

9/11/01, The Worst Day of Joy Carter's Life.

by Maureen Winsor

Part One

Today is September 11th. My grandmother passed away about a week ago, so I'm on a plane to go to her funeral. I'm planning to stay in California for a few weeks to help my mom. I was close with my grandma, but not as close as my mom was with her, so this has been really hard on her.

I grew up with a big family, we all lived in California, but after I met David, everything changed. We got married and he got a great job opportunity, so we moved to New York. BUZZ. *Oh, just Joy, my 15 year old daughter texting me; it says, "2 planes hit twin towers-towers are gone!!!!!! I don't know where dad is!"* I gasp, this can't be true. The person next to me looks a little curious as to why I gasped, but as I try to explain, I am interrupted by a scream. Everyone looks up to see where the noise had come from, four men had stormed into the cockpit!

"Our plane has been hijacked! We're all going to die!" Someone yelled. Everyone stopped what they were doing, all went silent, not sure what to think. A voice with a bit of an accent came over the speaker "This is your new captain speaking, everyone remain seated, if you do not comply there is a bomb aboard, and we are not afraid to use our resources."

Someone towards the back stood up, "We can't let them destroy anything else. We must stop them! I just learned that two planes crashed into the World Trade Center towers and another into the Pentagon. We will probably have the same fate if we don't do something about it." We all looked around at each other and nodded.

We decided that we would watch for a safe, open field to land in. While we waited, we would call our family and friends to tell them we loved them and good-bye. We would tell them what was happening.

I called Joy. "Mom, what's going on?" She asked.

"Honey, I'm really sorry. Our plane has been hijacked and we all are going to stop them. We are going to crash the plane before it gets to any buildings. Tell everyone I love them. I love you, Sweetie. Tell your dad I will miss him. Goodbye." I try to sound calm for her.

"Wait, Mom! I love you! What am I going to do if Dad is gone? What will I do?" She is pleading.

"Your aunt will be there soon. Just have faith that your dad is fine. I love you Sweetheart. I will be with you always." I hold my breath to keep the tears in.

"NO, Mom! Don't say that. You will be okay. You will come home!"

I could hear her crying on the phone. The line is getting staticky. "I love you! Be brave. Bye, Honey."

"NO! NO! NO!" Joy screamed right before our connection was broke.

Tears roll down my cheeks as I try to breath, I look around at all the people around me, innocent people, and a fury burns in my chest. How can someone want to hurt people they have never met so badly, that they'd be willing to sacrifice their own life? Why, why do they want to take away so much away from families that never did anything to them? We know what we must do. We love our country and our people. Some of us are still on the phone, while others have their heads down and are praying.

"NOW!" Someone shouts. We look out the windows. We see the field, it's perfect for what we need to do. As if we are in slow motion, everyone stands up and heads to the front of the plane. I can't see what is going on, but I can hear yelling. With tears streaming, ears ringing, we all start floating up, but eventually everything stops, the last thing I think of is Joy....

Part Two

Today is September 11. My wife is on her way to California for her grandmother's funeral. I am here at work, already missing her. It will be just me and Joy for a few weeks while my wife stays to help her mother. Joy is our fifteen-year-old daughter. We named her Joy, well because she really brings joy to all those around her.

It is pretty calm this morning and I wonder what today will be like. I wish I was outside enjoying the clear, bright day-

BOOM! "What was that?" The whole building shakes, almost like it was shoved. I look around, the few people in the office are racing to look out the windows to see what it was.

"OH MY HEAVENS! Something has crashed into the building. Hurry get everyone out!" I turn to go and realize that people are too stunned to move. We are about twenty stories up and the lights are flickering. As confusion washes over me I can only think of one thing; we must get everyone out of here.

"Everyone get to the stairs! GO! Don't stop for anything, just get out of here!" I take charge and lead them out. We have to go fast. I can't tell exactly what damage is done but I know we must go NOW.

There are so many people rushing in the stairwell, I am afraid someone might fall. "We can't panic! We have to go safely." I tell the people as they are pushing each other down the stairway. The lights go out. We can smell smoke in the air. Everyone

starts screaming in fear. We are almost to the bottom. Our eyes are burning and not just from the smoke. I am trying not to cry as I know my friend must still be in there, because he works close to the top. *Oh, I hope he makes it out.*

We make it out the front doors. It is chaos in the streets. My phone starts ringing. It is my friend. He can't get through to his boss to tell him he is running late. I am so relieved to hear his voice, tears start rolling down my face. He has no idea what is going on down here. As I tell him what has happened I hear him gasp in fear.

I hear several loud noises. I look up and to my great horror the building is starting to collapse. I start yelling at people to get out of the way and we take off running. It seems as if we are in slow motion trying to outrun the waves of smoke and falling fire. It is so hard to breath. I don't know if we are going to make it. I see a shop up ahead and I run inside away from the windows.

"Get down and cover your heads!" I scream as I burst through the doors. We are frozen with fear as we watch the waves of destruction roll down the street. I can't believe what I am seeing. It is almost as if I am in a nightmare, but I know I'm not because this is worse than anything I could have imagined.

I hear on the radio behind the counter that another plane has crashed into the Pentagon. Then they say there was another plane, I hold my breath waiting to hear more, "Flight 93 that crashed into a field in Pennsylvania."

"NO!" I cry out. "My wife is on that plane!" My heart is breaking as I listen to the newscast. *What will I do without her.* I have to call Joy...