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# The Fires of September: The Lay of Mohamed and the Tragedy of the Two Towers

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Noah Cogan, 2012-2013

The Fires of September: An Explanatory Paper

My desire to compose an epic poem was inspired by a variety of instances. When I arrived at Vassar, I took Professor Curtis Dozier's course Reading Antiquity where I first read the *Iliad* and the *Aeneid*. Professor Dozier guided my class through these texts and introduced us to the wonders of Greco-Roman epic poetry and the characters that define the genre, such as Achilles and Aeneas. In my junior year, I took the most influential course over my time at Vassar, the Homer seminar taught by Professor Rachel Friedman. In this course, we read Books 18 & 19 of the *Odyssey* in Greek and engaged directly with Homer's language and character development. I also had the privilege to attend yet another highly influential event, Dr. Jack Mitchell's performance of his own epic poem, the "Battle of the Plains of Abraham." The idea of composing a modern epic poem had never occurred to me before I saw Dr. Mitchell's performance but from the moment he finished his work I knew that this was something I wanted to do too. Throughout my time at Vassar I realized that the field of Greek and Roman Studies was under intense scrutiny regarding its continuing relevancy, a crisis which manifested itself in the cutting of the Classics department at one of the SUNY schools my sophomore year. I had been searching for something I could do to show how relevant Greek and Roman Studies is and I thought that composing a modern epic poem would be a great way to revive an ancient art form and make it relevant for a modern audience. Furthermore, I have always been a lover of music, playing both jazz piano and oboe as well as composing jazz pieces, and this seemed like a great way for me to marry my two loves: Greek and Roman Studies and music. Fortunately for me, Dr. Mitchell's was incredibly encouraging and no one was more excited than Professor Friedman, who would eventually become my advisor in this endeavor.

In the spring of junior year I studied abroad at Lady Margaret Hall College at Oxford University where I gained another ally in my project, the Homerist Dr. Maarit Kivilo. I told Dr. Kivilo about my project and she graciously agreed to structure our term together as a time of preparation for my composition. I engaged deeply with both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, analyzing the themes and characters of the work while writing about the composition of epic poetry as a whole. Despite my illuminating work with Dr. Kivilo, I still struggled with the simplest aspect of my poem: the subject. Initially I wanted to compose the poem about J.R.R. Tolkein's *Lord of the Rings*. I have always loved these books and, since there are a lot stories from that universe that have been made into songs and ballads by characters in Middle Earth, I thought it would very accessible. Tolkein also created a vast pantheon of gods and goddesses about whom I could write hymns to preface my poem. However, after having multiple conversations with relatives, particularly my father, I decided to make the World Trade Center attacks of September 11, 2001 the subject of my work. I realized that, in order for this work to have the greatest possible impact, it should be about a pivotal event that is worth immortalizing. I was further inspired by a quote from Milton published in the preface to the Penguin edition of *Paradise Lost*, in which the famed author writes that epic poems should be national. I spent almost a month wrestling with the idea of composing the poem about September 11<sup>th</sup> since the events of that day had only occurred less than twelve years ago. Could I take on the task of composing a poem based on such a tragic event that is still fresh in the minds of this nation? I decided that I should do it for two purposes, other than for the sake of the art: to tell the story of the hijackers and to immortalize the bravery and tragedy that was omnipresent on that faithful day.

After a good deal of thought, I decided to divide the poem into two major sections: the “Lay of Mohamed,” which tells the tale of Mohamed el-Amir Atta, and the “Tragedy of the Two Towers,” which describes the tragic events surrounding the collapse of the World Trade Center. In addition to these two major sections, I also included a hymn to open the work as well as an introduction and conclusion. I decided that the musical accompaniment to the poem will be provided by a piano, both percussively and lyrically, as I will explain later in this paper. The inspiration from the hymn comes from the Homeric hymns dedicated to gods and goddesses and possibly sung before an excerpt from an epic work in ancient Greek. Such an instance occurs in Book 8 of the *Odyssey* when the bard Demodocus sings about the love of Ares and Aphrodite before launching into his poem about the Trojan War later in the work. In order not to privilege any religious tradition over another, and to honor the true inspiration behind my work, I decided to dedicate my hymn to the ancient bards.

I describe a situation in which an old bard has arrived at a small village and proceeds to the center of the town at dusk to repay the village’s hospitality by singing them an epic poem. The hymn implies that the bard is singing “The Fires of September” and his audience is able to identify with the work because of the universal archetypes in epic poetry. The intention of this connection is to introduce the audience to the tradition of epic poetry and link my own work to those of the past. The piano accompaniment consists of two-note chords, sounded in 4ths (meaning that there is an interval of four pitches between the two notes of the chord) and played on beats one and three of a four beat measure, reminiscent of the lyre that used to accompany the ancient Greek bards. I chose this type of accompaniment after reading the article “What Song the Sirens Sang: Problems and Conjectures in Ancient Greek Music” by Warren Anderson in which the author conjectures about the use of the lyre in the performance of epic poetry.

