

And God caused him to die for an hundred years, and then raised him to life. And God said, "How long hast thou waited?" He said, "I have waited a day or part of a day."

--Qur'an, 2:261

Chapter One (2001)

New Yorkers grew anxious over their personal circumstances in the days following 9/11, momentarily disbelieving in their own good fortune of being alive in the greatest city on earth. They saw a similarity between what had happened at Ground Zero and the increasing degradation of their personal lives. They didn't know how to contextualize either event properly. They didn't know where a civilized inquiry about the fairness of life ended and a superstitious brooding began.

"I've been sleeping poorly of late I have to admit," Dr. Michael Kaplan, the noted trauma surgeon told his celebrated patient, who was then only known to hospital authorities as John Doe 16, when visiting him one day on rounds. This was the Friday after the Towers' collapse. The debris was still in the air of lower Manhattan circulating like some sort of locust cloud. Nobody knew how many dead yet. Nobody was politically incorrect enough to hazard a guess in a serious way.

To protect his patient's corneas that were damaged by the microscopic glass fragments discharged by the buildings' implosion, Dr. Kaplan had shrouded John Doe's eyes in a thick rubbery gauze made by an Italian manufacturer just for this purpose. Presently Doe looked more like a half-carved totem than a human being. He looked like a graven image of a lost culture in front of which blood sacrifices would occur as a response to whatever blight had descended as a test of faith.

To Mike Kaplan, he seemed only proto-human at the moment. Which was to say possessed of some deep pagan magic of the type much in demand in these uncertain hours. His religious pull was entirely unselfconscious, however. Also there was the fascination that accrued to a person who survived a situation in which most others had died screaming. There was an unspoken assumption made that he was chosen by God. There was an assumption made that he possessed powers, if only manifested as dumb luck, of which others only could wonder over.

According to Dr. Kaplan, there were only three other survivors in this hospital and one of them was circling the drain rapidly. They called John Doe 16 John Doe 16 but in fact he was John Doe Nine. Three had died on the operating table in other hospitals, two had recalled their former names spontaneously, and one had died of self-inflicted wounds via a belt noose at Bellevue General. Probably given another week they would all fall into one of these categories. Mike Kaplan, however, saw something different about 16. He saw a moral resolve to his reticence as if this was the role he was destined to play his entire life and circumstances only recently had allowed him to do it.

Dr. Kaplan was in need of a heroic symbol readily accessible to him. As generally-speaking his life of late had taken a turn for the worse.

“The evidence is clear,” he said to his totemic patient, meaning the evidence of his impending nervous breakdown as opposed merely to the evidence of his wife's infidelity. Of course, one fact necessarily enabled the other in this case. It was hard to claim which event precipitated which.

Kaplan could read the signs of his wife's affair ably in the way she refused to make eye contact with him during their infrequent bouts of lugubrious sex.

“I'm a passionate man, deep down,” the surgeon told his blinded patient in discussing his own erotic technique. He felt the eyes were the window to the soul or some such blather like that. He felt that he could read every emotion in his lover's face just like in surgery he could read a hidden lesion in the color of the pus extruded.

He told John Doe that nowadays he slept only with the aid of tranquilizers. Oh, such terrible times we were living through! Dr. Kaplan didn't know how he would ever make it past the year but he was dedicated to doing so regardless. He didn't see his medical degree as any conference of omniscience certainly. He didn't see himself in any way deserving of the fate that had befallen him.

It all came out of nowhere, this infidelity, just like those planes that collided with the towers a week back. Nowadays he had taken a room in a hotel adjacent from the hospital. He didn't know if eventually he would live there for good. He wanted to be prepared for what came. This was his deep nature. He wanted to have an easy transition into bachelorhood if that's what it came to opposed to some sort of abrupt shift into taking ones dinner nightly leaning over Styrofoam containers in front of the TV and sleeping in a single bed with a mattress lumpy enough to indicate that it was bought at a fire sale from a city jail.

