

# *decembergirl*

Marina Belica

"The impact of living next to ground zero was hard for people outside of Manhattan to really understand. The constant smell of possibly toxic smoke. The likelihood of even more ungodly smells to come, with nearly 3,000 people consumed by the debris. The shock of witnessing a key element of our local skyline attacked, burning, and collapsing. The empty streets, a key avenue lined for as far as the eye can see with dumptrucks and bulldozers from communities throughout the tri-state area. Workers covered in dust and emergency medical personnel in green scrubs walking to the north because there was no transportation to or from the disaster site. The sound of helicopters, the initially constant and now intermittent sound of sirens. The look on people's faces. The realization that probably everyone here would know of someone lost in this tragedy. The beauty of the sunset made even more beautiful yet sorrowful from the smoke and debris in the air. It felt disrespectful to return to ordinary life, and it was the only way to heal and to go on.

Soho (where I live) was close enough for me to have witnessed the second tower collapse before my eyes, but not before I saw a man jump from a high floor in the most unforgettable embrace of life I have ever seen. He spread his arms wide and did the most graceful swan dive, a mythic figure, like Icarus, surrendering to his fate, a final majestic, and heroic act, choosing to fly before he died. Apparently, many people jumped. I saw only this man and will never, ever forget it.

My neighborhood was cordoned off, no people on the street, no cars, and eerily silent for the remainder of that week. Only residents were allowed to come and go. If the winds had blown to the North on Sept. 11th and Manhattan had been engulfed in smoke, it would have been bedlam. Never was I more grateful for an easterly wind. Cruelly, it may have been the most beautiful day of weather of the summer.

Now we wait along with the rest of the world for what will follow.  
The world as we knew it is no longer."

**- Performing Songwriter, November 2001**  
**Special Issue: The Healing Power of Music**

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