claims two of the iconic North Tower's upper levels. Barrett began work as an entry-level years ago on Cantor's lower floor, but he hardly spends any time there these days and isn't quite sure where he'll find the working photocopier. Peering around vaguely familiar cubicle walls, he scouts out signs of a working machine, or an intern to complete the job, and wonders casually why he's never taken a moment to look around down here. A quick glance at his watch jars him and reminds him of his impending deadline. It's already 8:45.

## DAYRUNNER

Tuesday, September 11, 2001

- 7 7:15 – get to work early! copy/distribute reports
- 
- 8 8:05 – global call, they’re calling this time
- 
- (8:46 a.m. – A Boeing 767 flies into the top floors of the North Tower.)**
- 9 9 (sharp!) – Staff Meeting
- 
- (9:02 a.m. – United Airlines Flight 175 hits the South Tower.)**
- 
- (9:40 a.m. – American Airlines Flight 77 crashes into the Pentagon.)**
- 10 **(9:59 a.m. – The South Tower collapses on itself.)**
- 
- (10:10 a.m. – United Airlines Flight 93 crashes in Pennsylvania.)**
- 
- (10:28 a.m. – The North Tower crumbles.)**
- 
- (10:54 a.m. – Fearing WWII, people in Israel evacuate buildings.)**
- 11
- 
- 12
- 
- 12:30 – eats. Joanna @ Battery Park
- 
- 1 **(1:27 p.m. – Washington D.C. is declared a state of emergency.)**
- 
- 2 2:15 – third quarter review, one on one with Bob
- 
- 3
- 
- 3:30 – meet the new intern
- 
- 4
- 
- 5 Coffee with Kevin after work
- 
- (5:20 p.m. – World Trade Center Building 7 gives in.)**
- 
- 6 **(8:30 p.m. – President Bush breaks national silence, vows “retribution”.)**

Sept. 11, 2001

A day of infamy. That's what they're calling it. Of course, they have to call it something. I heard a voice from across the office holler, "A plane has hit the Trade Center!" My first reaction was, "What a dumbass," thinking some little crop duster had gone astray. Yeah, Jill. A crop duster in the middle of Manhattan. Something told me to go to the TV. Then I saw it: a plume of smoke billowing out the side of the WTC. I couldn't believe the speculation about terrorist attacks. Surely it was a flight pattern miscommunication, a terrible computer malfunction. But there wasn't a cloud in the sky today. It was the most beautiful New York day, or at least it looked that way on TV. Then something entered the screen. The explosion happened faster than I could comprehend. I had to wait for the replay. They have been replaying it ever since.

I think we were watching CNN. It seems silly that I can't remember such details from this morning. I never went back to my desk, except once to send Trish an e-mail and tell her what happened. She already knew. Everyone knew. I sat in the conference room, the one with the television, and watched. I was glued to the reporter – live from the Empire States Building – and the blazing towers behind him. I had just been there to visit.

I'm not sure what I was waiting for as I stared at the TV, but when the South Tower collapsed I had a better clue. Maybe I knew the story's ending all along. Maybe I thought if I watched closely enough, I could

keep the North Tower from giving in, too. I was caught up in the chaos and almost sickly attracted to the destruction.

People were going home by then. But are we any safer in our homes? I don't know why I stayed for so long, but I did. If the people in those towers weren't going home, I wasn't going home either.

It all happened so quickly. As I watched the story unravel, news flashes of further devastation cut in and redirected my attention. The North Tower collapsed within half an hour, the Pentagon – our five-sided fortress – was already ablaze. A fourth plane, missile, crashed in Pennsylvania, supposedly heading toward The White House but deterred and destroyed by its passengers. They have already been called heroes. The media were relentless, they still are – cell phone recordings, more planes, more targets, flight numbers, survivor statistics, family help lines. The president was flown from Florida to an underground lair in Louisiana. Cheney was taken to a secure and confidential location. No one knows where he is. The White House was evacuated. Then D.C. was evacuated. All national landmarks were being vacated. I bit my lip at the thought of my buddies in the Sears Tower.