Anderson writes in his work that it would be almost impossible for a lyre player to play a note or chord on more than just beats one and three of a four beat measure, hence my decision to structure the piano accompaniment in such a way. The introduction and the conclusion of the poem are both written in iambic pentameter and end with a rhymed couplet, reminiscent of Shakespeare. The music during both of these sections is the same as the accompaniment during the hymn to promote a sense of cohesion between these sections of the poem. Furthermore, the hymn, the introduction and the conclusion are meant to be more formal, hence the iambic pentameter, and thus the continuity of the accompaniment helps to create a unified sense of austerity.

I gained the majority of my information on the hijackers from a book written by the journalist Terry McDermott entitled *Perfect Soldiers: The 9/11 Hijackers: Who They Were, Why They Did It*, which focused primarily on the life of Mohamed el-Amir Atta, the lead hijacker. I decided, based on his book, that I would make Mohamed the subject of half of my work, while devoting the other half to a description of the collapse of the World Trade Center. While Mohamed's actions align closely with the stereotype of a villain, I chose to treat him, strictly for literary purposes, as a kind of protagonist, comparing him to the character arc of Achilles in the *Iliad*. The *Iliad* begins with the poet singing about the rage of Achilles and then chronicling the effects of that anger throughout the poem. The poet describes Achilles' withdrawal from battle, and heroic life in general, which eventually results in the death of his dear friend Patroclus. The poem ends in sorrow as Priam comes before Achilles in Book 23 to request the body of his son Hector whom Achilles recently killed in battle to avenge the death of Patroclus. Achilles sees his own father in Priam and is able to empathize with the king in his grief and decides to return Hector's body to him. In researching Mohamed, I saw similar elements in his life: his rage over

the Westernization of Egypt, his inability to connect with the world around him and his inability to find a job. By emphasizing these common themes and struggles and including a moment of weakness before he eventually crashes American Airlines Flight 11 into the North Tower I hope to have humanized Mohamed. I also decided to use various epithets taken from Homer to describe Mohamed throughout the biographical section of “Lay of Mohamed” such as “the curse of men,” used when I describe Mohamed’s childhood, “the tireless one,” which describes Mohamed during his time in Germany, “the crooked-counseling one,” which I use to describe Mohamed during his descent into jihad. I chose the first epithet to enforce the ridiculous nature of pure hatred and begin the process of humanization, for how can one call a child who has done nothing wrong with his life “the curse of men?” The second epithet encapsulates Mohamed’s energetic period in Germany, always studying and teaching people about Islam while ingratiating himself in his new circle of friends. Finally, “the crooked-counseling one” represents the plans he decided to follow through with and his inability to overcome these wicked designs devised by his Al Qaeda superiors. I want people to learn to see him as a person they can understand rather than as the embodiment of pure incomprehensible evil. The vehicle of the epic poem is ideal for this goal in my opinion, since it attempts to create characters and situations people can identify with. That is the main reason the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* have continued to remain relevant today and what drew me, and countless others before me, to them in the first place.

In the “Lay of Mohamed,” the metrical structure is divided into two distinct sections to reflect the dichotomy between the events of 9/11 and my biography of Mohamed. The events of 9/11 are described in a short and clipped manner, punctuated by strategic percussive hits on the top of the piano. The metrical and musical styles work together to create rapid forward motion which keeps the audience on the edge of their seats, anticipating the next line. This reflects the

rapidity of events that took place on 9/11 as well as the excitement of Mohamed as he gets closer and closer to completing his goal of destroying the World Trade Center. The biography of Mohamed, spoken in free verse, attempts to evoke the air of a classroom setting, in which the poet informs the audience about Mohamed's background. The slower pace also allows the audience to take in the information at their leisure and creates a pronounced aural divide between this section and the events of 9/11. There is no accompanied percussive rhythm or lyrical music during this section, and practically all of the Lay of Mohamed, since Mohamed himself abhorred music. The only time that lyrical music enters into this section of the poem is when Mohamed falters before the plane hits the North Tower and thinks of his mother. I decided to introduce the theme for the "Tragedy of the Two Towers" here to emphasize the tragedy of Mohamed's life. His death, in a way, is almost as tragic as the deaths of those who perished as a result of his attack since no one was able to reach out to him to stop him from committing the atrocities carried out on that day.

