

THE LEAP OF FAITH



Tuesday September 11, 2001, I write in my work diary. I write in it every day. It marks the progress of my internship here. I hope to get the job, administrative assistant. I eventually want to run a company, but everyone must start low and work their way up. Ever since I graduated high school 4 months ago, life has seemed so big, amazing and full of possibilities. I am excited to be a businessman at the age of 18.

I work on floor 109 of the north tower, of the World Trade Center twin towers. The view is amazing. I can see for what seems like forever. The morning sun sparkles off the water, far below me. There was a huge thunderstorm yesterday, and everyone thought that today would be stormy too, but today is bright and clear. It's probably the most beautiful day in Manhattan that I have ever seen.

New York city is so amazing. Across the expanse of skyscrapers, I can see the Empire state building. It has a good long history with this city. I heard about something that happened to it in 1945. The city was so foggy that an airplane pilot crashed his plane into it, because he couldn't see where he was going. I really hope that nothing like that ever happens again. It's such a pleasure to work here.

It's 8.30 in the morning now, so I get 15 more minutes to sit around, think about my life and enjoy the view. I can see a dot in the distance, and I know that it is an airplane. They sometimes come past these buildings, and I really love watching them go. I've even been on airplanes that go right past these towers. Next time I'm on a plane that goes past, I'm going to say

to the person next to me, 'look, that's where I work!' as the towers flash past.

As the plane comes closer, something seems wrong. Its heading too straight at the tower, normally, they go past the tower, but this one is heading directly at the tower.

I pull my trusty flip phone from my back pocket. As I flip it open, I notice the battery is very low. I hope it lasts long enough to make this call. I press the buttons, 9,1,1. **"Hello, do you need police, fire or ambulance?"** "Probably all three, in a couple of minutes. There is a plane headed straight to the north tower of the World Trade Center!"

"What is your location?" "Floor 109, the north tower, the World Trade Center, New York city." They ask my phone number, so I tell them. **"Ok, sending police, fire and ambulance now."**

"Yo!" says my workmate, Chris. "There's a plane about to crash into the tower!" "I know!" I tell him. "I called 911." I look out the window again. The plane is much closer now. There can't be more than a minute until the plane hits the building. I dive under a desk, banging my elbow painfully on the floor. "Get down!" I yell. Chris drops to the ground and crawls under next to me. I put my arms up, trying to brace myself. Silence.

"Hey!" says Chris, "Nothings happeni –"

BOOM!

An ear-splitting noise, louder than anything I've ever heard rings out. The building shakes like we're in an earthquake. The

building has been designed to shake a little in the wind, and I've felt it. There's been nothing like this though. It must have hit one of the lower floors, because this floor seems intact. I can hear screams coming from all parts of the tower.

“We need to get out!” Chris says. I run to the stairwell. We run down the hard, concrete stairs. “It seems clear! We should be able to get out.”, I say. I keep running, trying not to slip. If I broke my back on the point of a stair, I would probably get stuck here. I run, turn round a corner, and run straight into a pile of rubble. There is a small fire, bits of metal and glass from the tower and plane. I catch my foot on something, and down I go, straight onto the fire.

Out of all days, why did I have to be wearing a flammable shirt today! It catches on fire almost immediately. I can feel the sharp and direct pain of flame against skin. Suddenly, I feel a hand grab on to mine. Its Chris! He pulls me out of the fire, and I drop to the ground and roll, smothering the flames, putting them out. I stand up and hear a dripping sound. “What's that sound?” I ask. “Its airplane fuel!” says Chris, “Its dripping onto the fire! We need to get out of here before it explodes!”

I run back up the staircase. Boom! I can hear the explosion of jet fuel on fire behind me. Bits of concrete from the walls and floor, as well as bits of metal, fly into us. I hope that it hasn't damaged anything too much. “There's no way out!” We're trapped! There's small bits of rubble and burnt things on the floor everywhere, and I try not to slip.

At floor 109 again, I can see the other tower. There are people coming out of the bottom. I look up, and there's another plane. I didn't expect this. It's heading straight towards the other tower! This is no coincidence. I thought at first that there was a pilot who couldn't see properly, when the plane hit the first tower, but no. This has to be a terrorist attack. I've heard about things like this in other countries, but I never thought that it would happen here!

Suddenly, I hear a muffled, but loud crash. I look over and the plane has crashed into the second building. Almost immediately, I can see smoke coming out of the building, followed by flames. "Jim!" Yells over Chris, "I just realised, we can't get out. We shouldn't have to get burnt or smoked to death in a building. We have to get out, but it's not going to be very nice." "What?!"

Chris walks over to a big conference table. He starts to push. He can do it. Chris is very strong. As he slides it across the room, it slowly gathered speed, before it smashes through the window, leaving a big gaping hole. The table falls through the air and, after a while, hits the ground with a thud. "No!" I say.