The commentators were looking for something intelligent to say, but all we could do as a nation was sit mystified with gaping mouths. I couldn't help but imagine the worst *Independence Day* outcome. Was this World War III? Would there be nuclear attacks? What was next? It felt like the end of the world. It would have only been the end of us.

There is emptiness inside me now, like a vacuum of shock, disbelief, awe. For so long, I've been trained to misunderstand national tragedy. I wasn't there for Pearl Harbor. I didn't see Kennedy get shot. I was born in the lucky generation in which everything is taken care of and you don't need to understand such things – "when fact is fiction and TV is reality." I feel exempt from realizing the extreme weight of today's events. I haven't cried; I can't. I am desensitized. Part of me wishes I were there, running down the streets to escape a colossal wave of steel limbs. Then I could understand, empathize. Then I'd get it, with no television screen or stock ticker in the way. From here, all I can do is watch and keep breathing.

**Have you been introduced to the skeletons in your closet?**

There are far too many of them  
like forgotten winter clothes  
more patient than you've ever been;  
They wait for you, unbothered by dust,  
the dirt you're always in.

Time is all you have to count on  
till the demons come out to haunt you  
from nowhere and everywhere at once;  
They strip you of all dignity  
layer by layer  
storey by storey.

Exposed for what you really are  
what you weren't sure you were  
what they knew better all along;



You're not so innocent after all  
and no, you're not so strong.

The carpet on 104 looks brand new, especially near the copy machine. Barrett notices a Coke machine in the corner and along the wall, a table of Styrofoam cups and canisters of Gloria Jean coffee.

"What do these people do down here?" he wonders jealously and aloud.

Overhearing his comment, someone giggles secretly behind him – the new intern, Meg. Barrett has an introduction scheduled with her later this afternoon, but since she's caught him at his managerial worst, he thinks now might be a better time to say hello, save face. He gets the copies started – of course it works – and heads toward her cubicle for a proper "good morning."

Barrett stops abruptly in his first step, and Meg's giggle turns sour, her face dropping. It feels like an earthquake. He can't take a step forward, anywhere. So out of place, like in a science fiction novel, a seismic wave rips through the office from below him, then instantly turns around and crushes him from above. It happens within seconds; he is frozen in them, suspended in the air by the shockwave's force. Then he's released and left in a heap in the middle of the hall.

Barrett looks around him, stunned, and surveys the situation. He isn't the only one lying on the floor; others don't seem to be getting up. He thinks he feels the building sway, like a hellish case of Vertigo or a blade of grass in the breeze. He grips the floor and holds his breath, waiting for the sensation to pass.

Sept. 12, 2001

I can't imagine what it is like back home in Jersey. Even in LA you meet so many people who knew people. Six degrees of separation. Brothers, uncles, ex-boyfriend's friends, old bosses – some on the infamous flights out here. What must it be like on the other coast? One degree of separation? Maybe two? You'd run into an old friend, a neighbor in the grocery store and hesitate to ask them how they are – the same hesitation with which you might check the temperature of your bath water or take the first sip of your coffee. Why would they even be at the grocery store? They would be in the city, stapling fliers to billboards, copying photographs, scribbling dossier descriptions of their loved ones, their lost ones. They would be holding hands in circles, lighting candles, waving flags. They would ask you to pray for them, for whoever might still be buried or would soon be buried.

What would you say?

I didn't know anyone in the towers. I didn't know anyone in the city. I called Grandma and Patty from the office when it happened, and they said the family in Jersey was safe. There was no reason to go into New York yesterday. Patty could see the chaos from the highway, though; she

said Bob was on his way into work when he saw the sky light up in front of him and the horizon turn black with ash. He wasn't the only commuter to slam on his brakes at the sight, then pull off the side of the road to watch, to turn around and go home. He called Patty on his cell: "Something terrible has happened. Turn on the news, quick!" Patty saw the second plane hit on "Good Morning America," then grabbed her coat and keys, rushed out the door and brought her children home from school.

