

The Inside Hustle.

A Mystical Misfit's Travel Adventure Into The Unknown.

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## Chapter 1

Central Park was like a small urban sanctuary amidst the disaster. Although the bars, restaurants and cafes were empty throughout Manhattan, the calm comforts of the park's eight hundred and fifty acres were brimming with people. Everyone just wanted to be together. The main field was filled with groups of people hanging out, playing frisbee, eating a picnic lunch, reading the paper. It almost felt normal. It was reminiscent of a horde of kids in a gigantic playground. Just as children play with toys to work through their emotions at school or with a therapist, it seemed that the actions of adults in that park that day echoed these primal instincts.

Later that evening, with the 'trigger-happy Bush' screwing up yet another vengeful speech on national television, CBS cut to the mother of all battleships sitting out in the harbour. People were talking World War III. Fuck. Throughout the night, the Empire State Building and Penn Station had bomb scares with more evacuations. Another building had turned to dust and there were two more structures that were incredibly precarious and worrying. I saw the trillionth hysterical wife on TV with pictures of her missing husband, and this was just day two of the national disaster in the 'Attack on America'.

At the agency the mood was somber. People's friends were still missing, someone's brother was going to 'Ground Zero' as a search and rescue helper on the front line and there were colleagues' friends and family who were dead. Grand Central was evacuated

after bomb scare threats, as were a few other areas in the near vicinity throughout the morning at work. Every five minutes someone was talking about another evacuation near the office. No chance of writing my creative brief on a rather unimportant billboard sponsorship and print ad. I checked in with my boss and left.

The A train was jammed to the hilt after the evacuations at Grand Central. There were a hell of a lot of people on the train. It felt strange being sandwiched so closely to people at a time like this. Back down on 15<sup>th</sup> Street, there were more sirens and vehicles whizzing by on the empty streets. Tired doctors, nurses and officers were stopped along 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue for a bite and a small break. I sat at home for the rest of the afternoon watching CNN, writing and catching friends for a comforting chat in New Zealand. My flatmate arrived home a few hours later and we hung out in the apartment, discussing the possibilities of Bush taking us straight into World War III. The F-15s were thundering through the sky constantly. Army tanks, troops and battleships were a dime a dozen, littered around Manhattan. All of it was starting to really freak me out.

After some dinner and more coverage on the box we decided to get a drink from the deli across the road. The wind had picked up and there was a sinister burning smell outside. My eyes were dry from all the ash flying around in the air as we walked around the block taking it all in. I kept my mouth tightly closed. We passed posters of missing people, on cars, walls, lamp posts. Sirens blared everywhere and the reverberating blast of the fighter planes continued overhead. People in the streets were wearing dental masks for risk of asbestos poisoning. We rounded the corner past the police blockades and for some reason, chose a different deli from the norm to stop by.

After getting our drinks we crossed back over the road. Half a block from our apartment we were met at our usual local deli by five

NYPD pulling up, a couple of ambulances and firefighters too. They were carrying out a young Middle Eastern guy who had just been stabbed multiple times in a hate crime. Our safe little gay neighbourhood didn't seem so safe anymore.

As the officers were cordoning half of the block off with yellow tape, I dragged my room-mate across the road and back up to our apartment. I could feel the weight of aggression in the air around me. It was unmistakable. I shivered. Damn, I was out of cigarettes. I'd just witnessed the scene of a stabbing across the road and I was out of cigarettes. Twenty minutes later, I figured things must have cooled down over the road, so I stepped out to get a pack of Camel Lights. I scoped out the officers putting up more tape around the blood from the crime scene. The yellow tape seemed to make it more real. I ran over the road to yet another different local deli, and waited patiently while two security guys ran through a lengthy order for themselves and their colleagues.

In the meantime, another gentleman was standing at the counter aggressively yelling. "Are you gonna take my money or what? Are these fucking free tonight?" The first guy in the line looked less than impressed. "He's taking my order." In the seconds that follow a full-scale altercation erupts. I had nowhere to go. The door was blocked off and I stepped back, shaking in my boots while keeping all the universal love preaching going on in my head, to myself. The world was going mad. After buying cigarettes, I resolved to stay indoors at night over the coming days. Being moments away from getting caught in the midst of two aggressive incidents in the space of one hour signaled that I should not tempt fate.

As I curled up in my bed an incoming storm hit Manhattan. The growling cracks of thunder made me reach for my blankets in comfort, and the lightning toyed with my imagination behind my closed eyes. Not able to sleep, I looked out at the glistening raindrops as they pounded onto the ground. A torrential

thunderstorm seemed threatening in current circumstances, especially to the rescue operation happening around the clock downtown. I turned it over in my mind and decided that the rain might seep through to dehydrated survivors buried below the rubble, and the lightning was far more powerful than the rescuers' searchlights. I said a small prayer and went to sleep.

