

And Out of the Dust Came the Heroes

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Reflections on September 11th, and the true nature of "superheroes".

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And Out of the Dust Came the Heroes

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It was a day of flickering television sets.

It was a day of tied up phone lines.

It was a day of pain.

A day of sweat and blood.

A day of smoke.

A day of screams.

A day when the world stopped for just a few, horrid seconds.

A day when mortality was proven.

A day when hope began to falter.

...and on that day, out of the dust, came the heroes.

They wore no costumes of spandex and leather. They're weapons did not include adamantium claws or bat-shaped boomerangs. They were not gifted with supersonic speed or x-ray vision. They were neither mutant nor Kryptonian.

But they were superheroes.

Instead of costumes, they wore uniforms of blue, red, and yellow, of civilian clothes, caked with white dust and soot. Instead of steel claws they fought with extinguishers, fire-hoses, and "the Jaws of Life". Instead of superpowers they were gifted with mercy, with determination, with unshakeable will. And they were not of an alien race, nor of an advanced society; they were the perfect example of the human spirit.

They fought the worst of villains. Not mad-capped scientist, or diabolical business, or power hungry queens. They did not fight the hounds of hell or the bloodsuckers of the night. They did not fight ghouls or werewolves or warty witches.

They fought against the choking dust and the acid rain of fear. Against collapsing buildings and screams of "this can't be real!" They fought against flying debris, against heated flames, against death itself. Time and hysteria was the enemy. Cracked walls and leaking fuel was the foe. Stuck elevators,

demolished staircases, and fire were the killers.

They fought against an earthly hell.

And because of them, of these superhuman men and women, it was a day of courage.

It was a day of unity.

It was a day of *hope*.

Three years from the day, I can remember my first trip to New York City. It was a bustling place, where time was of the essence and filled with quickness. All was alive, bright and fast, flashy and dirty and filled with glory. From my seat I watched the building foundations shoot from the ground, like metal trees, a monument to the technology humanity had developed over the years.

But as we turned a corner, my mind began to grow stiff. The street was familiar, in a way, with its board cement bottom and its line of light posts that stood sentry at its center. It seemed eerily familiar.

And then it hit me. The scene of a snow-white street filled with people, sorrowful, angry, bleeding people. The memory made my blood run cold.

A chill passed through the bus as we drove up the road. The air became stagnant as the brown gash in the earth came into view. Silence, absolute silence, filled the bus and the area around us. It was as if New York City, and all its fastness, had stopped, and the cars around us seemed to slow down and file into a makeshift funeral procession. The air was stoic, cold, unmoving and unchanging; a darkness swept from heart to heart as the ominous aura engulfed us. The guide need not have stated where we were. We all knew what the great field of brown earth meant...We were at the very foot of Ground Zero.

The spirits still linger there.

And so do our heroes.

~Dedicated to all those who lost their lives on September 11, 2001, to our firefighters, our police force, our men and women in arms, and to our good Samaritans. They truly are the heroes of this world.~