I used to love jumping on Rte. 17 from Patty's place. On a clear day, that magnificent New York skyline was just over the next hill. I grew up with that skyline: the twin towers, the Empire States, the Statue of Liberty, the Chrysler building. To my grandfather, that skyline meant liberty, freedom and opportunity – everything he didn't have in Ireland. It was his first image from the ship, his hand in his father's, his eyes wide open and his future about to dock. It was Hell's Kitchen, his new home, where he played in the sprays of fire hydrants, perfected his street smarts and bought hot dogs from street-corner vendors with what little change he earned. He would make something of himself here, he knew.

To me, New York was summertime on visits back home. It was ferry trips across the Hudson, daylong lines to get to the top of Lady Liberty's crown, Broadway productions of *Annie*; New York was thin, foldable, dripping-with-grease pizza. It was where everything happened. It was where I would one day return. A Mecca for the American people, in the midst of their amber waves of grain, their purple mountains majesty.



## **It's time to humble an empire.**

To subvert its dominance  
turn the mirror around  
and show the West its face.  
Mock them, mimic them  
challenge their values  
then smile at their disgrace.  
Aim at their icons  
their symbols of faith  
and bring them to their knees.  
Upset their blindness  
awaken their sleep  
and shake their security.

Only a moment has gone by, but suddenly Barrett can't remember an hour ago. He can only think of the building and his college buddy, Chris, who'd been in the towers back in '93. Barrett's only heard a few of Chris's stories, but he has never gotten over the chill of Chris's description of the bomb – how the building shook. He can't get the image out of his head now.

People are screaming, and Barrett thinks he hears someone say something about a plane. Otherwise, things seem oddly normal – not normal at all, in this case – like the eerie, orange-gray sky before a hurricane. Meg grabs the receiver and dials home. A woman Barrett vaguely recognizes runs past on her cell phone. She is ordering someone on the other end to turn on CNN.

“I can see smoke rising out the window!” she yells. Then her arms drop to her sides, defeated, and the cell phone no longer is held to her ear.

“A plane has hit the World Trade Center!” Meg cries, grabbing her breast in anxiety as she is reported details. “No, Mom, I won’t hang up.”

Others concur, scurrying past with Palm Pilots, cell phones and other devices – links to the outside, to safety. Mass havoc ensues as the situation’s severity is gradually realized. Barrett can detect the faint smell of smoke, but he doesn’t see where it’s coming from. He blinks, finally, and realizes he’s still on the floor. There’s no time to waste, he thinks. He has got to get out.

“I hope it hit above us,” he whispers, fearing there might be no way out. Then he remembers Jo upstairs and shakes his head in disbelief, trying to settle the guilt in his belly.

A man he’s never met before tells Barrett to call for help. Hardly thinking, he picks up the nearest landline and dials the front desk of North Tower’s lobby.

“What do we do?”

“A plane has hit the Trade Center, floors 92-98 roughly,” the operator says, sealing Barrett’s fear. It hit below. “Rescue teams are working to

evacuate the floors directly impacted, so wait for direct instructions from the command center.”

Wait?

The receiver still in his hand, Barrett begins dialling Jo’s number upstairs, though he has no idea what to say. Then out of the corner of his eye, he sees the first signs of smoke – thick and deathly. He panics and drops the phone. He’d better find the stairs, he decides. Get the hell out of here. Barrett grabs Meg’s arm and leads her briskly down the hall to the stairs he had just taken. She is screaming something about her cell phone dying; she can’t get her mom back on the line. As they reach the stairwell, Barrett notices people fleeing from it, rather than to it.

“There are no stairs!” someone shouts.

Barrett forces himself through the crowd to the stairs to see for himself. Pushing back the door he is nearly knocked over by smoke; the intense heat feels like it’s singeing his brow. It’s the center stairwell, he thinks. We’ll never get through here.