Nowadays Doc Kaplan was short with the nurses routinely, especially the scrub nurses who assisted him with the difficult task of repairing those bodies damaged enough to land in a trauma center. He was moody with colleagues and indifferent to their exhortations to buck up. People had taken to whispering behind his back. He wasn't like this usually. Usually he wasn't somebody in need of help.

Of late Dr. Kaplan had taken to experiencing a sort of free floating dread that lasted for only as long as he could get one of the blue pills his shrink had prescribed for him past his blood-brain barrier. This dread, more than any other symptom, led him to the conclusion that he was losing it. It wasn't a passing thing with him. It wasn't something that could be attributed to an ordinary level of stress.

He suspected his wife's paramour to be another doctor on staff here and when he found out exactly who he thought God help him and God help her at once.

“The Hippocratic oath,” he pointed out to Doe 16 “is applicable only in a professional medical setting. It's not a call to pacifism to any degree. It's not an injunction against violence in the name of self-defense.”

Killing your wife's lover after a suitable period of stalking stretched the concept of self-defense mightily of course. The reason he was here even talking to his patient about this presently, however, was that he felt unable to do anything civil about it. He felt he was a wussy underneath it all just like the kids back in a Brooklyn playground accused him of being. He thought he was somebody who would take it up the ass regularly rather than somebody who would go to jail permanently in defense of a principle. He assumed he would waver at the decisive moment. The bullies of the world had gotten to him. He thought he didn't have it in him to be violent, to be a real man.

When contemplating the unasked question of what more he could do short of murder to rectify the situation, he put his head in his hands and began to sob.

Oh, the bitch, the bitch deserved death surely but that didn't mean her death was the ideal solution to the problem. If at the moment of truth Michael's wife begged to be forgiven he supposed he would forgive her. Likely and luckily such a scenario was far-fetched. Michael told Doe 16 that he assumed that from *her* perspective she had done nothing wrong. It was all she could do to bear him all these years, let alone remain faithful. An illicit orgasm every now and again was a small recompense indeed for having to dwell with a *shlemiel* for all these years.

The smart play called for Dr. Kaplan to hire a divorce attorney, a private detective, or both and proceed with the matter in a coolly rational way. But all his waking visions of late were interfering with his brain's decision-making processes. It was turning him into somebody devoid of the ability to see the simplest solution.

“Always the falling buildings, the pulverized rubble in dream after dream after dream,” he said to John Doe 16, who may have been sleeping just at the moment behind his heavy gauze blinders, when describing his latest recurring vision. In these figments the concrete was pulverized so fine it made its way to Asia born aloft by the jet stream. Some of it landed on monks in a Tibetan monastery who were forced to brush away grains of it along with bits of the human matter—fillings and inferior *vena cavae*, bits of the frontal lobe where the cherished memories of a daughter's sixth birthday once resided—from their orange robes.

At moments like these, Kaplan felt, he was seeing the world through John Doe 16's eyes. He was casting himself as the ultimate victim simply by fancying himself as having wandered into the wrong place at the wrong time.

During these episodes, Mike Kaplan had imagined himself standing beside his patient on Tower B's stairwell just as the first plane collided with the tower's edge. Soon he was staring at the walls as the stress fractures grew like ivy up a brick wall. He was trying to peer through the smoke down below and spy a way out for them both.

Unlike 16 in real life, Michael Kaplan's dreamed of self never escaped from these recreations alive. It was only when the stairwell collapsed on him when normal consciousness would return to him temporarily. These phantasms could overtake him at any time, during a patient consult, or even while asleep. For this condition he had been prescribed Haldol. He had been advised not to self-medicate in regards to the frequency of his anti-psychotic and let loose from his shrink's office on his own recognizance.

Heavy into the relating of details concerning his own tragic circumstance, Dr. Kaplan had barely glanced at his patient's vitals, displayed as multi-colored vectors on a twelve-inch monitor just above the IV drip.

“I think you and I will have a fair amount to discuss,” he told John Doe 16 immediately before admitting embarrassment over the presumptuousness of the utterance. In the relationship with his patient, he was the suppliant until either grace or *satori* (or whatever it was) descended. Medically, he didn't think there was anything more that was required of him to hasten John's recovery. They had pre-booked sessions with the hyperbaric chamber on the seventh floor and had sessions with a grief counselor set up for him whenever the gauze was removed and the power of speech returned.

