

## TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2001

*“What was more important in the world view of history?... the Taliban or the fall of the Soviet Empire? A few stirred-up Muslims or the liberation of Central Europe and the end of the Cold War.”*

— U.S. SECRETARY OF STATE ZBIGNIEW BREZINSKI, 01/98

AS SARAH WALKED INTO AL-TAÏB, the restaurant’s typically animated clientele had become zombies, hypnotized by the big-screen television in the corner. On her way to the counter to order a zatar, she glanced in the same direction as the mesmerized herd. She too was brought under the power of the flickering images. Her afternoon hunger was forgotten.

The Twin Towers attack was on everyone’s lips that morning on Concordia’s downtown campus, but actually seeing it on the screen was another matter. It became real.

She gaped at the slow-motion replay of the plane crashing through the South Tower and the fireball coming out the other side. Her grip loosened on her cumbersome bundle of textbooks and notes. A few sheets of paper drifted out of her file folder and down to the floor beside her army boots. The tip of her tongue toyed with the ring on her lower lip. Screams of panic, confusion, smoke, dust, blood; it was a war zone. A black woman was stumbling about. White ash covered her face, her eyes vacant—a ghost. This was New York? But these things didn’t happen where people like Sarah and her family lived. They happened in far off Third World countries, not a day’s drive south of Montréal. Wasn’t Brent in New York? She would have to ask her mother. If Brent was killed or injured in this thing... And then it really hit her. The attack had touched, however peripherally, her own life.

SHE REMEMBERED BRENT AS A BOY TWO YEARS HER SENIOR, SHOWING HER HOW TO PLAY MONOPOLY ONE RAINY EASTER SUNDAY IN NEW JERSEY IN THE BASEMENT OF HER AUNT'S SUBURBAN HOME. HE LET HER WIN. AS BRENT'S FRIENDS WOULD SAY, SARAH, THE SIX-YEAR-OLD "BABY" DIDN'T "GET" MONOPOLY. WHAT THEY MEANT, WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING IT PRECISELY IN THESE TERMS, WAS THAT SARAH HAD YET TO ABSORB THE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF CAPITALIST COMPETITION. SHE WOULD HAVE TRADED PARK PLACE FOR BALTIC AVENUE BECAUSE SHE LIKED PURPLE BETTER THAN BLUE. MOST EIGHT YEAR OLD BOYS WOULD HAVE GROUND THE LITTLE GIRL INTO POVERTY AND THEN LAUGHED AT THE NAÏVETE OF HER STRATEGY. BUT BRENT WENT OUT OF HIS WAY TO LET HER WIN.

HER FATHER ADMONISHED BRENT AND SPOILED THE ILLUSION FOR SARAH, "HOW'S SHE GOING TO LEARN THE GAME IF YOU JUST LET HER WIN?" HE ASKED THE BOY.

"IF SHE ALWAYS LOSES IT WON'T BE ANY FUN," HE REPLIED. "SHE WON'T WANT TO PLAY ANY MORE."

Although Sarah saw Brent only during rare family occasions, she had a certain comfortable familiarity with him, like revisiting an old friend. And now she didn't know if he were dead or alive.

"You dropped this," said a young kaffiyeh-wearing man standing beside her in line at the counter. He held up a few pieces of paper. Notes from her Women and Religion course.

Sarah grabbed them quickly before he could decipher their significance. The last thing she wanted at the moment was a discussion on women and religion with this young Arab man. At first Sarah had an unquenchable thirst for intellectual debates about feminism and the Muslim religion. Concordia offered a rich feast of scholarly debate following the lean years of *CÉGEP* that were supposed to prepare her for university. But after a few days of calorific discussions with people in the Muslim Students Association she had her fill of argument on that particular question. Sarah had savoured those talks, but now she needed some time to digest them. "Thanks," said Sarah. And then realizing she was blocking his view of the television, she moved closer to the counter to place her order.

The four men working the counter were pushed to the limit today. The frantic pace, the din, and the heat of the pizza ovens made it a tough job on the best of days, but on September 11 the customers were simply too shell-shocked to respond to efforts at communication. “*Suivant, next. Pardon madame. Est-ce que je peux vous aider?* Can I help you please?” The entire clientele was mesmerized by CNN. They couldn’t even liberate their minds long enough to place their orders. Customer indecision became the bottleneck in what was normally an exceptionally efficient fast food machine. Sarah was as absent as the rest. She had to be asked twice to place an order. She even walked away with her zatar and coke without paying. The cashier had to come out from behind the counter, to bring her back to reality long enough to pay for her meal.

She took her tray up to the second floor and looked around to see if anybody she knew was there. Sure enough, Hassan was watching CNN just like everyone below as he nervously tapped out an S-O-S with his cigarette package on the table. “Hi Hassan.”

“Oh Sarah,” said Hassan in a surprised voice, turning to look at her as if she had just passed through a solid wall. The spell of CNN was broken. He was no longer in New York’s smoldering skyline, but back in Al-Taïb, smiling yellow teeth up at his friend. Even though she was young enough to be his daughter, he found Sarah to be attractive—dark wavy hair, green eyes, and a very nice body. She would be even better looking if she didn’t wear those army pants and boots, if she stopped wearing bandanas in her hair like the protestors in the Québec City FTAA protests, and if she took those silly piercings out of her eyebrow and lower lip.

Sarah didn’t notice Hassan looking her up and down today. She was too distracted. In any event, she was used to guys doing that. It bothered her, but she was used to it. Occasionally she would lash out at one of the more obvious gawkers, but not a helpless frumpy little old guy like Hassan, and not today. She sat down at the table beside him. “What’s up?”

Hassan simply gestured with his head towards the television. He continued to tap his cigarette package on the table. He had been meaning to go on the balcony for a smoke for

three hours now, but he was held in place by his eyes which refused to let go of the screen. Sarah furrowed her brow and nodded in response.

“Dude,” Sarah burst out, her voice muffled slightly by the zatar that filled it, “that is some fucked up shit. Who did it?” She had cultivated the habit of speaking with her mouth full ever since she noticed how much it bothered her father.

“Why is that always the first question?” Hassan complained. “Well, at least you didn’t ask, ‘what Muslims did it?’...” he drifted off pensively. Palestinian street celebrations were being shown, once again, on the screen as if to illustrate his point. “Of course it may very well have been a radical Muslim group. I don’t know. Osama bin Laden seems to be a likely candidate. But all Muslims and Arabs are going to pay the price. There’s going to be a backlash. It’ll be worse than it was during the Gulf War.”

“What’s going to happen with the bazaar and rally on Saturday?” asked Sarah.

The Concordia club, Solidarity for Palestinian Human Rights, had been planning a rally and a bazaar to commemorate the September 1982 massacres at the Sabra and Shatila Palestinian refugee camps under Israeli occupation in Lebanon. The university administration had already been giving SPHR a hard time, refusing to let the group book an empty lot for the event. Rector Frederick Lowy had even written an open letter to the Concordia community, citing “the magnitude of the proposed events and the risk of confrontation and possible violence.” Much had been made of an article in a local pro-Israel newspaper, *The Suburban*. The headline:



The whole idea that terrorists were somehow involved in a student club was laughable, but nobody was laughing. And now Hassan was talking about the beginning of a new backlash. If there was going to be a backlash after the World Trade Center attack, then what had they been experiencing up to now? And how could the situation get any worse? Sarah knew Hassan had much more experience in these matters than her, and she respected his opinion, but it seemed hard to believe.

“I don’t know,” admitted Hassan. “Maybe it’ll end up being cancelled or postponed. It depends on how militant people are and how belligerent the administration is.”

“But dude, this is like the perfect opportunity to underline the similarities between the terrorist bloodshed in New York and the Sabra and Shatila massacres. Isn’t it?” she demanded. “In both places thousands of people were killed in cold blood. Now North America is seeing what this kind of violence is really like. I like totally understand you want to avoid backlash but come on. You guys have got to stand up for yourselves.”