The "Tragedy of the Two Towers" consists of the destruction of both the North and South Towers and the response of both the civilians in and around the towers and the rescue forces deployed by the city of New York (the New York City Police Department, New York City Fire Department, the Port Authority Police Department and the Office of Emergency Management of New York City). I attempted to accurately portray the chaos surrounding the situation while also explaining what occurred to the audience. In order to accomplish this, I used a variety of metaphors and similes centering around three distinct themes: a tree, Homeric imagery and the American Revolution. The tree metaphors reflect how Homer would describe the death of a soldier as a tree falling while the other types of Homeric imagery, such as anthropomorphizing fate, chaos, etc., also firmly connect my poem with the work of Homer. I also included Homeric

epithets for the different rescue forces to emphasize their heroism. Furthermore, I highlighted the recollections of Bruno Dellinger, addressing him in the second person, which is a motif in Homer used, in my opinion, to engage the audience with specific characters such as Patroclus in the *Iliad* and Eumaeus in the *Odyssey*. The eulogy section of the work is also inspired by Homer, mainly from how he would elaborate on the family history of warriors in the midst of battle. The metaphors of the American Revolution reflect my desire to make the poem a national work as do allusions in both the introduction and conclusion to Emma Lazarus' poem "The New Colossus" and the song "America the Beautiful" respectfully. I gained a lot of my knowledge about the events of that day by reading the *9/11 Commission Report*, perusing the oral history archives recorded by the New York Times, utilizing the 9/11 Memorial Website as well as the website of Project 2,996, an initiative created to eulogize all those who lost their lives on that day. All in all, my goal in this section of the poem was to both immortalize the tragedy of September 11<sup>th</sup> and celebrate the heroism displayed by countless first-responders and civilians in the face of despair.

This section of the work constitutes one long poem written in rhyming couplets to resemble modern rap. The music is a series of chords ending in a major resolution which is repeated throughout the course of the poem. It attempts to invoke a feeling of sadness yet hope, which is the theme of this section of the poem, while reflecting the dependence of rap on sampling, a repetitive background track that accompanies the rapper. Three note chords are played on beats one and three of every measure to set the rhythm for the poet, once again mimicking the lyre, and crescendos and decrescendos with the poet to reflect the intensity of the particular section in the poem. The eulogy portion of the tragedy, as well as the conclusion after it, has no musical

accompaniment both out of respect for individuals being eulogized and to have the audience's attention completely focused on the poet.

Earlier this year, I heard this quote regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: "an enemy is someone's story who you haven't heard." This phrase reflects the greater purpose behind my work, besides rehabilitating a dormant art form. I hope that my poem can help people on their journey from a place of hate, to a place of reflection and, finally, to a place of understanding regarding acts of terrorism. While the atrocities committed by Mohamed Atta and his fellow hijackers on September 11<sup>th</sup> were appalling and horrifying, to say the least, I believe it is important, once we have taken the appropriate amount of time to grieve and mourn the loss of lives and to acknowledge struggles of those still living, to attempt to understand why terrorists commit these acts. I hope that, by hearing Mohamed's tale, the audience will think critically about the roots of terrorism. In the end, I hope that the audience both appreciates the venerable tradition of epic poetry while taking the themes of my work to heart.

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## THE FIRES OF SEPTEMBER

### Hymn (Hymn Chords)

As the sun now sets behind the hill  
 A blind old man walks alone from his home.  
 He goes to the center of the town  
 The village waits for him beside the fire.  
 They wait each one next to his neighbor  
 The beggar sits with his lord,  
 As he sings his new song about these folk far away  
 The people see themselves now in the song.  
 He speaks with the wisdom of the ages,  
 And he sings with the might of ancient swords  
 A tale of the future comes to life  
 But this same saga has been sung forever.

### Introduction (Hymn Chords)

Help me Muse let us now tell this sad tale  
 The day the face of Liberty witnessed  
 A September morning, that dark day when  
 It seemed time was stopped in its ceaseless flow  
 The Mighty Lady wounded in her heart  
 She knelt in fear, her pride torn asunder  
 Thus pierced by many wounds, forced to endure  
 Bolts from the sky she could not hold at bay  
 From sea to shining sea they held their breath  
 Huddled masses yearning for answers they  
 Raised their voices shouting in disbelief:  
 "Who did this deed? Why would they cause such harm?"  
 His story I will now recite today  
 Mohamed Atta's road which lead to this  
 Fire, which burned a path across the ocean.  
 The answer today to you I'll supply  
 Why he convinced himself that day to fly.

### The Lay of Mohamed (Percussive Hits in Present Amir Section Where Marked)

5:00 AM  
 September 11, 2001  
 The Comfort Inn near Portland Jetport, Maine.  
 Mohamed el-Amir Atta pauses in his prayers.  
 Time to begin the final preparations.  
 The final day of his life, X  
 The greatest day of his life, X  
 His destiny fulfilled. X