Protocol dictated a venting of the fears and still real horrors resident within, but in this instance Dr. Kaplan doubted it was necessary. The fact of the matter was that all through his ordeal there hadn't been a single attempt on his patient's part to communicate in a non-verbal way. He had a family no doubt to judge by his age and the half-scorched business card for a Jersey City

Gymboree that first responders found in his right pants pocket upon admittance days before. This suggested that he was a grounded sort. The bloodied shirt and tie he wore on the occasion of his admittance marked him as somebody who had ascended WTC Tower B daily to labor in a financial office, not merely a tourist, a day laborer, or a bystander whose loved ones might have actually been unaware of his presence at Ground Zero at the hour of the attack.

Maybe he was in the initial stages of PTSD. This possibility would need to be addressed over the ensuing weeks via talking therapy and a psychoactive course of medication. Perhaps John was suffering some sort of misplaced survivor's guilt that prohibited him from attempting to reach out to his family. If this was the case likely he would have preferred to have been one of the many who had jumped from open windows on the ninety-fifth floor. Maybe he knew some of these people by name. Or at least he could pick them from a crowd.

Victimhood, Michael Kaplan always assumed, conferred a certain dignity upon those who merely survived a tragedy as opposed to those who merely didn't. Unlike those who weren't present, one could claim, if only for a minute, to be wholly innocent in the face of heinous crime. *Pure* victimhood conferred pure absolution from a certain perspective. Whereas mere survivorhood was a deeply ambiguous state to exist within up until that point that one could forgive oneself for still being alive.

Ideally one could see John Doe 16's stoicism in the face of personal suffering as being a deeply moral response to the obscenity of the terrorist attacks. His whole silent bearing seemed a tribute to the legion of the dead and dying whose number at this moment could only be guessed at and was held, by one reliable source in the Giuliani administration, to be in the tens of thousands. Unlike so many others he seemed determined not to cry out or admit loneliness or complain at all. They knew he was fully conscious at least some of the time. Rather John seemed fiercely determined to deny the terrorists their terror. He accepted the pain forced upon him with supreme dignity and became a sort of *Fleshy God* unto himself. Michael Kaplan had come to see him as a kind of martyr who had survived the cross. A Jesus Christ who was denied his reward or something like that. Unto to such a being one was impelled to confess. All men wanted to be pure like him. They didn't know it yet until they were in his presence but this was what they wanted deep down.

Short of dying in the conflagration, such wiggling out as Michael Kaplan was in the midst of was the only way to achieve such purification ably.

"I tried my best as a husband and father, absolutely," Dr. Kaplan told this John Doe and stared into the uneven blankness of his gauze-covered eyes. Just then he wasn't looking for affirmation for his claim so much as an understanding of it. He didn't want to have his own actions impugned or have his ongoing despair rationalized as guilt over his failure as a man.

Speaking of his wife's assumed affair, Mike felt the need to debase himself rigorously in front of his patients as if it by itself was an act of expiation.

Sometimes in his waking dreams he would be one of the more fortunate ones, one of the falling men, leaping from the ninety-fifth floor unto an iconic death. All his medical knowledge led him to the conclusion that the moment of impact with the ground for such creatures would be largely painless and therefore hugely preferable to the endings that circumstances had in mind for those who either remained in the burning building or those who watched impassively from the ground. For them there'd either be survivor's guilt or the suffering that emerged invariably when flesh was exposed to a thousand degree fire. Once the spinal cord was snapped, all pain would vanish and the abyss which was non-existence would be entered into forcefully. All trepidation and the trials of war would be alleviated with a single zesty snap. Likely this was how the plummeting victims perceived their end. Every neuron was fired at once. Ecstasy as ever was entered into involuntarily by them. Likely the victims would experience the instant of their demise as some sort of dispersal of consciousness. It would be more like waking as opposed to falling asleep. It would be a thrilling experience for the microsecond that it lasted.