There were more parallels that could be made. Hassan knew about them and Sarah would soon learn. If bin Laden was behind the World Trade Center attack, then in both cases, the US played a role in the massacres. The training and equipping of Osama bin Laden’s network was co-funded by the CIA when he was fighting the Soviets in Afghanistan, and the US was implicated in the Sabra and Shatila massacres as well. Uncle Sam was giving more military aid to the Israeli military than to any other country in the world. But Hassan did not mention any of that today. There was no reason to encourage Sarah on this issue. It would only make her more pigheaded. Did she really understand how SPHR needed to avoid a backlash? How could she? A white girl living in Westmount?

“There are a lot of connections,” Hassan admitted, “but nobody will understand. I’ve been watching TV all morning. People are being brainwashed to think this thing just came out of the blue for no reason, and the US is just a victim. They just see these images of death and destruction in New York. They see these innocent victims, and then they see an American flag.

And the obvious conclusion is that the whole United States, even the government and the army, is like these innocent victims. Nobody's going to understand."

"We can make them understand," Sarah persisted unconvincingly. She had to admit it would be difficult.

On the bottom of the image of the black cloud hovering where the Twin Towers used to be, the following words crawled across the screen:

**State Department calls today's attacks "worst act of terrorism on US soil."**

Even with the smattering of US history Sarah had picked up in *CÉGEP*, she could have easily disproved the State Department's assertion. The worst act of terrorism? Really? What about the hundreds of thousands of slaves kidnapped from Africa and dragged to American soil against their will to be forced into degrading labour, raped, tortured and murdered? Doesn't that count? What about the millions of Native Americans killed in genocidal wars on American soil to make way for white settlers? Doesn't that count either? But what could she do, call up the State Department or CNN and demand they print a retraction? There had to be something she could do. There had to be a way around this backlash.

Sarah felt some invisible force slowly pressing down on her. She couldn't define it, or even talk about it. Movement became increasingly difficult. Her lungs squeezed shut. It was impossible to cry out. And it was all happening so quickly. A few short months ago she thought she had all the answers. But suddenly all those activist teach-ins, the songwriting workshops, the mass actions—they all seemed insignificant next to this.

DESPITE THE TEARGAS AND THE STORM-TROOPER GOON SQUADS, THE MASS ANTI-FTAA (FREE TRADE AREA OF THE AMERICAS) PROTEST AT THE SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS IN QUÉBEC CITY THE PREVIOUS APRIL WAS THE MOST LIBERATING EXPERIENCE OF HER YOUNG EXISTENCE. SARAH WAS PART OF A LARGE AND GROWING "ANTI-CAPITALIST" MOVEMENT THAT WOULD SOMEHOW GIVE BIRTH TO A BETTER WORLD. MONTHS AFTER THE RAGTAG SIEGE OF THE 34 SOVEREIGNS HOLED-UP IN THEIR

FENCED-IN FORTRESS, THE RHYTHMS OF PROTEST DRUMS OVER THE THUNDERING POLICE HELICOPTERS WERE STILL IN HER EARS. HER SKIN STILL BURNED FROM TEARGAS, AND SHE COULD HEAR THE BOISTEROUS CHEERING FOR THE ANTI-CAPITALIST WAR ENGINE SUCCESSFULLY CATA-PULTING TEDDY BEAR PROJECTILES INTO THE CORPORATE STRONGHOLD. MOST OF ALL, SHE FELT THE COLLECTIVE POWER OF THE BARBARIAN HOARDS AS THEY BROKE THROUGH THE RANKS OF ARMOUR-CLAD KNIGHTS AND TORE DOWN THE “WALL OF SHAME” PROTECTING GEORGE BUSH AND HIS VASSALS.

HER AFFINITY GROUP, THE RAGING GRANDDAUGHTERS—THE YOUNG, ANARCHISTIC VERSION OF THE RAGING GRANNIES THAT SERENADED ACTIVIST RALLIES ACROSS CANADA—HAD SENT HER TO THE QUÉBEC CITY CONSULTA WEEKS BEFORE THE SUMMIT. THERE, SHE PARTICIPATED IN DISCUSSION GROUPS AND PLANNING SESSIONS WITH MORE EXPERIENCED ACTIVISTS. SHE MET HASSAN AND OTHER MILITANTS FROM CONCORDIA, WHO INTRODUCED HER TO THE ANTI-OCCUPATION STRUGGLE FOR PALESTINIAN HUMAN RIGHTS. IT SEEMED STRANGE TO GO TO QUÉBEC CITY TO MEET PEOPLE FROM A UNIVERSITY THAT WAS WITHIN WALKING DISTANCE FROM HER *CÉGEP*, DAWSON COLLEGE, AND TO MEET PALESTINIAN SOLIDARITY ACTIVISTS. BUT THAT’S HOW THINGS WERE CONNECTED. U.S.-SUPPORTED MILITARY CAMPAIGNS IN COLOMBIA, OR ISRAEL/PALESTINE, COULDN’T BE SEPARATED FROM ECONOMIC GLOBALIZATION. THE WHIRLWIND OF TEACH-INS, MEETINGS AND PROTESTS—ESPECIALLY THE 50,000-STRONG PROTEST IN QUÉBEC CITY—OVER THE PAST EIGHT MONTHS HAD OPENED HER EYES TO A WORLD OF GLOBAL POLITICS THAT SHE HAD ONLY GLIMPSED IN HER WORLD ISSUES CLASS AT DAWSON. IT ALSO SHOWED HER THAT IT WAS POSSIBLE TO ORGANIZE THINGS DIFFERENTLY, LIKE THE QUÉBEC CITY PROTEST ITSELF, WITH NO BUREAUCRATIC LEADERSHIP, BUT INSTEAD WITH DEMOCRATIC SELF-ORGANIZED AFFINITY GROUPS WHICH SENT REPRESENTATIVES TO LARGER MASS MEETINGS, OR SPOKESCOUNCILS.

ORGANIZED YET SPONTANEOUS, POLITICIZED YET ANTI-DOGMATIC, A POWERFUL TIDE WAS SLOWLY SHIFTING LIFE ON *CÉGEP* AND UNIVERSITY CAMPUSES ACROSS QUÉBEC. IT SEEPED THROUGH THE INTERNET, SPILLING INTO MASS MEETINGS AND TEACH-INS. THE NEW CURRENT WAS STILL BEING CALLED THE ‘ANTI-GLOBALIZATION’ MOVEMENT, BUT THE TERM DID NOT DO IT JUSTICE. IT WAS MORE THAN AGAINST GLOBALIZATION. IT WAS FOR A WORLD WHERE LIFE MATTERED—SOCIAL JUSTICE, DEMOCRACY, FREEDOM, CREATIVITY, HEALTH, ECOLOGY. THE NEW SOCIAL FORCE WAS STILL EMBRYONIC, ITS FEATURES UNDEFINED. BUT ITS LIFE FORCE WAS PALPABLE TO SARAH AND HER FRIENDS.

THE RAGING GRANDDAUGHTERS WERE PART OF A RENAISSANCE OF FEMINIST THINKING AND PRACTICE. IN THE COURSE OF THEIR ACTIVIST

ADVENTURES, SARAH AND HER FRIENDS MET WOMEN WHO TALKED ABOUT HOW FEMINISM WAS CENTRAL TO THE STRUGGLE FOR HUMAN LIBERATION. ONE OF THOSE WOMEN WOULD HAVE A DECISIVE IMPACT ON SARAH'S ACADEMIC FUTURE: LILLIAN ROBINSON. SARAH MET ROBINSON AT A TEACH-IN ON THE FTAA HELD AT CONCORDIA A COUPLE OF MONTHS BEFORE THE PROTEST. THE PRINCIPAL OF THE UNIVERSITY'S SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR INSTITUTE SHOWED THE FUTURE CONCORDIA STUDENT THAT HER STUDIES COULD GO HAND-IN-HAND WITH HER ACTIVIST WORK. THEORY AND PRACTICE WERE NOT OPPOSITES. THERE WAS EVEN A WORD TO DESCRIBE THE UNITY OF THE TWO: PRAXIS. SARAH WAS NOT ONLY STRUCK BY THE KNOWLEDGE OF WORKING CLASS AND FEMINIST HISTORY THAT ROBINSON DEMONSTRATED AT TEACH-INS AND CONFERENCES, BUT ALSO BY THE DEPTH OF HER PERSONAL COMMITMENT THAT LED HER TO TAKE DIFFICULT POLITICAL STANDS. THE OLD JEW FROM NEW YORK WAS ALSO A MILITANT AND INCREASINGLY VISIBLE SUPPORTER OF THE PALESTINIAN LIBERATION STRUGGLE. SHE WAS THE MAIN REASON SARAH DECIDED TO GO TO CONCORDIA TO DO A DEGREE IN WOMEN'S STUDIES. THE ANGRY REACTION THAT IT PROVOKED IN HER FATHER SIMPLY CONFIRMED FOR HER THAT SHE HAD MADE THE RIGHT CHOICE. HE WANTED HER TO GO TO MCGILL. "YOU WENT TO CONCORDIA," SARAH THREW BACK AT HIM, "WHY CAN'T I?"