“Where are the corner fire exits?” he bellows out above the crowd.

Barrett sees another man nod through the thickening smoke and follows him around. He turns over his shoulder to see if Meg has followed. Only a cloud of smoke trails him.

“There are no corner stairwells,” Barrett’s leader yells back at him, “only central ones!”

They round the corner to stairwell B, and find the situation just as futile as before, though now the smoke is overwhelming, intoxicating. Barrett’s chest sinks in despair, and he sways slightly, disoriented by the smoke in his lungs. We’re not getting out of here, he thinks. The reality is now setting in: there’s a fireball of fuel burning just below, vaporizing everything in its path – an impassable belt of hell between here and escape.

“What about the air ducts?” he asks, although he knows the answer.

“We’ve tried calling the architects, someone who may know the building better,” the man replies, shaking his head distantly and seeming to come to the same realization as Barrett. “The phone lines are dying.”

### ***Sept. 13, 2001***

As if life could return to normal, I went to the post office today. Three men of Middle Eastern descent were in line for passports. They didn’t speak any English, it seemed, and couldn’t understand the postwoman as she asked to see their identification papers. Two of them wore baggy jeans and oversized sports jerseys; the third, who seemed to be doing all the negotiating, had on a bulky winter coat. It was only 65 degrees



outside. I stared at them while I waited and while they argued in vain, but I couldn't quite understand why they were applying for passports today – today of all days. Then I heard a voice in my head scream, "Don't let them have it! They're terrorists!"

I objectified them, profiled them – I hated them.

I've never looked at a person and judged them by their color before.

Today I wanted to yell. I wanted to scream at these three random men. I wanted to hit them, kick them and throw them up against a wall. I wanted to send them back to wherever they came from and say to them on their way out, "How dare you come over here, make a life for yourself off our liberty then fuck us over when we're not looking." Fuck you! Fuck being scared. The reports say they're everywhere. They've been here, "sleeping," for years. They took flight lessons. They took trips, received documents from abroad, obtained mission details, had meetings. All right under our noses, and we didn't know. We couldn't see. We were too busy...doing what?

I'm scared, and I don't care if that means they've won. In my book, they have. They've got us in a checkmate, in this age-old game of power chess. Our only move now is to stick our tail between our knees.

Like rats from water, men and women in business suits are fleeing the smoke on level 104. From the staircase, Barrett follows a small group of workers to the northwest conference room. There, about 50 people are

taking shelter from the smoke. With the door sealed, it almost seems as though nothing is happening – just a regular day at the 9 a.m. staff meeting. Barrett determines that all he can do is stay alive until it's over. He'll wait here for the rescue teams.

A man is now on the phone with his wife, taking people's phone numbers and calling home to their families to let them know these 50 are alright. "You – what's your family's number?" he calls, pointing over the crowd in Barrett's direction.

Barrett realizes that his cell phone is upstairs. Everything is happening so fast; he hasn't even thought about making a "last call" home. Would he really die here, he wonders briefly, then hollers out his mother's number – she'll know who else to call. The man repeats it digit by digit to his wife, safe at home.

Barrett settles himself in a corner of the room, still considering the various ways he might get out of the building. A man approaches him and asks if he's heard what happened. Barrett admits the last of his knowledge: a plane has struck the building. The stranger – he's met so many strangers today – tells him a second plane has hit.

"I was on the phone with my wife. She saw it hit the South Tower on TV and says they keep replaying the footage. Can you imagine those tourists down there with the home videos? I dunno. All I could say to her was that I loved her. Then the line died."

Barrett nods in solace. He hasn't considered the "why" or "how" of it all, yet, but now it all seems clear.

"We're under attack," he says quietly. He doesn't know what else to say to the man and would much rather sit in silence anyway. No one has any answers, and the chatter at this point just seems meaningless. So meaningless.