True, a person could impassively behold the flailing of limbs in the televised footage and the backward tilting of heads indicating fear as these jumpers rushed into an embrace with the earth. He or she could play the tape forward or backwards at whatever speed he or she pleased but the imagery would remain constant. The victims didn't seem to be aware of the exaltation that awaited them. Rather they seemed to be supremely distressed at the revelation that physically they weren't at all different from sacks of ambulatory meat tied off at the edge.

One of Mike's colleagues, the hepatologist Dr. Lise Kroger, had videotaped many instances of falling bodies and was in the midst of making a compilation, she said, purely for medical study.

"We need to explore," Dr. Kaplan told John Doe 16 momentarily once the subject of conversation had organically shifted from his failed marriage, "the reasons behind the missing smiles on their faces. I mean I think it's important," he said. "A ninety-five story plunge is an intense experience of the sort that could not be replicated in the lab. Obviously. We need to gather as much from their extinction events to ensure the smoothness of our own when it is finally forced upon us. We are not dissimilar from them so much. They're luckier than we are but that's only a subjective gloss. Our fates are their fates more or less. We are not people who should look at them and feel pity for ourselves only."

What Michael intended to do in short order was lease a hotel room on a long term basis and spend his off hours studying Dr. Kroger's tape for clues. Where were their smiles? He thought the knowledge transference would be gradual as the flow of highly filtered water. The images he had seen thus far taken from jumpers on the ninety-fifth floor were scandalously low res. He didn't think really such studies could be considered comprehensive if indulged in over an entire life. He thought every twitch of an elbow would spawn a religious order. He thought every pathetic flailing of an arm over centuries would branch out into a new area of study.

When Rhonda, Dr. Kaplan's wife, would finally admit to him the error of her ways, only then would he feel free enough to move on. Of course this was never going to occur in a waking moment. Her tearful confession was a favorite fantasy of his. It was never going to manage to make the jump into the normal daylight world.

With the passing of a loud Dominican family in the hallway en route to visit a loved one, suddenly Michael could begin to recall the physician's proper role. It was good for Michael to play doctor if only so he could forget his real troubled self. He desired a more dispassionate incarnation of himself. He assumed eventually he would outgrow the need to grieve.

When it happened he assumed this was part of his own recovery process. He assumed this was what grief counselors referred to when using the phrase letting go.

Throughout that interminable September of 2001, Dr. Kaplan would return to John Doe 16's bedside to adjust his patient's medication in a progressive enough manner that a particular auditor of the treatment might conclude he was acting in a fairly rational way. By the time the thick gauze around Doe's eyes were removed and the wire dis-inserted from his jaw, Mike Kaplan would have been absent of the hospital grounds seventy-two hours without explanation. His cell phone had been turned off and neither he nor Rhonda would respond to the messages left at his home number. He had no prior penchant for flaky behavior of this type. He gave no indication to any colleague that such an impromptu vacation as this appeared to be in the cards.

Cops would be consulted in due time but in that present agony of lower Manhattan such a routine missing person case as this one would neither be welcomed nor attended to directly by police.

"That funny guy," said grief counselor Chelsea Pavey to 16 when referring to one of her other clients on the sixth floor. Fingering the dirty brown ponytail that she had wrapped her hair into that morning, she began to talk to him about former clients. She seemed to be stalling for time for some reason. She began to talk about things that had nothing to do with the session at hand.

On this ward, already Dr. Kaplan's face and presence had been largely forgotten. None of the care providers, the nurses and nurse's assistants, seemed to recall him as a fully formed person anymore. They knew of his absence only in the burden it created in their professional lives. They couldn't seem to recall his name ably. They couldn't seem to recall whether or not to be concerned as opposed to merely annoyed at his extended absence.

The "funny guy" in question was another John Doe, 12, who, newly liberated from Dr. Kaplan's smothering presence, had taken to cutting himself on the wrists and ankles with the remains of smashed china that the gourmet meals donated from a downtown brasserie had arrived on, in a gesture of New York solidarity.