"I WENT TO SIR GEORGE WILLIAMS," HER FATHER CORRECTED HER. THE NAME "CONCORDIA" WAS CREATED IN 1974 WITH THE FUSION OF THE DOWNTOWN SIR GEORGE WILLIAMS UNIVERSITY AND THE JESUIT LOYOLA COLLEGE IN NDG. "AND I WENT THERE BECAUSE I HAD TO. YOU HAVE A CHOICE."

"AND I CHOOSE CONCORDIA. I DON'T CARE ABOUT MCGILL'S REPUTATION. I'M NOT GOING TO UNIVERSITY TO MEET A NICE YOUNG DOCTOR HUSBAND. I WANT AN EDUCATION IN FEMINIST POLITICAL ECONOMY!" SHE KNEW HER FATHER DIDN'T HAVE THE SLIGHTEST IDEA WHAT FEMINIST POLITICAL ECONOMY WAS. IN FACT, SARAH WASN'T TOO SURE WHAT IT WAS HERSELF, BUT SHE KNEW SHE WANTED TO LEARN ABOUT IT.

JACK THOUGHT HE KNEW PRECISELY WHAT FEMINIST POLITICAL ECONOMY MEANT: WOMEN'S LIB. AND HE DIDN'T LIKE IT. WHERE DID SARAH GET IT FROM? SHIRLEY WASN'T ONE OF THOSE WOMEN'S LIBBERS. IT MUST HAVE BEEN THE TEACHERS AT DAWSON COLLEGE. ANYWAY, SHE WOULD OUTGROW IT. WOMEN'S LIB WAS *PASSÉ*. BUT WHY DID SHE HAVE TO SABOTAGE HER CHANCES BY GOING TO CONCORDIA? MCGILL WAS A BETTER SCHOOL. EVERYBODY KNEW THAT. HE WOULD HAVE GONE TO MCGILL IF HE COULD HAVE. JACK JUST WANTED HIS DAUGHTER TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE CHANCE HE NEVER HAD: A CHANCE OF A LIFETIME. RICH PARENTS FROM THE STATES SENT THEIR KIDS TO MCGILL FOR MEDICAL SCHOOL. IT WASN'T JUST ABOUT MEETING A GOOD HUSBAND,



BUT REALISTICALLY, WHAT KIND OF A HUSBAND WOULD SHE MEET IN WOMEN'S STUDIES? THEN FOR A BRIEF INSTANT JACK CONSIDERED THE POSSIBILITY THAT HIS DAUGHTER MIGHT BE A LESBIAN. HE PUT THE IDEA OUT OF HIS MIND AS SOON AS IT APPEARED. NO, SHE WAS JUST NAÏVE, NOT DEVIANT.

SARAH'S FATHER WAS A NUISANCE, BUT HE COULDN'T STOP HER FROM THROWING HERSELF INTO THE DYNAMIC CRUCIBLE OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS THAT WAS CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY.

But now, as of September 11, Sarah was up against something far more formidable than Jack Murphy. The shadow caught her from behind, slowly suffocating her, leaving her immobilized and aching with fear—the backlash. It was a force much bigger and more powerful than that name, but it would have to do.

“You can't just make people understand,” said Hassan shaking his head and throwing up his hands. His Arab accent became more evident when he was upset. Does she think I want to allow the backlash to wipe out the massacres of more than 2000 living human beings from the slate of history? Then he reminded himself what a kid Sarah was. How could she know any better? Sometimes she seemed so much older. The kid was a born leader—forceful and articulate, commanding respect, dominating every political meeting. But she was only 19, just a bit older than his own daughter.

He took a deep breath, then laid out all the facts like the pieces of a chess game. “Okay,” he conceded, “it looks bad. How can we accept that the Sabra and Shatila memorial can't happen out of respect for today's victims? Why should respect for one set of massacred victims demand the denial of respect for another?”

Sarah nodded, and started to respond, “That's just it, you can't...”

Hassan cut her off, “But you've got to understand how hard it was even to get people living next door to the massacres to admit they happened, and then it took even longer to get people to admit that Israel was responsible for them. And they still

don't understand the US role in the whole thing. Right now the historical conditions are making it impossible to 'make' people understand this. You can't fight history."

HASSAN STILL REMEMBERED HIS YOUTHFUL IDEALISM BACK IN 1982 WHEN THE MASSACRES HAPPENED. HASSAN AND THAT YESH GVUL-INSPIRED MORTY DINGLEMAN WERE CONVINCED THEY COULD MAKE A DIFFERENCE. AS THE MOST ACTIVE (SOME SAID OBSESSED) PART OF THE QUÉBEC-PALESTINE SOLIDARITY COMMITTEE, THE PAIR WAS FOREVER PORING OVER DOCUMENTS AND CORRESPONDING WITH ACTIVISTS IN ISRAEL AND PALESTINE—HASSAN IN ARABIC AND FRENCH AND MORTY IN ENGLISH AND HEBREW. FOR MONTHS AFTER THE MASSACRES, THEY WORKED FEVERISHLY TO COLLECT THE NECESSARY DOCUMENTS, EYEWITNESS TESTIMONY AND FORENSIC EVIDENCE, AS IF THEY WERE RUNNING THEIR VERY OWN INDEPENDENT INQUIRY HERE IN CANADA. AND THE MOHAMED-DINGLEMAN REPORT WAS ONLY A FOOTHILL AMONG THE MOUNTAINS OF OFFICIAL INQUIRIES AND INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALIST REPORTS PRODUCED WORLDWIDE. AT FIRST THE ISRAELI DEFENSE FORCE (IDF) HAD DENIED KNOWING ANYTHING ABOUT THE MASS MURDER BEING CARRIED OUT DAY AND NIGHT BY THEIR LEBANESE PHALANGIST ALLIES RUNNING THE DETENTION CAMPS. THE IDF TROOPS STATIONED LESS THAN 100 YARDS AWAY, JUST OUTSIDE THE CAMPS, APPARENTLY DID NOT NOTICE THE CONSTANT GUNFIRE OR THE TRUCKS PILED WITH DEAD BODIES LEAVING THE CAMPS FOR THE TWO-DAY PERIOD. BUT EVENTUALLY, THROUGH PUBLIC PRESSURE, INCLUDING MASS PROTESTS BY ISRAELI ACTIVISTS IN THE STATE OF ISRAEL ITSELF, A PUBLIC INQUIRY WAS UNDERTAKEN BY THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT—AN INQUIRY THAT CONDEMNED THE MINISTER OF DEFENSE, ARIEL SHARON. HASSAN EVEN READ ABOUT IT IN *THE GAZETTE*.

*THE GAZETTE*, montreal, Wednesday, February 9, 1983

## EDITORIALS

# Ariel Sharon must go

One thing we can be sure about as a result of the special Israeli inquiry into the massacre at two Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon last September: Defence Minister Ariel Sharon must go. Whether Prime Minister Menachem Begin leaves as well or decides to tough it out or call new elections should be known soon.

with a "certain degree of responsibility."