He rose to his feet.  
 The Surahs of Repentance and The Spoils recited.  
 Washing his face.  
 The angels shall seek forgiveness for him. X  
 Reciting the morning prayers. X  
 Abdul Aziz al-Omari, his fellow jihadi, has already begun.  
 Enunciate every syllable perfectly. X  
 No mistakes. X  
 Omari prays too quickly.  
 He corrects him. X  
 5:33 AM  
 They are running late.  
 Moving quickly to the rented Nissan Altima.  
 The car won't start.  
 He curses the Jews. X  
 The car starts.  
 Arriving at the airport.  
 His bags are delayed.  
 Special security measures.  
 Inconsequential. X  
 He makes it through security.  
 5:53 AM  
 They are in their seats.  
 What are the others doing?  
 Ziad is probably calling his wife.  
 Fool. X  
 She is too Western. X  
 Too American. X  
 An unnecessary obstacle in our plans.  
 She pines for him back in Germany.  
 Ziad hasn't called her in months.  
 Good. X  
 This is no place for women.  
 Especially not her. X  
 6:00 AM  
 The commuter flight to Boston takes off.  
 His hopes soar with the plane.  
 They will all die today. X  
 Those who cloud the minds of believers. X  
 Usurpers of Order. X  
 A perfect world is nigh at hand. X  
 His wedding is today. X  
 Eternal blessings, X  
 Mingling with the prophets and martyrs forever. X  
 He smiles. X  
 Destiny reaches out her hand. X

A child screams in a nearby seat.  
He sees his mother wears a tank-top.  
Harlot. X  
He thinks back to his own childhood.

Born in the Nile Delta, Amir, the curse of men, moved with his family in

The 1970s to Eldmalsha Street in Abdin, a quarter of Cairo

That had seen better days by the time Amir and his family arrived.

Perhaps Amir's father chose Abdin on account of its squalor,

As it allowed the lawyer to purchase a large double flat with enough space

For the curse of men and his two sisters to have their own rooms. Such privacy

Was a rarity in Cairo, as the urban masses lived almost on top of each other.

Work in Mohamed Khamees' nearby auto-body shop spilled over into

The middle of the street. Amir's father kept the family strictly isolated.

Even during Ramadan, when families typically broke the fast with friends and

Neighbors, Amir's family never had any visitors or never went to visit anyone themselves.

In fact, Amir's family was fairly secular, observing holidays but

Not attending mosque or engaging in any prayer. The only religious fervor

In the curse of men's home was the worship of success and achievement.

Amir's father timed the distance it would take for him and his sisters to walk home from school

And if they were late they would have to answer for it. While Amir's fellow classmates

Relaxed on street corners chewing pistachios, the curse of men sat in his room alone and studied.

He succeeded in earning admission to Cairo University like his sisters, and, after performing well

In his first year, he earned admittance into the engineering department, the most venerable at the

School. From there he entered into the architecture program,

The most competitive sub-discipline of engineering. Amir excelled at the

Mathematical aspect of architecture but fell short in the design aspect.  
On account of this, he failed to gain admission to Cairo University's  
Graduate program and was thus forced to make an important decision.  
Amir's father thought the boy was too soft, too attached to his mother,  
And, after Amir wowed some German friends of his father with his  
Command of the German language, his father sent him to Hamburg  
On a whim, and thus the curse of men was abroad and totally alone.

6:45 AM

Logan Airport

Boston, Massachusetts.

No more reflection, only action.

Phase two has begun. X

6:52 AM

Marwan al-Shehhi calls,

Preparing to board United Airlines Flight 175 for Los Angeles.

Everything is on schedule. X

7:00 AM

He checks in to American Airlines Flight 11.

Satam al-Suqami and the brothers Wail and Waleed al-Shehri arrive

The team is assembled.

He checks for his mace and utility knife. X

Khalid Sheikh Mohammed had been right, X

This was too easy. X

7:35 AM

He sits down in business class 8D

Omari and Satam sit nearby

The brothers sit in first class X

7:59 AM

The plane takes off X

Soon they will take action X

He steeled himself for the moment

Remembering the cause of his hatred for the Americans.

Amir arrived in Hamburg in the summer of 1992 to stay with the friends of his father  
That he had so dazzled back in Cairo. Alone and abroad, the tireless one turned more towards  
Islam than he ever had previously, praying five times a day and keeping a strictly *halal*  
Diet. He frequently argued with his hosts about religion and eventually wore out his  
Welcome due to his close-mindedness.

In between verbal tirades against the landlady's unmarried daughter for her  
Immoral ways and sleeveless blouses,

Amir smiled and played games with her little girl.

It was the only time any of them

Could remember seeing him happy.

He enrolled in the Technical University of Hamburg-Harburg to study architecture,

Moving in to the dormitories at the university. He had little success fitting in there

As well, once being dragged out by students to see a screening of Disney's The Jungle Book and,

Upon witnessing the pre-movie conversation, was heard muttering under his breath

About chaos and left the theatre in a huff. The tireless one also openly complained about the act

Of eating, saying that it was boring. His routine was to skin and cook a huge pile of potatoes

And eat them gradually over the course of a week, pulling them in and out of the refrigerator

Without heating them up. Amir established himself as a total introvert, a man who owned no

books and disliked music and movies. While things were

Difficult for him socially in Hamburg, Amir excelled at the

University, earning high praise from his professors for his studious ways. The tireless one began

To dream big about returning to Egypt as an "Arab to Arabia" intent on bettering

The lives of his countrymen through the construction of better neighborhoods.