"Would you rather get burnt to death, or smoked to death?" I think about this. I take a deep breath and ignore the fact that my heart is pounding like a thousand drums. I walk over to the hole in the window. The view is still amazing. It is so high up. 417 metres. There is no way I can survive the fall. At least the last thing I'll ever see is the amazing view. I take a deep breath, go back couple of feet and leap off the edge.

The sensation of falling is unlike anything that I have ever felt. I can see the ground, still so far down, and the windows of the building flash past, as well as other buildings. Even though it's a massive drop, it's almost over. The ground is about to come to me for the very last time. I ready myself for the end and wait.

The ground hits me. The world blurs, then comes into focus, clearer than it's ever done. I feel fine. Not dead and no injuries. I feel the best I've ever felt, except for what is happening all around me. People are screaming. There are streams of them coming out of the doors at the base of the buildings. I look around for Chris, but can't see him. I wonder if this is happening to him too.

As I walk through, I see everything. Lots of people are running, in case the buildings collapse or fall over. Some people are just standing and looking up at the towers in stunned silence. Others are screaming or crying, or both. I can see more people fall or jump. I wonder if this- what is happening to me now will happen to them. I don't know how I am still alive, but I'm looking around, and I can feel, so how can I be dead? But how can I be alive?

I'm walking around the area around the towers. People that I walk right past don't seem to notice me. I'm not that surprised though. People would definitely be more focused on what's just happened, than to notice the people walking by.

There is something strange happening. There is lots of smoke and ash in the air, and lots of people are coughing. I can't smell smoke at all and I'm not coughing, or sneezing. Maybe, although

I somehow survived the fall, all my senses are messed up. I might even be internally injured or have brain damage. I need to go to a hospital. I know St Vincents is nearby.

I reach for my flip phone, but it isn't there. It must have fallen out when I fell. I know the address. It's really close. I'll have to walk. It should only take me a couple of minutes. I look around at the towers, and I can't even see the top 40 floors of either tower because there is so much smoke. Ambulances have arrived, their sirens wailing into the air. I turn back and keep walking. I'm surprised that I can walk so easily, I mean, I just jumped off one of the world's tallest buildings!

After a couple of minutes of walking, I arrive at the hospital. It's really big, with enormous white slabs on the walls. I walk around until I find the emergency room. There is a line of people outside. All of them look really hurt. Some of them are in office chairs with wheels, makeshift wheelchairs. I walk to the back of the line, and again no one notices me. The line very slowly grows shorter and shorter, person after person getting admitted.

Finally, I am at the front. There is nobody in the line behind me, but I am sure there will be more soon. "Paul!" Says the tall thin woman behind the counter to the man with short hair and glasses to his left, "There is no one left! Let's take a break!" This is weird. Can't she see me? I don't think that she would prank me.

"Uh, hello?" I say. No response. "Hi! I jumped out of the World Trade Center. I must be hurt somehow." The nurse and the

doctor just walk out of the room, not showing any signs that they heard me. I am sure that the people working in the emergency room wouldn't just ignore someone. They must not be able to see me. This is so weird. It's like no one can see me or hear me.

Suddenly, I hear another loud BOOM! People start screaming louder than they were before. I go out to look and after going past the new line of people outside the emergency room, I walk into the thick black air. It's so dark that it almost looks like night. I reach into my pocket for my small torch, but just like the phone, it isn't there.

As this happens, I can hear new shouts ring out among the crowds of people. They're yelling, "They collapsed! They collapsed!" The towers must have just collapsed. That's why it's even ashier than it was before I came out. The people around me are also coughing. Lots. I still aren't coughing though. The fall from the towers must have damaged me somehow. I might even be about to die! I must go to my family and say goodbye.

My family live on the outskirts of the city, so I will be able to get to them. It will be a long walk. I hope I can find my way through the dark. As I set off though, I start to feel dizzy. This feeling gets stronger and stronger until suddenly, everything's gone.

I don't know what just happened. Maybe I fell asleep. The sky is a lot brighter, even though there is still a lot of smoke. It can't have cleared that quickly. This must be the next day. The twin towers are gone. There is a thin trail of smoke from where they

once lay. Something looks different though. Actually, everything looks different.

I am in an entirely different place. Still in New York city. I turn around, and see my house. The same house that I grew up in my whole life. I don't know how I got here, but this is where I need to be. To say goodbye before I go.

I walk up to the front door and knock. My fist goes straight through the door. What!?! I must be delusional, or seeing things. I do it again. Same thing happens. I put my whole arm up to my shoulder through the door. Looking like a ghost from a strange old film, my whole body goes through.

I look around my home and on the table, I see something. It's a funeral document. Someone has died. I look closer to see the name. John Callington. That's my name. I guess I didn't survive the fall after all I wonder if Chris had the same fate. I only wish I could have said goodbye.



18-year-old John Callington was starting his internship at the World Trade Centre twin towers in New York city. He was inside one of the towers when the planes strike in the 9/11 attacks.

What happens next, you'll have to read to find out...