The conclusions contrast sharply with the government's early rejection of suggestions of responsibility as a "blood libel" to be rejected "with contempt." Mr. Begin, who finally appointed the commission under pressure, at the time indicated he would resign if senior officials were blamed. The

AND STILL, FOR THE 33 YEAR-OLD HASSAN, THAT EDITORIAL DIDN'T GO FAR ENOUGH. LIKE SARAH, HE DEMANDED THAT THE TRUTH COME OUT. THE NUMBERS CITED FROM THE OFFICIAL ISRAELI REPORT WERE WRONG. IT ONLY ACKNOWLEDGED 328 CONFIRMED DEAD AND 991 MISSING. INDEPENDENT REPORTS, USING PHALANGIST OFFICERS AND INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT SOURCES, PUT THE BODY COUNT WELL ABOVE THE 2000 MARK. BUT IT WASN'T THE NUMBERS THAT BOTHERED HASSAN THE MOST. WHAT BOTHERED HASSAN WAS THE WAY THE BLOODY MASSACRE OF MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN WAS TREATED AS AN ISOLATED CASE OF HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSE. NOBODY WAS LOOKING AT THE BIGGER PICTURE OF THE BRUTAL OCCUPATION SPAWNING THE MASS MURDER: AMERICAN-BUILT IDF-OPERATED TANKS AND JET FIGHTERS BLASTING AWAY AT A STATELESS POVERTY-STRICKEN PEOPLE.

HE PHONED EDITORS AND JOURNALISTS AT *THE GAZETTE* AND *LA PRESSE*. HE EVEN STARTED A LETTER-WRITING CAMPAIGN, DEMANDING THAT THE MEDIA TALK ABOUT U.S. RESPONSIBILITY IN THE AFFAIR. HASSAN WROTE THE FRENCH LETTERS AND MORTY WROTE THE ENGLISH ONES. IT TOOK SO MUCH OF HIS TIME HE SAW MORE OF MORTY THAN HE SAW OF HIS OWN INFANT DAUGHTER, HE WAS FAILING HIS COURSES, AND HE HAD TO DROP OUT OF UNIVERSITY. IT WAS ALL IN VAIN. THE MEDIA ACCEPTED THE OFFICIAL U.S. LINE. AT THE TIME, IT OUTRAGED HASSAN. BUT NOW HE REALISED THAT'S WHAT JOURNALISTS DO. THEY HAVE TO ACCEPT THE VERACITY OF OFFICIAL SOURCES.

AS MORTY SAID, "IF THEY DIDN'T HAVE CREDIBILITY, THEY WOULDN'T BE CALLED 'OFFICIAL SOURCES,' RIGHT? OR IS IT, IF THEY WEREN'T CALLED 'OFFICIAL SOURCES,' THEY WOULDN'T HAVE CREDIBILITY? THE CHICKEN OR THE EGG? SUCH A CONUNDRUM. JOURNALISM'S A TOUGH RACKET HASSAN."

THE U.S. ENVOY TO THE REGION, MORRIS DRAPER, DID IN FACT PROTEST TO ARIEL SHARON IN A PUBLIC STATEMENT:

YOU MUST STOP THE MASSACRES. THEY ARE OBSCENE. I HAVE AN OFFICER IN THE [SHATILA] CAMP COUNTING THE BODIES. YOU OUGHT TO BE ASHAMED. THE SITUATION IS ROTTEN AND TERRIBLE. THEY ARE KILLING CHILDREN. YOU ARE IN ABSOLUTE CONTROL OF THE AREA AND THEREFORE HAVE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THAT AREA.

BUT WHY DID DRAPER MAKE THIS STATEMENT ON SEPTEMBER 18, TWO DAYS AFTER THE KILLING HAD BEGUN, AND AS IT WAS FINALLY WINDING DOWN? JUST TO ASK THE QUESTION WAS ENOUGH FOR JOURNALISTS TO CALL HASSAN A CONSPIRACY THEORIST.

And the 51-year-old Hassan knew that asking the question now would result in far worse insults.

*The Gazette* would soon be printing pictures of President Bush and Prime Minister Sharon, two respectable heads of state, smiling and shaking hands, warriors in the fight against terror. Backlash was a powerful thing. And, for the moment at least, it was too strong to fight.

“Sometimes,” said Hassan with a carefully cultivated patience, “you have to take two steps backward before you can take one step forward.”

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Carla kneeled in the cool shadows of the church on that sunny and clear Tuesday morning as she had done every September 11 since she was eight years old. For a long time, she thought she did it for her mother. But her mother had been dead for two years now, yet she returned on her own. Carla was not religious, yet she came to the church and she prayed.

She thought of her mother, Margarita Rodriguez, when she lit the candle but she did not light it only for her. She lit the candle for all the victims of terror, for all the dead. Carla considered her mother one of the victims because she died before her time. Breast cancer. That premature death must have had something to do with the terrible events they had lived through. She prayed such an awful thing would never happen again.

Her father, not a religious or a sentimental man, was always careful to make sure she had a clear understanding of the political contradictions that led to the September 11 attack. Carla’s mother, on the other hand, reminded her of wounds it had left: the friends and relatives whom they had lost, and the terrible blow suffered by the whole country. Carla herself had only the vaguest of memories of those dark days. But she made the pilgrimage here to try to bring those painful memories back. And in front of the candle that her mother did not need to tell her to light, she felt her mother kneeling beside her, as it had always been.

She could still hear her mother whispering in her ear the names of those who fell, of their important contributions to their country, and how the violence of arrogant, jealous men could never erase them from the hearts of those who loved them. In fact, it was Carla who found herself whispering those names, looking very much the way Margarita would have looked twenty years ago. Tears rolled from her dark almond-shaped eyes down her cheeks to be swallowed up by the sleek black hair coiling down to Margarita's cross around her neck. She was so absorbed in this communion that she did not notice the others filing in to light their own candles.

A woman a few years younger than her mother touched her hand. Carla thought she had seen this woman somewhere before, but she could not quite place those teary green eyes. "They are in a better place now dear," said the vaguely familiar mourner. Her voice quivered into an unconvincing smile. Carla had not seen that face recently. The woman was from a long time ago, maybe from her adolescence. Where had Carla seen her before and what was she doing in this church on a Tuesday afternoon?

How did this woman know Carla's suffering? And what had brought this crowd into the church? Many of them were weeping and consoling each other. Had she stumbled into a funeral ceremony?

"I'm sorry," Carla stammered. "I probably shouldn't be here." She got up off of her knees to stand.

"Oh of course you should," said the familiar stranger, putting her arm over Carla's shoulders and sitting her down on the pew. "At a time like this, people must come together in faith and hope."

"At a time like this?" asked Carla.

"Yes, I mean, with the bombing..." Now both of them were confused.

"But that was twenty-eight years ago," replied Carla weakly as she tried to shake the cobwebs from her mind. She touched

her face and realized that her cheeks were wet with tears. The woman offered her a tissue.

“Twenty-eight years ago?” the woman slowly repeated, trying to bridge the gap between their two worlds of grief. “I don’t know what happened twenty-eight years ago. I’m here because of what I saw about twenty minutes ago.” Her tone became less steady and her tempo increased, the words spilling out her own anxieties, “The Twin Towers were hit by planes. Both of them collapsed. It’s really terrible. When I saw the second one fall, I came straight here. I didn’t know what else to do. I just couldn’t watch the TV anymore. It’s too horrible. It looks like thousands of people are probably dead. I don’t know how anybody could survive that. My nephew is in New York and...” Her voice wavered and her lips trembled. More tears to dab after taking her arm from Carla’s shoulders.

“The World Trade Center?” Carla was incredulous. How could anybody manage to inflict that kind of damage to such an important building in New York City? How many people did she say were killed? “That’s terrible,” said Carla. She put her arm around the woman’s shoulder. “I’m sure your nephew is probably okay.” But Carla was not focused on this woman’s nephew. She was still unable to conceive the World Trade Center attack.