That is when everything changed.

Amir travelled back to Cairo in the summer of 1995, on a grant

From the Carl Duisberg Society, a German

Think-tank that promotes redevelopment and preservation. The tireless one and two colleagues

Traveled to the area of Cairo known as the Islamic City to study the plans that the Egyptian

Government had for this cluster of ancient monuments,

Modern marketplaces and medieval architecture.

Amir learned that the Egyptian government planned to

Restore the Islamic City by evicting all of its

Current residents, renovating the buildings and hiring troupes of actors to play the very

Residents they had just evicted. The nearby City of the Dead, home to centuries of Cairo's

Deceased residents and thousands of squatters

Living amongst the tombs, would also be renovated.

Amir looked on as earthmovers tore up the ancient burial ground, destroying a precious

Piece of Cairo's history. Amir and his colleagues attempted to discuss their concerns with the

Municipality, however they did not understand the problem. "It is a good idea," they said.

Amir became disillusioned with the Egyptian government. He had already experienced

Difficulties trying to find a job in Egypt, having issues fitting into a system in which jobs were

Handed down from one generation to the next. Egypt's ambitious and inexpensive system of

Higher education was pumping out more

And more well-educated people who could not find work.

Egyptians with graduate degrees were 32 Times more likely to be unemployed than illiterate Peasants. Amir railed against the Egyptian Government to his colleagues, arguing that Mubarak's eagerness to appease the Americans had Led to the creation of this "Islamic Disneyland."

The tireless one cloaked his anger in the garb of Islam,

A transition noticed by a several people. As he talked with Mohamed Khamees in front of His autobody shop a few weeks later while the

Mechanic repaired his car, Amir excused himself to

Answer the afternoon call to prayer. It was the first time Khamees had ever seen any member of Amir's Family acknowledge the call to prayer.

The tireless one took his first pilgrimage to Mecca that year.

8:14 AM

His time has come.

The "Fasten Seatbelt" sign is turned off. X  
 Wail and Waleed stab two flight attendants. X  
 They grab the key to open the cockpit. X  
 "We have cleared the way for you Brother,"  
 He moves swiftly towards the cockpit. X  
 A man rises from behind to stop him X  
 Satam stabs him, X  
 The fires of holy vengeance burn in his eyes.  
 The fires of September.  
 "Lead us to Allah."  
 Omari and Satam spray the mace. X  
 Passengers flee to the rear of the plane, X  
 But they cannot outrun Fate.  
 He takes the controls X

Upon his return from making *haji*, Amir had finished all of his requirements for receiving

His graduate degree except for completing his dissertation.

However, he lost all interests in his academics

At this point and began to frequent the mosques in Hamburg, growing a beard as a sign of his Religious fervor. He developed a circle of

Friends at the Al Quds mosque, the most radical in Hamburg,

Which he invited back to his dormitory for dinner frequently, cooking soup.

He began to teach informal courses in Islam at Al Quds.

The crooked-counseling one frequently accosted students for their wardrobe,

Called music the work of the devil and, when women once came to his course,

Told a male student to tell their fathers that they were

Unwelcome in his class. He began teaching around

80 students and ended up with only a handful.

Amir constantly criticized his new-found

Friends over their praying style, so much so that some would

Leave the mosque early to avoid his persistent harangues. Amir of the crooked-counsels

Completely dropped off the map according to the university,

Not contacting them at all for 2 years. He did however, teach seminars

At the think-tank which awarded him the

Fellowship to go the Islamic City. Amir came to the lectures

Incredibly prepared, gave them, and then left. He engaged in almost no personal conversation

And never attended any of the social events held in conjunction with the seminar. One student

Remarked that there seemed to be a wall between

Amir and the class. Amir and Ramzi bin Al-Shibh,

Otherwise known as Omar, became the ringleaders of a

Fluid group of youths devoted to Islam. They

Courted other Arabs more than proselytized, offering to explain passages of the Qur'an and attending study groups throughout Hamburg, making themselves known to those who might be willing to join them in their cause. All they talked about was religion and life after death. Nothing else mattered. People often fled the group, sometimes to other cities entirely, scared off by the intensity of its members and the debates on the effectiveness of jihad.

Amir, Omar and others in the group went to several jihad camps in Afghanistan in 1998. The group began to grow closer, living together in a small flat in Hamburg, removed from the world. After 2 years of neglecting his studies, the crooked-counseling one finally returned to complete his thesis, even working with a female professor until he told her he could stand it no longer. He completed his work with commendation and returned home to Cairo to see his parents. He told them that he planned on travelling to the United States to obtain his doctoral degree and his parents were delighted. He remarked privately to his mother that he was tired and wanted to stay in Cairo to take care of her but she would have not of it. Her husband wanted Amir to be a success and thus he must go to the United States. Little did his parents know that he had no intention of pursuing his education. Amir had heard the *Fatwa* and he was prepared to answer.