Sept. 14, 2001

I said something at work today – something along the lines of, "Who would want to do something like this to us? What have we done?" Most of the room agreed with me, and shook their heads despairingly. After lunch – I hardly ate – Greg pulled me aside and said he thought I might be interested in some author named Chomsky. Greg said that although he didn't condone what happened Tuesday, we shouldn't be so surprised.

I couldn't imagine what he was talking about. I was so angry! All we ever do is try to help other countries! We stick our nose in other people's business because they ask us to, because they need our help. If we stood by doing nothing, we'd get bombed just the same. You can't be the world's superpower and not feed starving people, or help them fight their oppressors. You can't just stand by and revel in your money while other people, sometimes your friends and sometimes not, are sick, starving and being murdered.

It's like walking down the street, counting your money in your silk suit as you pass a homeless person who's blind and living in a box.

There's no way we'll ever make everyone happy. If we're not all friends, we can't all get along. But that doesn't give these people the right to fly a plane into our buildings and kill thousands of innocent people.

**An irrational hatred for the Sudan.**

That's all you ever had  
irrational intolerance  
for the ways and ideas of Others.  
You made us with money  
and called us "Afghanis"  
then told to fight like we were dolls.  
Then you covered your tracks  
turned your giant back  
rejecting such fundamentalists.  
Our barbarism, faith  
benefit you once  
and then you deem it uncivilised.  
It is us against you,  
your self, our Other  
your money will now come to kill you.

How long have I been sitting here, Barrett suddenly wonders. He looks down at his wristwatch; it's only 9:58. He can't take the waiting anymore – waiting to be rescued, waiting to die, waiting for some resolution. The clean air is running out and the smoke is taking over the conference room. He decides to get up, do something, anything. Then he hears something. It is godlike in its gravity, its volume. It shakes the North Tower, shuddering the building's spine and Barrett's. It can only be one thing, he resolves – the one thing he has tried not to think of all morning. The other tower must be gone.

Screw this, Barrett says, scared shitless. He waits for the thunder to die slightly, then gets up, takes in whatever clean air he can and abandons

the shelter zone. He plunges through the smoke, over scattered office supplies, chairs and people. From what he can see of Cantor Fitzgerald, things are in absolute disarray, but it is the smoke, the heat and the boiling of the tower's belly below that mortify him.

On the opposite side of the floor, Barrett spies another vacant office space. He enters and goes to the window to see what happened – not too close, he advises himself cautiously. Outside he sees nothing, but there should be quite a large something. Where just this morning stood the South Tower of the World Trade Center is in its place a cloud of smoke, soot, ash and dust. It is thick and gray – more matter than absence. It is seeping through the cracks of Wall Street, downtown Manhattan, chasing and threatening to engulf those who have escaped below – and bury those who haven't. It is destruction, desolation, annihilation. Barrett knows now that his turn is next.

### **They died for a cause that was not their own**

of which they knew little,

of which they cared less.

We were our own greatest enemy

fashionably patriotic

tragically uninformed.

Then, for a moment, we were silenced.

If they wanted us to listen,

We heard.

If they wanted us to know their pain,  
We most certainly learned.

Barrett swallows hard: first what little spit his body is producing and then the sobering realization that the floors are buckling below him. The North Tower will soon go the way of its twin. It hurts to swallow. Barrett thinks he might be feeling a bit sick and wishes he had decided to call in sick today, but there's no purpose in "what ifs."

An object in the window breaks his stare. It falls past his gaze too quickly to articulate, but he knows what it is. Like he knows New York doesn't have earthquakes. The narrative unravels itself. The characters comply to their roles.

Barrett steps back through the smoke a few steps. Wind from the broken windows sweeps debris from his hair. He tries to inhale deeply, sigh, but he can hardly breathe anymore.

His colleagues are still huddled in the corner conference room, and he hears one of them shout, "They're saying it was a terrorist attack. Those bastards!"

Terror. He considers the word. Would it be so much a terrorist attack if he doesn't let himself feel terrified?

"Fuck you and your cause!" he yells, but no one is there to hear him.