THE UNITED STATES WAS THE SUPERPOWER THAT BACKED THE MILITARY COUP IN CHILE ON SEPTEMBER 11, 1973. ON THAT DAY BOMBS RAINED DOWN ON THE PALACE OF LA MONEDA IN SANTIAGO WHERE THE DEMOCRATICALLY ELECTED PRESIDENT SALVADOR ALLENDE AND SOME OF HIS SOCIALIST ENTOURAGE HAD BARRICADED THEMSELVES, REFUSING TO SUBMIT TO THE VIOLENT USURPERS. THAT DAY, A NEW MONSTER EMERGED FROM THE SHADOWS OF CARLA’S CHILDHOOD: U.S.-BACKED GENERAL AUGUSTO PINOCHET. WITH CONTROL OVER TANKS, PLANES AND WARSHIPS, HE SEEMED OMNIPOTENT. HE WAS MADE EVEN SCARIER TO THE LITTLE GIRL BY THE DARK GLASSES HIDING HIS MYSTERIOUS INTENTIONS. WHAT MADE HIM ROUND UP THOUSANDS OF UNION LEADERS, LEFTWING STUDENTS, PROFESSORS, PEOPLE LIKE HER PARENTS WHO DISAGREED WITH THE NEW ORDER? THEY WERE ALL ARRESTED, HERDED LIKE CATTLE INTO DETENTION CENTRES. MANY WERE NEVER SEEN AGAIN.

WHEN CARLA GOT OLDER, SHE LEARNED WHAT HAPPENED TO THOSE WHO DISAPPEARED. HER FATHER THOUGHT IT IMPORTANT TO TELL HER THE TRUTH ABOUT THE TORTURE AND MURDER OF INNOCENT PEOPLE. HE WANTED CARLA TO UNDERSTAND THAT THE MEN DOING THE BLOODY WORK WERE PART OF A LARGER PROBLEM. MANY OF THE SOLDIERS UNDER PINOCHET'S COMMAND LEARNED THEIR VIOLENT TRADE IN THE U.S. MILITARY TRAINING FACILITY IN PANAMA CALLED THE SCHOOL OF THE AMERICAS.

AS CHILE FELL INTO THE HANDS OF THE U.S.-BACKED REGIME, CARLA FLED THE COUNTRY WITH HER MOTHER, FATHER, AND YOUNGER BROTHER. HER AUNT, AN ANTHROPOLOGY PROFESSOR, AND HER AUNT'S HUSBAND, A HISTORY PROFESSOR, DISAPPEARED SHORTLY AFTER. THEY WERE THOUGHT TO BE AMONG THE 12,000 PRISONERS HELD IN THE SOCCER STADIUM BETWEEN SEPTEMBER 11 AND NOVEMBER 7. HER GRANDFATHER WAS ALSO TAKEN THERE AND TORTURED. HE SURVIVED. HE NEVER SAW CARLA'S AUNT OR UNCLE BUT HE HAD HEARD THEY WERE IN THE STADIUM TOO. HE NEVER TALKED TO CARLA ABOUT WHAT HE LIVED THROUGH IN THE GALLOWS.

"You have family there too?" asked the woman sobbing in her arms.

"No," said Carla absentmindedly, "the family I lost was in Chile. That's what I meant when I said it happened 28 years ago."

The woman stopped sobbing, and she fixed those familiar eyes on Carla. "It's funny you know," she said with a furrowed brow. "You look just like the Chilean woman who ran the corner store down the street in NDG where we had our first house. What was her name?"

"Margarita," Carla spoke softly, offering the precious name of her dead mother.

"Yes, that's it," said the woman. "That was her name. And her husband..."

"Jesus," said Carla with a smile.

"Yes, that's right," laughed the woman, wiping away her tears. "Jesus. My daughter thought she was so clever when she'd

say ‘His name is Jesus, like Jesus Christ in the Bible, but it’s pronounced Hey-soose’.”

The memory momentarily chased away the grief that brought Carla to the place of solace. She laughed, “Yeah, those were my parents.”

“So you’re...”

“Carla.”

“Their teenage daughter? You’re so grown up now. You look just like your mother! Such a beautiful woman... I’m Mrs. Murphy. Shirley.”

Carla smiled back at the kindly Mrs. Murphy from down the street, back in the 1980s.

“And how are your parents? Do they still run the store?” asked Shirley.

“My dad does,” answered Carla. “My mom...”

Shirley saw the tears forming again in Carla’s eyes, and offered her another tissue. “Jesus and Margarita probably saved my life.”

“How’s that?” asked Carla.

“They refused to sell me cigarettes when I quit smoking. They told me my money was no good at their *dépanneur*. I’d have to walk ten more blocks to the grocery store. By the time I walked all that way, I would change my mind.”

Laughter spilled out from Carla’s tears. Mrs. Murphy was so sweet to cheer her up at a time like this. Carla could not allow herself the luxury of any more weeping. Mrs. Murphy’s suffering was fresh. It took precedence over her own.

Carla felt no joy of revenge with the news of the World Trade Center attack. She was filled by empathic grief for Mrs. Murphy’s nephew. In any event, Carla’s father had always said what was needed was *justicia*, not revenge. The criminals responsible for the terror visited on Chile, whether in the Chilean military, in the CIA, or in the United States government, should



be arrested and brought before an international court. Carla was convinced that justice could not be found by bombing innocent people in the country whose government had served as the terrorists' training ground. She wished the bombers could see the face of this worried aunt and all the people like her.

"Your nephew..."

"Brent."

"Brent," said Carla, promising herself to remember the name this time. "You can't jump to any conclusions. New York is a big city."

"I'm sure you're right," said the woman with a brave sniff. "Brent never mentioned anything about going anywhere near the World Trade Center. He's probably watching the whole thing on TV just like everybody else." She laughed nervously, clearly not convinced of her nephew's safety. "But it's so terrible not knowing for sure."

"You'll find out soon enough," said Carla reassuringly. She was more composed now. "He'll call you as soon as he gets a chance. Have faith."

CARLA REMEMBERED HOW HARD THE WAITING WAS FOR HER PARENTS. SHE DIDN'T UNDERSTAND THE TURMOIL THE COUNTRY WAS IN, BUT SHE KNEW HER FAMILY FACED TERRIBLE DANGERS. HER FATHER CAME HOME EARLY THAT SEPTEMBER 11 MORNING BEFORE HIS SHIFT WAS OVER. HE GRABBED HER OUT OF BED, STAINING HER PINK NIGHTGOWN WITH BLACK GREASE. HE LEFT WORK WITHOUT EVEN WASHING HIS HANDS. HE TOLD HER IN THE MOST REASSURING VOICE HE COULD MANAGE, "WE'RE GOING ON A LITTLE TRIP, TO CANADA." THE NEXT THING SHE KNEW SHE WAS IN A CAR, THEN IN A CHAOTIC AIRPORT, THEN IN ANOTHER AIRPORT WHERE NOBODY SPOKE SPANISH.

THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE DISAPPEARED AFTER SEPTEMBER 11. MANY OF THEM WERE NEVER SEEN AGAIN. HER FATHER WAS A SHOP STEWARD IN HIS UNION, SO A LOT OF HIS COLLEAGUES WENT MISSING. SOME, LIKE HIM, HAD GONE UNDERGROUND AND FLED THE COUNTRY. OTHERS WERE NOT SO LUCKY. CARLA REPEATED THE EXACT STORY HER MOTHER TOLD TO MRS. MURPHY. "HAVE FAITH," HER MOTHER WOULD SAY. CARLA REMEMBERED TRYING TO HAVE FAITH, PRAYING TO GOD WITH

HER MOTHER, BUT THE DAYS OF WAITING TURNED INTO WEEKS, THEN MONTHS. EVENTUALLY THEY HEARD ABOUT SOME FRIENDS AND FAMILY WHO HAD RESURFACED OUTSIDE THE COUNTRY, OR ABOUT PEOPLE WHO HAD BEEN RELEASED, BUT AS THE MONTHS TURNED INTO YEARS THEY GRADUALLY GAVE UP HOPE FOR THE OTHERS.