The man of crooked counsels left Hamburg in 1999 with the rest of the group, staggering their individual departures over the span of a few weeks, to formally join Al Qaeda. Upon their arrival, the group was sent to see Osama Bin Laden, who told them that he had a special task in mind for them, a plan proposed three years ago by Khalid Sheikh Mohammed: To attack the United States of America. He asked for their undying loyalty and to accept suicide missions. They consented. After being briefed by

Al Qaeda military commander Mohammed Atef

And conversing with Bin Laden on several other occasions, Amir of the crooked counsels

Was appointed leader of the expedition.

The group left individually with orders to seek flight training. Amir left for

Florida in 2000 to begin his new studies. Most of the would-be-pilots found it relatively

Easy to enroll at flight schools. In the final year

Leading up to the attacks, Amir and his colleagues

Gained as much experience as they could on flight simulators, studied airplane procedures and

Airport Security. They welcomed the younger jihadi

Recruits sent to the United States to aid them in

The hijackings. The youths worked out at gyms to prepare themselves for combat, ate frozen

Pizzas, Prayed and studied airline procedures and security. After one final meeting with Omar

Over the summer of 2001 in Spain, everything was finally in place.

8:44 AM

The plane goes into a rapid decent. X

Just a few more minutes. X

He recalls the face of a woman he sat near in business class.

She looked like his mother. X (Big Hit Here)

The disillusioned academic felt a tear roll down his face.

(Tragedy Chords Start Here)

What would she say if she could see him now? How would she react to her

Only son, fighting for a cause which she did not believe in, ready to die when all she

Wanted was the best for him? He had never killed anyone before in his life, not even in the

name of Allah. All he wanted was a job, for the government to respect sacred land. Was that too

much to ask for? Success. That was all his father ever wanted, but he had failed him. No one

understood him. There is a wall between him and the world. Now look what has become of

him. Hadn't he always told his students to stay away from radical Islamic groups?

(Tragedy Chords End Here)

“Paradise is overshadowed by swords.”

Now he will be a success. X

An eternal success. X

8:46:40 AM  
September 11, 2001  
American Airlines Flight 11  
Crashes into the North Tower of the World Trade Center  
Everyone in the plane dies instantly,  
Countless more died in the tower.  
“The work of Allah is done.”  
The last thoughts of the five harbingers of doom. X (Big Hit Here)

The Tragedy of the Two Towers (Tragedy Chords)

A massive explosion shatters the silence of lower Manhattan

Ripping a hole in the smooth satin

Of the work day, as Chaos would now test the limits

Of how many people could be saved in 102 minutes.

A quarter to nine the plane assaults the North Tower

Striking a wounding blow into one tower

Of the world tree; smoke flows

Out like sap as the life blood of our nation arose

From the wounds; the gray of the trees' leaves turn to red

Heralding the impending feeling of dread

That overcomes the citizens inside

And the tree into two sections did divide.

Those above the point of impact were now trapped

Their freedom to move gone; handicapped

They gathered in groups, harkening to an unsaid decree

Like baby birds in their nests in the canopy of the tree.

Those on the lower floor waited for assistance

The call to evacuate, that grim insistence  
Was heard only by some with the intercom broken  
On some floors; the words that were spoken  
Could not be heard as the baby birds craving to fly  
Were instead left alone, hoping not to die,  
Secret crowds shrouded by the smoky air  
Imprisoned, their own office turned into a snare.  
Some called 911 on their cellphones  
Appealing to those in safety, those couched in their thrones  
But they did not know what to say, everything was unclear  
Leave, stay, go to the roof; do not give into fear.  
What had just happened? What should they do?  
They waited for the ferryman, to shake hands with death in this queue.

But you Bruno, scion of the Dellingers, who sat on the 47<sup>th</sup> floor,  
Heard the sound that would haunt you forever more  
The deafening howl of plane engines at full force  
Heedlessly fueling the plane's deadly course  
Like a massive wave destined to strike the beach  
Having built its strength far out to sea, beyond reach  
It gains momentum and rises to its maximum height  
Smashes the sand and rocks with a vicious bite  
Sucking back the debris in its bottomless maw

Swiping a chunk of bark off the tree with Death's mighty claw.

But then the warriors came, one and all

To face the grim peril, they would not let us fall

The four battalions came to greet the calamity

Keeping us from the dark precipice of inhumanity.

FDNY of the shining helms, within five seconds they all came,

With yards of hose and courage they would surely quell this flame.

NYPD, bastions of the city, quickly joined the fold

About their bravery many a tale shall be told

Swift-footed PAPD was on-site from the very start

The focal point of the rescue, its still-beating heart

Brilliant OEM mobilized and joined the fray as well

Supervising and charting the topography of this new hell.

