

Janice Brook's account of Tuesday September 11th, 2001

It was a glorious day. I left for work relaxed and happy at about 7.20am. I was at my desk reading through emails by 7.30am. I remember picking up the telephone to dial London, and I heard a loud bang. My PC screen flickered, the lights flashed on and off, and I saw paper and dust floating through the office window opposite where I sat. I ran around the corner to see Brian Clark, who told me not to panic, that it was probably a construction explosion, and that he would investigate. I went back to my desk, sat down, and then I heard a man's voice shout "Everybody out".

As I was about to leave, I hesitated and decided to call the London office to tell them what was happening. I vividly remember my conversation:

J: Rob, something's happening next door, we're all okay, but we're leaving.

R: Something's happening next door?!?!?!?!? Janice, a plane's gone into the building – get out of there right now!!!!

The urgency in his voice made me move. I don't remember saying goodbye or putting down the phone, I just grabbed my bag and ran. I vaguely remember smelling what I now know to be airline fuel as I ran, and asking people if I should stay or go. In the end, the decision to stay or go was taken away from me as I was herded into the fire escape staircase.

The staircase was already full with people coming down from above, it was a steady pace, but people were chatting, joking and relaxed. I was wearing some ridiculously high shoes, and someone suggested that it would be quicker if I took them off, so I put them in my bag, and continued down in bare feet.

When we got down to the 72nd floor, there was an announcement from the building security. They assured us that our building was secure, that the emergency services had requested they not evacuate our building as the space on the plaza was being used as an emergency medical center for those being evacuated from One World Trade. The announcement said we should go back into the building, and make our way back to our own offices. We carried on down two more flights, and entered back into the building on the 70th floor. There was a further announcement whilst we were walking, repeating again that our building was secure, and that the lifts would start to work again momentarily.

We waited for about three minutes but the lifts did not come back on. Someone suggested we should start walking. When we walked into the staircase it was still full of people walking down. I remember a girl asking me where I was going. I told her that we had been assured that our building was secure so we were heading back to our office. She carried on walking down. After walking for about ten minutes, we left the staircase and walked into a connecting corridor. I was about five steps into the corridor when I felt a dull thud, the building shook and I fell back against the wall. I also remember the ceiling coming down behind me and smoke or dust filling the air. A man with a white shirt tried both the door that we had just come through and the door up in front of us, both were blocked with fallen debris and rubble.

Then I heard a woman's blood curdling, high pitched scream, and I remember a man's voice shouting for help and some frantic banging. We all moved further into the corridor to see where the noise was coming from, we could hear crying and shouting from the other side of the up door, so, led by the man with the white shirt, we cleared the rubble, and pushed and pulled on the door until it opened. About six shocked and dazed people came through, all were bloody and the women were crying.



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The first woman had blood all over her arm, which was cut from her shoulder to her elbow. She also had a wounded foot, glass in her hair, and cuts on her face. One man had a cut across the back of his neck, and the back of his t-shirt was soaked with blood. Another man had a blood-splattered shirt and had huge pieces of glass in his chest, which the others were pulling out. The last person to come through was another woman who had cuts all over her face, and had one eye full of blood. This was the woman who was screaming. She was saying she couldn't see and waving her arms frantically in the air. Someone gave her a bottle of water, she washed her face, and the blood in her eye was from a deep gash on her forehead which had dribbled down. When she shook her hair, glass showered everyone.

We all moved towards the door that we had originally come through, but when we pulled the door open, the stairs were gone and all we could see was smoke and darkness. Fortunately there was another door, it was blocked but the men pulled back the rubble and opened it enough for us to get through. I remember going through sideways and feeling with my bare feet to find a hold. We entered a well-lit staircase, which was littered with pieces of ceiling, wire, plaster and concrete. Plastic coke bottles had exploded, and there was a broken pipe gushing water down the stairs, which mixed with the coke made them very slippery. The woman in front of me was sliding all over the place. It was very dusty, I remember coughing, and my feet feeling sticky and wet. As we were walking down, a man from Euro Brokers was constantly running back and forth between the people at the front, and me and a coughing lady at the back. He kept telling us to stay focused, watch where we were walking, to hold on to the handrail and to keep moving.

I remember the woman behind me crying, and coughing even louder, she told me that she had asthma, and she had to keep stopping to take deep breaths. The woman in front, with the arm, kept saying over and over again that she was moving house on Friday and would not be able to help her husband with a bad arm. Her left foot was bleeding badly and I saw that she only had half a shoe on. Each step she took left a bloody footprint, I remember looking down at my left foot and seeing blood oozing through my bare toes as I stepped behind her. I remember a sheer panic sweeping over me, and a scream building in my throat, until I heard a voice in my head telling me to calm down, everything was going to be okay, that it was not my blood, and that I needed to focus and listen to the man from Euro Brokers.

I stopped dead a few flights later when I saw blood on my shirt, not much, but still it shocked me. I remember pulling my shirt from my body and mouthing to this still unknown man "I've got blood on my shirt" I kept repeating it again and again, standing dead-still. He put his arms around me, told me that it was okay, but that we really needed to keep moving. I remember starting to cry, and stopping again a few flights later and saying "I don't even know your name". His name was Bob Mahon. We carried on down and didn't see anyone else until we were on about the 8th floor when we saw three firemen walking up. They seemed to look us over, probably noting that there were walking wounded amongst us, but otherwise that we were okay, and then they carried on up without saying a word.

Out on the street, it was chaotic. There was a steady stream of Fire and Police officers going back into the building as we were leaving. I remember seeing a woman standing there, coffee in one hand, Krispy Kreme donut in the other looking up at the building in a total trance. I wanted to grab her, shake her, and tell her to run. I looked at my watch and it was 9.43am. Then for the first time I looked up at the World Trade Center. I couldn't believe what I was seeing, where our floor should have been there was a huge gaping hole, and I could see smoke and flames. I could taste sick in my mouth as a wave of nausea swept over me, and I stood in a trance, just like the Krispy Kreme woman, and I started to cry.



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