IT WAS HARD FOR CARLA'S MOTHER TO ADMIT THAT HER SISTER ROSITA, AND HER SISTER'S HUSBAND, OSCAR, WERE GONE FOR GOOD. THERE WERE NO BODIES. THERE WAS NO DEFINITIVE PROOF. MARGARITA COULD NOT IMAGINE THAT SHE WOULD NEVER HEAR THEIR VOICES AGAIN.

CARLA REMEMBERED PLAYING HIDE-AND-SEEK WITH HER AUNT AND UNCLE, WHO DID NOT HAVE ANY CHILDREN OF THEIR OWN. THERE WERE LOTS OF GOOD PLACES TO HIDE IN THEIR HOUSE. MANY CLOSETS, A WARDROBE, THE CELLAR. THERE WAS ALSO A BOOKCASE THAT CARLA COULD FIT BEHIND BUT THE ADULTS COULDN'T. THAT WAS HER FAVORITE HIDING PLACE. SOMETIMES SHE WOULD TAKE ONE OF HER AUNT'S ANTHROPOLOGY BOOKS FROM THE LARGE COLLECTION, AND SHE WOULD SIT BEHIND THE BOOKCASE, LOOKING AT PHOTOS OF THE CANADIAN INUIT AND THINKING ABOUT LIVING IN AN IGLOO AND EATING SEAL BLUBBER. WHEN HER PARENTS TOLD HER SHE WOULD BE GOING TO CANADA, THAT'S WHAT SHE THOUGHT THEY WERE GOING TO DO. WHAT AN ADVENTURE! WHEN CARLA'S MOTHER TOLD HER THAT HER AUNT AND UNCLE MIGHT BE HIDING FROM PINOCHET'S MEN, SHE IMAGINED THEM CROUCHING IN THEIR WARDROBE, WAITING FOR THE SOLDIERS TO PASS. SHE DID HAVE FAITH THEN. SHE THOUGHT AUNT ROSITA AND UNCLE OSCAR WOULD COME OUT OF HIDING AND RUN TO SANCTUARY. HER MOTHER HAD AN IMPRESSIVE FAITH—NOT THE FAITH OF A LITTLE GIRL. SHE HELD OUT MUCH LONGER, WHICH MADE THEIR PASSING MUCH HARDER. SOON AFTER SHE FINALLY LET THEM GO, CAME THE DIAGNOSIS: BREAST CANCER.

Carla hoped Mrs. Murphy, now sobbing in her arms, would not meet the same fate as her mother. "Let's pray together," she suggested, "for Brent." It was what her mother would have done.

Shirley nodded. And they both knelt and prayed to a God neither was sure existed.

\* \* \*

Jack whistled as he walked into his Sherbrooke Street office building. He was always cheerful in the morning—definitely a

morning person. Sharply dressed, closely shaven, jacked up on coffee, he was always ready to motivate his subordinates and impress his superiors—a first-rate corporate soldier. But Jack hadn't always been that way.

In his university days Jack was more of a night owl, drinking and partying until dawn. Such antics were why his father called him a longhaired communist-hippie-draftdodger. He may have had longish hair back then—just above the shoulders—but he was not much of a hippie and he certainly wasn't a communist. He was a draft-dodger, but that was just because he didn't want to get killed. It had nothing to do with his politics. His irresponsible diversions got him kicked out of NYU and onto the draft list. Montréal looked like it could be a fun place to evade the draft, and it was, except for all the politics.

But now, thankfully, all those battles had died down. The *québécois* were not going on about American or English imperialism any more, feminism was back out of style (he wished somebody would tell his daughter), and the Black Power movement was a thing of the past. As was his enjoyment of the Montréal nightlife. Still, he liked his job. And he liked the morning view from his office window, especially while poring over the headlines with a fresh espresso. And of course there was the money, lots of money. He had a house in the ostentatiously wealthy municipality of Westmount with a swimming pool and all the amenities. Plus it was within walking distance of work. On a nice day like today he could leave his car in the garage.

But something was amiss on this beautiful Tuesday morning. He strode passed that nice young black security guard, Greg, and he did not hear “Good morning Mr. Murphy.” He had always been politely greeted ever since Greg had started working here. That was what he liked about Greg: he was nice and polite, clean-cut in his pressed blue uniform. And now he let Jack pass as if he were not even there. There's respect for you!

Jack looked back towards the security desk as he pressed the elevator door button. He saw the back of Greg's brown shaved head. Greg was staring at a portable television screen on his desk and there was a wire running from the television to an ear-piece he was wearing. It looked like he was watching a news

report on a fire. There was a building ablaze on the screen. Why would his attention be so captivated by a fire? Then he made out some of the letters on the bottom of the screen and he saw the words “World Trade Center.” Oh my God.

“Ping,” the elevator door opened. Transfixed, Jack did not even turn around. Unable to step onto the elevator, Jack was pulled towards the television set on Greg’s desk. It seemed impossible that the Twin Towers could be burning like that. They were indestructible.

HE WAS GOING TO NYU IN THE SPRING OF 1968 WHEN THOSE UNMISTAKABLE SYMBOLS OF MODERN DAY NEW YORK CITY WERE UNDER CONSTRUCTION. HE REMEMBERED GAZING IN WONDER AT THOSE COLUMNS, SHIMMERING IN THE DAWN LIGHT AUGMENTED BY THE LSD COURSING THROUGH HIS VEINS. HE WAS ON THE ROOF OF HIS DEALER’S GREENWICH VILLAGE APARTMENT. HE LIKED TO HANG OUT WITH THE DEALERS MORE THAN THE HIPPIES. HE UNDERSTOOD WHAT THE DEALERS WERE ABOUT: MONEY AND PLEASURE. HIPPIES WERE TOO FULL OF ART AND PHILOSOPHY BULLSHIT. THEY WERE LIVING IN SOME KIND OF UTOPIAN DREAM. BUT JACK COULD SEE THE REALITY, AND WHILE THE LSD BROUGHT THE HIPPIES CLOSER TO THEIR HIPPIE UTOPIA, IT JUST BROUGHT JACK CLOSER TO REALITY. LSD PEELED AWAY ALL THE BULLSHIT AND LET HIM SEE WHAT WAS UNDER IT: THE ESSENTIAL, THE REAL, THE RATIONAL KERNEL OF THE MATERIAL WORLD. WHEN HE LOOKED AT THE TWIN TOWERS HE SAW THEIR REAL MEANING. THEY WERE MORE THAN TWO NEW COLUMNS IN THE NEW YORK SKYLINE. THE TOWERS WERE QUINTESSENTIALLY MODERN: REFLECTIVE METAL AND GLASS, PERFECTLY UNIFORM, ERECTED BY THE MOST ADVANCED ENGINEERING AND CONSTRUCTION TECHNIQUES, REFINED OF ALL MATERIAL IMPURITIES THAT CAN BE SEEN IN BRICK OR CONCRETE. THEY REPRESENTED THE DAWN OF A NEW ERA. AS HE WATCHED THE GIANT MACHINES BUILDING THE TOWERS EVER SKYWARD, AND THE GLITTERING SHOWER OF SPARKS SPOUTING FROM THE STEEL SKELETON OF THE UPPER FLOORS, HE WAS POSITIVE THE ERA OF THIS NEW ARCHITECTURE WAS AN EPOCH THAT WOULD BE MEASURED IN MILLENNIA.

And thirty years later, one of them was ablaze and spewing smoke. No wait, a camera shot from another angle showed that both of them were on fire! And then another shot, a plane crashing into one of the towers in slow motion and exploding.

“What the hell is going on?” asked the executive.

Greg jolted upright for a second, startled by what he perceived as someone sneaking up behind him. Greg turned around to see the concerned executive staring at the television he had been watching so intently. “Oh, good morning Mr. Murphy.”

Ah, there it was, his “Good morning Mr. Murphy.” Jack found the words reassuring. The Twin Towers were burning, but in Montréal all was well. The black security guard at his office was still a nice and polite young man.