Upon opening my eyes on Friday morning, I felt different than I had for the last two mornings. Maybe that's because I couldn't feel anything. I didn't know what to feel or how to be. It was a strange feeling. I felt disorientated and slightly lost. Like the rug had been pulled from under me. I didn't feel emotional. I didn't feel distraught. I guess you could call it shock.

More F-15s and sirens, more police, more people in the haze of bereavement. At Union Square and Washington Square Park there were masses of people and shrines there for their loved ones. It dawned on me that I was witness to a nation in mourning. One of the biggest and greatest nations of our time. Grief and sorrow were written all over the streets. I couldn't get away from it. It was everywhere I turned. I sent another message to the Universe to look after all those in need, whichever realm they may be in, physical or non-physical. I headed home around 1pm to prepare for Annie's group worldwide peace meditation that she was holding at a friend's home. I lit some Sai Baba incense, a candle and put on some music. I had a picture of the Twin Towers, taken only a week before laid in front of me. I started meditating around 1.45pm. After a while I saw various shapes and faces combined with feelings. Halfway through, the top half of my back started burning. The heat was incredible. I imagined myself in a circle of sapphire blue light, turning around me at different angles as I moved to the music.

The many angles created many circles of blue, so I was enclosed in a moving, revolving sphere of blue light. After I had been doing this

for some time, I moved the healing sphere to wrap around the WTC site, next moving it out around Manhattan Island. I lay down at some point after finding myself rocking from side to side. When I hit the bed, I realised the intensity of heat on my back. The heat continued as I lay meditating on my bed. I opened my eyes almost two hours later, hoping that I had overlapped with Annie's session at home and made a connection that could help. I grabbed a cup of tea and stepped out onto the fire escape for a cigarette. The trees applauded as they dropped all the raindrops from their leaves in unison.

President Bush was visiting Ground Zero later that day. I walked past hundreds of people at the memorial sites in Union Square, large American flags and photo-encrusted shrines littered with candles. The F-15s patrolled Manhattan airspace the entire afternoon. Every now and then I would look up amidst the noise of the raging jets to see four F-15s flying in a quad up and down the length of the island. High security measures all round. Like they needed any more fuck ups. We lit a candle outside the apartment at 7pm for the candlelit vigil to all those lost in the terrorist attack.

That night I dreamt I was hiding under the table. It had a long tablecloth to cover me. I heard the sound of Darth Vader. That evil wheezing. He was hunting me, walking around the table. I was trying to be as quiet as possible, while sweating with fear. Devo and Annie were suddenly there, and they fought him. Fighting against the dark side.

Monday back at work feels strange. At our agency meeting mid-morning, our CEO read out all of the emails received from the network around the world. People are crying, everyone emotionally drained from the previous six days and we end in silence. Although we were slowly moving back into our routine, it felt anything but. Most of us were still in shock and no one could really keep their mind on the job. We kept up for appearance sake, waiting for the

feeling of normalcy to return. As the weeks went by it came, slowly but surely. It felt peculiar, almost guilty, to be getting on with things, but what else could we do?

I was still searching the depths of my soul for meaning in the madness. About six weeks later, I had a realisation. I knew why I found myself in New York at this time. I understood why I felt the way I felt, during the incident. I understood why I couldn't feel the world's pain. I understood why I couldn't feel the world's anger. I was here to observe it and hold space and to work out *why* I felt indifferent. Because what I was really doing was remembering. I was remembering God. I knew there was no evil, that's why I couldn't be angry. I knew there was no pain, therefore I couldn't intrinsically feel something that I knew did not really exist. Because everything is an act of God. Goddess. Nature. The Universe. The divine intelligence in all things. It was divine will. The reactions of others were based on their perceptions and beliefs, and the paradigm Universe that they had chosen to surround themselves by. At the time I did not know why this was not a reality for me, but I knew it didn't feel right to buy into the hysteria of it all. I was here to experience these feelings so that I would remember who I was. It was a gift from God, a raising of my consciousness. This incident was to remind us that the current state of mass consciousness had created this event. It was not Osama Bin Laden. It was all of us. This is where the sadness came from. The sadness comes from here.

I had put it all together. The pieces came towards each other, meeting in a fleeting moment of awareness. Of distilled clarity and inherent knowing of the ultimate perfection of it all, of the divine intelligence that pervades all things. I had a deep understanding of the importance of energy consciousness. I could see how it all made perfect sense. I could see it all through a different lens. If I could only keep that moment, or moments, and be in that level of understanding, every hour of every day... but then I guess I wouldn't be here.