Their leaders congregated by tower number one

Each desperate to determine what should be done

Information was scarce and precious like pure gold

Buried in the rubble and hidden, waiting to be told;

FDNY discovered the sad truth; they made the initial call,

This was a rescue mission; the fire had turned them into its thrall.

Still you fled, scion of the Dellingers, down the stairs

Leaving behind your life's passion, your work; only your prayers

Accompanied you as you climbed quickly down, seeking security

While you saw the warriors climbing slowly up with grim surety

That they would give their lives to save another

A mother, sister, father, brother

It did not matter for all received aid

The greatest of all good deeds, which could not be repaid.

As you followed their progress up with your eyes

You saw visions which you never thought life could devise

The sight of those coming down from the impact

Bodies were burned, hairless with skin cracked

But they soldiered on still, oblivious to pain

As other helped them, preventing them from becoming one of the slain.

The largest rescue force in the city's history had been assembled

Over 1,000 warriors arrived as the ground trembled

Decisions were being made and a plan became clear

Then the crash came again and Liberty shed her second tear.

For the South Tower had been hit by a banking plane

Any hope it seemed, had all been in vain

For those in the tree now began to doubt

If they would see the light again; could they make it out?

But wait what's this? A passable stair?

A passage out from this death-filled lair?  
Now which way to go, they could not decide  
Some just stopped, sat down and cried,  
For they tried to go up but the doors were blocked  
They tried to go down but flames left many burned and shocked.  
Smoke filled the stairway and clouded their sight  
Confusion struck them, they didn't know which way was right.  
Some jumped from whatever floor they were on  
Like leaves from a tree in fall they fell, their deaths seemingly forgone.  
But many helped their colleagues, guiding them to safety  
They did not get out right away, they were not hasty  
As Washington led his troops across the icy Delaware  
So too did these citizens lead their fellows out of despair.  
They were not alone in their kindness on this day  
For the first-responders came too, without delay  
Although the situation to many seemed desperate  
They insisted their fate and the civilians' own would not be separate.

The zone of impact was like a demolition site,  
Which the long arm of Chaos had deigned to smite  
Civilians called 911 again and again to report the fallen  
But they were still forced to repeat what had befallen  
Them, as they ran to the lobby for refuge in search of aid

The saviors greeted the survivors and bade  
Those arriving to exit the tower if they were able,  
For the sheer number of people made the situation unstable.  
Fortunately most had escaped alive fleeing this dreadful tomb  
As one last contingent of NYPD rushed into the gloom.  
Alas these warriors were never seen again  
For as their backs faded into the shadowy den  
The great tree shuddered, as the tumultuous and final blow  
Resounded from its depths, laying this bower low.

Those outside looked towards the South Tower  
To see what had become of the auxiliary bower  
Only to see a new and terrible sight  
That added fresh horror to this sickening blight  
A massive sound rang out, like a bell toll of doom  
Yet greater still was this incalculable boom  
As bystanders stood by rooted, staring at the tree in fear  
Of its magnitude, as did those who watched the bower, dear  
To their hearts as their own flesh, start to collapse  
As an eternity, in their minds, seemed to elapse.  
The explosion shot debris out from all four sides  
Which mingled in the air with jumpers, seeking suicides  
It seemed like a timed demolition, as if it had been planned

But it was not so, for now we understand  
That the pressure from inside the tower could not be contained  
And the infrastructure itself had been strained  
To its breaking point and thus the windows burst forth  
On every floor and the building collapsed on itself thenceforth  
Popping red flashes exploded round the tower like the shots from the gun,  
That echoed around the world in Massachusetts where our revolution had begun.

Now, as the wind rushed slowly out from the ground floor  
Sweeping everyone in its path off their feet, running up the score  
In favor of Death; and Rage who walked among the crowd  
Like a giant of ancient lore, rained debris as it ploughed  
And sowed a field of woe upon those who remained  
Forging onward, delighting in pain, unrestrained.  
Chaos laughed aloud, blowing hurricane-force winds down  
Faster than Paul Revere rode around  
To Concord on that faithful day so long in the past  
When we threw off the yoke of oppression, aghast  
At their refusal to acknowledge our rights  
To life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness and delights.  
Yet now we had to throw off a burden once more  
As rubble trapped our warriors, lying alone by the door  
Of death, wishing to close it shut but the debris wore

Away their strength, clogging their mouths and ears  
As they could not hear the cries of their peers  
Seeking to help them and stave off Destiny encroaching  
Upon them, sensing the chance to begin poaching  
Their lives from them at Fate's cruel behest;  
So began this trial of survival, the ultimate test.

As you left the building, scion of the Dellingers, to stand on Church Street  
You found your escape to life was bittersweet  
For you looked up to see this beautiful fall day  
Marred by flames and dark smoke, the disaster on full display.  
When the South Tower collapsed you heard nothing  
For the smoke was so thick and its presence so crushing  
That sound could not travel through its dark embrace  
As it wrapped itself around you, the ability to breathe once commonplace  
Was now a chore as you knew then that you were probably dead  
For you could not hear, nor see anything ahead.