“Some terrorists hijacked two planes and crashed them into the Twin Towers,” Greg explained. “The second one hit just a couple of minutes ago.”

“Holy shit,” was all that Jack could say. And he gaped at the television screen in disbelief. He watched the billows of smoke coming out of the tower on the screen. Since there was no sound of an announcer to tell him what to think, his mind wandered.

The image triggered a memory of black smoke billowing out windows of another edifice Jack had been looking up at over thirty years ago. The building he recalled was smaller, maybe 14 stories high. Unlike the image on the screen, his memory came with sound, “Let the niggers burn! Let the niggers burn!”

PEOPLE WERE CHANTING ON DE MAISONNEUVE BOULEVARD BELOW. JACK WASN'T CHANTING WITH THEM. HE WAS NOT MUCH OF A CHANTER, BUT HE WAS THINKING IT. HE WAS MAD AS HELL.

IT WAS 1969 AT SIR GEORGE WILLIAMS UNIVERSITY WHERE JACK WAS A STUDENT. HE WANTED TO GO TO MCGILL. THERE WERE BETTER LOOKING GIRLS AT MCGILL, BUT HE DIDN'T HAVE THE GRADES. SIR GEORGE WILLIAMS WAS WHERE A LOT OF CARIBBEAN STUDENTS AND UNDER-ACHIEVERS LIKE HIMSELF TOOK CLASSES. AND NOW A BUNCH OF THOSE CARIBBEAN STUDENTS, A BUNCH OF “NIGGERS”—HE NEVER CALLED THEM THAT, BUT HE THOUGHT IT—HAD TAKEN OVER THE COMPUTER CENTRE ON THE NINTH FLOOR OF THE MAIN BUILDING. THEIR RACISM CHARGES AGAINST THE UNIVERSITY FACULTY WERE DRAGGING SIR GEORGE'S ALREADY TARNISHED REPUTATION THROUGH THE MUD.

FOR THE PAST FEW WEEKS, THEIR STORY WAS ON THE RADIO AND THE TELEVISION AND IN ALL THE PAPERS. IT WAS ALL STUDENTS WERE TALKING ABOUT. BIOLOGY PROFESSOR PERRY ANDERSON HAD BEEN ACCUSED OF RACIST GRADING PRACTICES, BUT CARIBBEAN STUDENTS COULDN'T MAKE THE CHARGES STICK. UNABLE TO ACCEPT THAT BLACK STUDENTS MIGHT JUST BE MORE STUPID (WHAT KIND OF AN EDUCATION SYSTEM DID THEY HAVE DOWN THERE IN THE CARIBBEAN ANYWAY?), THE BLACK POWER RADICALS WALKED OUT OF THE SPECIAL HEARING SET UP JUST FOR THEM IN THE HALL BUILDING AUDITORIUM. THEY IMMEDIATELY WENT UP TO THE NINTH FLOOR TO OCCUPY THE COMPUTER CENTRE.

FOR TWO WEEKS THEY HAD BEEN HOLED UP IN THERE, AND HE HEARD THAT THE UNIVERSITY HAD EVEN WORKED OUT SOME KIND OF A DEAL WITH THEM, AGREEING TO THEIR DEMANDS. BUT THAT WASN'T GOOD ENOUGH FOR THE RADICALS. THEY THREW COMPUTER PROGRAMS OUT THE WINDOW. PROGRAMS WERE ON PUNCH CARDS IN THOSE DAYS, SO THE RAIN OF CARDS HAD LITTERED THE STREET BELOW. THEY REPRESENTED THOUSANDS OF HOURS OF PROGRAMMING WORK. THE BOULEVARD WAS WHITE WITH THEM. AND NOW THEY WERE BURNING THEM ON THE NINTH FLOOR. AS CLOUDS OF SMOKE Poured OUT OF THE WINDOWS, IT BECAME CLEAR THAT THE FIRE MUST HAVE GOTTEN OUT OF CONTROL. WELL, IT SERVES THEM RIGHT, THE NIGGERS! THEY WERE RUINING SIR GEORGE'S REPUTATION. LET THEM BURN. FIRE TRUCKS HAD COME, EXTENDING THEIR LADDERS AND HOSES TO DOUSE THE FLAMES, BUT A LOT OF GOOD WHITE STUDENTS BELOW WHO JUST WANTED TO GET AN EDUCATION, AND DIDN'T WANT ALL THAT POLITICAL CRAP, WERE FED UP. "LET THE NIGGERS BURN! LET THE NIGGERS BURN!" THEY WERE CHANTING.

"Do you want sound, Mr. Murphy?" asked Greg.

Now there was a nice young black man. Why weren't the Caribbean students at Sir George Williams nice and polite like him? That whole mess could have been avoided if they had been more like this Greg. "Yes Greg, would you turn on the sound please. Let's see what mess those terrorists are causing now. Have they said who did it? Was it the Arabs?" If it was a suicide attack, it had to be the Arabs.

"No, Mr. Murphy," replied the security guard in a hollow voice. "Nobody knows who's responsible at this time." Greg Phillip consciously ignored the racist motives behind the question. His first thought of who the bombers might be was

coloured by the recent events of the Unabomber attacks and the Oklahoma City bombing. These white guys faced the death penalty for their actions, even if the Unabomber got off with life. A black man would have gotten the chair for sure. The attackers were suicidal. But Greg said nothing more to Mr. Murphy. In his experience, initiating arguments about racism was a way to get into trouble. That's what happened to his mother back in 1969 when she took part in the computer centre occupation at Sir George. Greg was not born yet, but he had heard all the stories. Many times. His mother insisted on telling them over and over.

BETTY PHILLIP WAS WORKING AS A NANNY IN WESTMOUNT AND TAKING COURSES AT SIR GEORGE ON THURSDAYS—HER ONE DAY OFF. SHE WAS ABOUT HALF WAY THROUGH A BACHELOR'S DEGREE IN ENGLISH LITERATURE WHEN ALL THE TROUBLE STARTED. THE WHOLE THING ENDED UP COSTING HER A DEGREE AND ALMOST GOT HER DEPORTED BACK TO JAMAICA. SURE, THE PROFESSOR WAS RACIST AND CARIBBEAN STUDENTS WERE OPPRESSED, BUT WHAT DID ALL THEIR POLITICAL BRAVADO AND ACTIVISM ACCOMPLISH?

SHE WAS LUCKY TO FIND ANOTHER JOB WAITING ON TABLES IN A ROSEMONT DINER. IT WAS HARD ENOUGH FOR A BLACK WOMAN TO FIND ANY JOB IN MONTRÉAL, LET ALONE A BLACK WOMAN FIRED FROM HER LAST JOB FOR SUCH A SCANDALOUS REASON. AND FINDING AN APARTMENT WAS ALSO TOUGH. SHE WAS TOLD RIGHT TO HER FACE ON MORE THAN ONE OCCASION, "I DON'T RENT TO NIGGERS." SHE ENDED UP IN SOME KIND OF HIPPIE COMMUNE HOUSE WITH SOME OTHER ARRESTEES. OF COURSE, MOST OF THE OTHER ARRESTED STUDENTS, MANY OF WHOM WERE WHITE, COULD TURN TO PARENTS FOR SUPPORT SO THEY DIDN'T NEED TO TAKE THAT KIND OF A JOB AND THEY ALREADY HAD APARTMENTS TO GO HOME TO.

BUT THAT'S ALL HIS MOTHER GOT: A JOB IN A DINER, SAVING TIPS TO FINISH HER DEGREE. IN 1971, AFTER THE ORDEAL OF A TWO-YEAR TRIAL, THE NANNY TURNED PROTESTOR GOT OFF WITH A \$1000 FINE. ALL SHE HAD TO DO WAS SIGN A STATEMENT SAYING THAT SHE WAS TAKING PART IN A PROTEST AGAINST RACISM WHICH SHE THOUGHT WAS LEGAL, WHICH WAS TRUE ENOUGH ANYWAY. BUT PAYING THAT FINE ATE UP ALL HER SAVINGS.