Their cause, their hatred, their inability, their insecurity, their complex – fuck them. Where would they be without us, he wonders. They wouldn't even know how to fly the damn planes.

### ***Sept. 16, 2001***

I checked out some books by Chomsky, and I get Greg's point. I had no idea. That's what's terrifying: I had no idea. I don't think many people do.

We read the paper every morning; we watch "CNN World News Report" and have intelligent conversations about world happenings with various other characters in our lives. It never occurs to us that however informed we feel ourselves to be, we're always missing the other side of the story. When the papers are stuffed with Chandra Levy, Clinton sex scandals, Reagonomics, there's no room left to discuss foreign policy. Hell, we're not foreign anyway. Why do we need to know? The CIA and FBI are too smart – they're hired for it – to discuss their real intentions with the Mujahadin. No one will ever discuss the United States' dubious role in Afghanistan back in the '80s over dinner, nor will they do an in-depth special report on its interference in international affairs throughout the '90s. They are just accepted as peace missions, helpful, well regarded. The U.S. doesn't interview locals who tell them to get the hell out of their country, their business, and go home. And the U.S. certainly doesn't



write into its history books that it was the first nation to be officially declared an “international terrorist state” by the World Court for its travesties in Nicaragua.

Who can I believe, then? Who can I trust? And is it really fair for those unknowing people in the towers to die for their country’s lies, deceits, mistakes? Things no one ever told them about?

I don’t know why we don’t consider ourselves terrorists, as we set car bombs to detonate in far-off lands when we know the most innocent people will be nearby. I can’t explain the thought process behind arming and training the infamous “Afghanis” to kill Soviets, then befriending the Soviets and trampling the Afghans. I didn’t make the call to support Israel in its invasion of the Holy Land. I don’t work for the companies that supply them with weapons to destroy Palestinians.

But then, I guess the thousands of people dead in the Sudan didn’t do anything to make us bomb their pharmaceutical company either.

It isn’t conviction, bravery or patriotism. It is foolish, pointless hatred and spite. It is greed. It is a snubbed nose, a cocked head, a “humph” in our enemy’s general direction. It is fear of being taken advantage of,

stubborn disallowance of giving in, refusal to be “had”, determination to have the last word.

What we need is a culture change. It cannot come just from the government; it must come from us. An elimination of the bias, the ethnocentrism, the immediate gratification, retribution, retaliation. We must take a step back, grant ourselves a broader perspective, and realize the path to peace is a peaceful one. How do we expect to make peace of war? Lead by example.

### **All it needed was a change of course.**

Slight veer to the left  
will clear the iceberg  
so all the warning signs said.  
But they missed those signs  
in their gentile jest  
and burned their engines instead.  
Like they always had  
like they only knew  
bigger, grander, faster, rank.  
It hit in the gut  
and tore it apart  
the unsinkable ship sank.

Barrett takes a last look over his shoulder through the clouds of asphyxiating smoke and reassures himself of no other Exit signs. There are none. He knows that. He’s looked everywhere – stairways, air ducts,

scaffolds. He is alone in a burning sky, and there is nowhere to go now but down. Barrett's not about to let someone else decide how.

Barrett doesn't pray, but whispers "God help me" anyway as he peers out the window, down below. He thinks of his mom, his family. He thinks of LA. He thinks of Jo and wonders if she made it out somehow. Then he wonders how it is going to feel. He doesn't take the time to consider all his wrongs, his human errors – his could haves or should haves. He doesn't hesitate. Barrett just takes off his goddamn tie, picks up a bit of speed and leaps.

**You didn't push me. I didn't fall.**

I took back from you what was rightfully mine:

My right to live.

My right to die.

My right to jump.

I let the wind rush through my hair,

while the fire burned through yours.

Of my sins, I absolved myself,

and you too, for your misplaced piety.

In spite of you, I opened my arms, my eyes;

I became the sign of my own cross.

As the floors fell upwards,

and hell invaded the heavens,

I flew.

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