The warriors scurried back and forth in the street below  
Like ants carrying food they ferried injured civilians to and fro,  
Saving compatriots and trying to understand the situation  
As the smoke had confounded the entire operation.  
The battalions struggled to talk to communicate

With each other, let alone potentially congregate  
Their own warriors, who were each striving to do what they felt was best  
To lay this crisis to its deserved and final rest.

Meanwhile, the citizens in the North Tower saw its counterpart fall  
They saw their destiny inching towards them at a crawl.  
911 was flooded with incoming and frantic voices  
Each desperate and wanting to know their choices,  
First-responders surged up the stairs  
Searching for any more survivors over the well-worn thoroughfares.  
The last 29 minutes of this tragedy were filled with urgency  
Finding as many injured civilians as they could in this emergency  
Until at last, the North Tower fell in a shower of debris  
The last portion of the once-almighty tree.

Three separate explosions emanated from the building  
Eliminating the ongoing attempt at rebuilding  
The hopes of those still trapped inside  
After witnessing the other tower's collapse they had run to hide  
Many had escaped but still some remained  
Unwillingly held back, forcibly detained  
By the fiery rage of those who hate,  
Manifested in the blaze they could not sate:

The Fires of September which raged on around them  
Fueled by the holy crown of martyrdom, its pure diadem.

Those outside realized that the fuel fell into the pit  
The persistent popping sounds continued to emit  
Each one signaling that time had run out  
The fate of the tree was no longer in doubt.  
Citizens fled for their lives as debris rained on those running  
Below indiscriminately like a gray hail-storm or a tornado gunning  
To destroy everything in its path; a dark titan released  
From Tartarus' gaping maw returned to sate its appetite through a grim feast  
Upon the lives of civilians young and old,  
Some of their tales shall now be told.

(NO MUSIC UNTIL THE CONCLUSION IN IAMBIC PENTAMETER)

Andrew Anthony Abate worked on the 105<sup>th</sup> floor  
Of the North Tower, remembered evermore  
By those college and high school friends who recall his funny jokes.  
His memory also evokes  
All the time he spent with Vincent, his brother,  
They hated to be separate from one another.  
Andrew drove down to the Jersey Shore  
To spend weekends with Vinnie, who could ask for more?  
They worked together at Cantor Fitzgerald  
Not knowing that their time together would herald  
A twin-death, Castor and Pollox falling together  
On one fall day, now with each other forever.

Vivian Casaldue worked for Empire Blue Cross/Blue Shield  
She waged war on life's battlefield.

"Do everything the hard way" she always said  
 As a single mother she kept three children clothed and fed  
 And became a grandmother too, and just to keep things fun  
 She was known to wear wigs to work, which kept everyone  
 Laughing, but so much was taken from Vivian on this day  
 Her children's weddings once so faraway  
 Will happen without her, their bastion of strength  
 Her life has ended, too short, not the proper length.

Marlyn del Carmen Garcia, just 21 years of age  
 She shined brightly on life's great stage.  
 The valedictorian of her high school class  
 Many honors she did amass  
 Including a scholarship to Syracuse which she turned down  
 To be closer to family, to live near her hometown.  
 At John Jay College she continued to excel  
 At Marsh and McLennon in North Tower she worked and you could tell  
 That she was destined for great things as she arrived  
 At work 1 hour early to go to school in the afternoon where she thrived  
 And hoped to work for the United Nations,  
 She was strong, fearless, determined and loved by all her relations.

All these deaths were wrought by those with ambitions grand  
 Hard at work, for years they had planned  
 To bring suffering to us, to spoil our affairs  
 They assaulted our fair Liberty, they took her unawares.  
 But like Francis Scott Key before  
 As he stood on deck and watched that war  
 So did we see this sight and endure this wrong.  
 For from its ashes, like a phoenix, shall be born a new song  
 Of unity, love and tolerance which will shape our nation  
 A hopeful and bright new aspiration  
 To be the best that we can be and renew the glory days of old  
 And we will stride forth to lock arms with destiny, humbled, renewed and bold.

#### Conclusion (Hymn Chords)

Almost twelve years hence this wound still leaks blood  
 That stains the lives of those touched by the deeds  
 Of one man, whose lay was told just this day  
 The solitary one, who could not find  
 His place amongst us, bent by wrath and grief

O'er the loss of what was dear to him  
It consumed him and lead only to death  
Both for him and many innocent folk.  
A tragedy which struck a mournful chord  
It rang across the fruited plains and through  
The amber fields of grain that was and is  
America; America which lashed  
Out against the East for this dreadful sin  
Feeding on the flames that once burned so bright  
Yet still the wound will not heal so I stand  
Before you now to sue for peace and hope  
Throw away your hate and now remember:  
Extinguish the fires of September.