THEN SHE GOT PREGNANT WITH GREG. HE WAS NOT IN HER PLANS EITHER. HE NEVER KNEW WHO HIS FATHER WAS, BUT HE HAD A SUSPICION

THAT IT WAS SOMEBODY HIS MOTHER NEVER REALLY LIKED. SHE NEVER TALKED ABOUT HIM.

WITH ALL THAT HARDSHIP, YOU WOULD THINK SHE WOULD HAVE REGRETTED HER ACTIONS. YET SHE TALKED ABOUT THE BLACK LIBERATION STRUGGLE WITH GREAT PRIDE AND AT GREAT LENGTH. GREG NEVER REALLY GOT THE MESSAGE. THE PAIN ETCHED ON HER WEARY FACE SPOKE LOUDER THAN HER WORDS—THE BAGS UNDER HER EYES FROM LONG HOURS OF WORK, AND THE WAY SHE WINCED WHEN SHE STOOD UP WITH HER HAND ON HER LOWER BACK. SHE WOULD COME HOME IN HER PINK WAITRESS UNIFORM AFTER DARKNESS HAD FALLEN, HOURS AFTER GREG HAD RETURNED FROM SCHOOL. AND EACH DAY, THERE WAS A LITTLE MORE PAIN ETCHED ONTO THAT BEAUTIFUL BLACK FACE. SHE WORE HER PAIN WITH THE SAME PRIDE AN OLD SOLDIER WEARS HIS BATTLE SCARS, AND SHE TOLD HER WAR STORIES TO ANYONE WHO WOULD LISTEN. THAT WAS NOT THE KIND OF OLD AGE GREG WANTED TO LOOK FORWARD TO.

THAT WAS WHY GREG WENT OUT OF HIS WAY TO ACCOMMODATE HIS BOSSES. HE DIDN'T WANT TO ROCK THE BOAT LIKE HIS MOTHER DID. LOOK WHERE IT GOT HER.

So Greg did not say anything for the rest of the time he and Mr. Murphy watched the Towers burning, President Bush talking to reporters in Florida, the Pentagon getting hit by another plane, the first tower falling, the smoke and the debris. Mr. Murphy was muttering something about the fall of Western civilization and lax border security and how this would be a wakeup call for the sleeping giant. The lamb would become the lion. America would rise from the ashes and would lead a crusade against this evil. It was Pearl Harbor all over again. Greg tried hard not to listen. He just wished Mr. Murphy would leave him alone and watch it in his own office upstairs.

But then, as people were walking by the security guard's desk on their way to lunch, out of nowhere Mr. Murphy exclaimed, "I knew it was the Arabs, I knew it! Didn't I say it was the Arabs earlier?" He was clearly pleased with himself as he clapped his hands together and pointed to the screen, as if he were watching a baseball game and his favourite player just tagged the runner stealing second. People turned to look.

Greg simply smiled faintly and nodded. He felt like getting up and glaring down at Mr. Murphy. Greg was about six foot six



and well-built, so he would have towered over the executive. He resisted the urge to smack Mr. Murphy across the face and tell him this wasn't a game of pin the blame on the minority. But Greg grit his teeth and said nothing. There was no sense in arguing.

On the screen were Arabs, Palestinians to be precise (not that it made any difference to viewers like Jack) who were celebrating in the streets of the West Bank at the news of the World Trade Center attack. And the announcers were talking about Osama bin Laden and how he had tried to bomb the World Trade Center back in 1993. It was still too early to say who was behind the attacks today, but there was speculation. Jack didn't need to speculate any further. He knew who was responsible.

"This whole suicide bombing thing is part of their cultural tradition," Jack said in his authoritative news-anchor voice.

Greg stirred in his chair. Mr. Murphy had stepped over a line. It was the line that had been hardwired into Greg's brain by his mother without him even realizing it. His mother's solid stance was stiffening his own spine, and he was determined to speak his mind. Greg knew it would be a mistake. He could already see the want ads and the rejection letters on his kitchen table, all the difficulties confronting a young black man looking for a job in Montréal. His mother's legacy repeated. Nothing could stop his visceral reaction—an instinctive, emotional and empathic defense of human dignity that was the basis of every revolt the oppressed had made against their oppressors from the beginning of history. Clearing his throat, he stumbled over the first words, "Mr. Murphy, I don't think... I mean Arab culture is not..."

Jack's cell phone rang. Saved by the bell.

"Hello... Oh, hi honey. Yes I saw... Yes it's horrible... Brent? Is he in New York?"

Shirley had always kept track of the comings and goings of all their nieces and nephews. She sent them Christmas cards every year and called them on most important holidays. She was good at that kind of thing. Jack couldn't be bothered. He was too busy making the money they needed to maintain their lifestyle, and besides, he only saw most of their relatives once

every two to three years or so. Until his father died in 1988, it was very difficult to see his family at all because the patriarch refused to be in the same room with the draft-dodger. Jack never got back into the habit of seeing his family after that. Brent was Jack's sister's son, but Shirley knew more about him than he did. She knew he was working at a video store in Manhattan and trying to get some kind of funding for an independent film he wanted to produce.

"He's so talented," said Shirley, her voice was shaking. "It would be such a shame if..."

"Oh, don't worry honey," Jack reassured her. He heard the emotion welling within her. "New York's a big city."

"I know, Jack. But what if he had some kind of business in the financial district? You know he's looking for funding..."

He hated when she got like this. She was simply incapable of listening to reason—such a worrywart. She was always anticipating the worst case scenario. When the mad-cow scare first hit the UK, she wouldn't cook him steak for months. When the millennium bug was supposed to make all the computers crash on New Year's Day 2000, she had weeks' worth of canned food, candles and bottled water stocked in their basement. What was she going to do this time? "Why don't you try calling him?" asked Jack. At least that would keep her busy for a while, and maybe she would talk to Brent and everything would be fine.

"I've been trying to get him all morning. I left messages on his machine but he's not home!"

Should have thought of that one. Of course she would have called Brent. That's the first thing she would have done. "He's probably at work, dear. Really, you shouldn't worry so much." But as the words were coming out of his mouth, the second tower was falling on the screen before his eyes. Should he try to prepare her for this, or was it better to leave her to find out on her own so that he wouldn't have to deal with her irrational panic?

"Ohh, ohh, oh my God. Did you see that Jack?!" she shrieked.

He hadn't considered that she was watching the whole thing on television too. "I didn't know you had a TV at your

work,” said Jack feigning interest. Changing the subject was a long shot but it might work. Jack really didn’t know that there was a TV at his wife’s workplace. In the ten years she had been working there, he had never visited. He thought of it as a hobby. It wasn’t real work. It was in a youth centre in NDG. The job paid less than a tenth of Jack’s salary. But she said it was for a good cause. It was like charity. That’s what Jack told his business friends. His wife worked for charity, to help poor kids in NDG. It sounded good.

“Jack. The other tower fell! There were still people in there! Oh my God!” She was hysterical.

Greg watched as Mr. Murphy winced the phone away from his ear. Even with the TV on, he could hear Mrs. Murphy shrieking on the cell phone. He had forgotten what he was going to tell Mr. Murphy, and was now thinking about the poor woman on the phone who had the misfortune of being married to this asshole.

“Pull yourself together Shirley,” said Jack. “This is what the terrorists want you to do. They want you to panic. Don’t let those Arab bastards win. Stay strong. Stay in control of yourself.”

Greg remembered what he was going to say.

“Oh Jack,” said his wife in exasperation. She was starting to calm down. “You just don’t understand. I don’t care about the hijackers. I care about Brent, and the others like him. Look at this destruction Jack. Look at it. It’s... it’s like in the Bible. You know, Armageddon. I think... I’m going to go to church.”

“You’re going to church?” Jack said in a mocking tone. He was sure Shirley had not been to church since Sarah was baptized.

“Yes Jack. I’m going to church. I just don’t know what else to do.”

“Um, okay,” said Jack hesitantly. He was confused but happy to get her off his back. “Say a prayer for me while you’re there.”

“I’ll be praying for Brent,” she sighed. “And for the others... Goodbye Jack.”