According to Chelsea Pavey, such self-destructive behavior was an example of *latent recidivism* usually committed by girls between the ages of ten and nineteen as a manner of re-establishing *modal control*. According to her, for grown men with tubes coming out of both arms, it was truly inexplicable behavior. A man needed to get his shit together, Chelsea felt, even when being cast as a victim. It was just the way it was and everybody should have known this. A real man shouldn't have had to be tutored necessarily on the art of being a stand-up guy. His balls should lead the way in this. Being a man by definition meant not having to be taught to be a man. Real masculinity was self-evident just like the scent of a warrior after battle.

Chelsea thought all this went without saying but here she was speaking of such matters to somebody who obviously didn't need much in the way of direction.

"Eventually you're going to have to fly on your own," she to Doe 16, then struggled to recall an article she had just read about him in today's *Daily News*. According to the article, this Doe's fate seemed to be implicated in the fate of all New York. Pure media hogwash which accurately, nevertheless, mimicked public sentiment. He had become a totem to them all strangely. He had become somebody that millions cared about in more than an off-handed way.

Dressed in a teal Charlotte Hornets Larry Johnson jersey over a men's white t-shirt, Chelsea Pavey seemed somebody, when mouthing these words, altogether less charitable than she might have meant to represent herself as being.

She needed to start her work with him regardless. She was a grief counselor, however, for a patient who seemed to be entirely devoid of grief. She needed to go through the motions with him anyway. She needed to get him to see that, even though inane, she was somebody who cared about him.

“Read this, blood,” Chelsea told John Doe 16 and presented him a picture of a mama grizzly bear with her cub treading down a wooded incline. “How do you think it would reflect upon you,” she said to him. “If you looked at this picture and compared it to your present life? What similarities would you find?”

In asking these questions Chelsea’s idea apparently was for the patient to force himself to identify with *either* the mother grizzly or her cub. By engaging in such personification, she believed a therapeutic transference would occur. She needed to make him fill in the void in the psyche that trauma had created. That was the essence of despair after a fashion she believed, such emptiness. That was why depression occurred, the fact that we lose temporarily the sustaining illusion of ourselves in the manner of warming bed sheets kicked over the side of the box spring on a cold night.

A firm adherent of the theories of R.D. Laing, Chelsea Pavey believed in the innate emptiness of the interior life and the need for it to be filled constantly with false identities.

“Baby bear, good,” said Chelsea Pavey to her famous patient, noting the place on the card where this John Doe pointed. She flipped the card over. Of course in order to facilitate therapy it was irrelevant which of the bears he chose so long as he chose one. The point of the exercise was to be able to emerge from the abyss that trauma had been forced one into temporarily. Doe needed to re-install the guiding archetypes upon which his personality sat like the world on Atlas’ enormous shoulders.

A Hornets fan, not a Knicks fan, Chelsea Pavey, nonetheless, gave lip service to liking all the local teams as might be required of somebody who wanted to get along in the Big Apple.

“My roommate is somebody I dream of stabbing nightly,” Chelsea mentioned to this Doe who with his pale blue eyes made dewy by the morphine drip appeared to be genuinely paying attention at least for the moment. The glass fragments that had been removed hadn’t seemed to do him any the worse for wear. He had abrasions on the eyelids that when he blinked gave the impression that he wore make-up. It would take another month at least for the swelling in his face to recede. From there he could make up any story that he wished about how he earned his scars.

Unmoved by 9/11 because she saw it as a New York event strictly, Chelsea Pavey was similarly detached from her clients’ resultant suffering.

“The thing I like about you coach,” she said to 16 calling him by the nickname she used for friendlies generically, “is you know how to take it up the ass without a whimper. You’re a manly man in an age of wimps. The thing I like about you is you don’t cry or complain about the way things are at the moment. Just deal with it. That’s you,” Chelsea said. “Coach, the thing I like about you is about how you tend to keep your head as others are in the midst of losing theirs.”

Presently with his eyes fully visible, Chelsea Pavey could see the degree of assent John Doe 16 had concerning such sentiments. Prior to this he was a complete mystery to her like the heads on Easter Island. Despite her background as a mental health care professional she didn’t know really what was going on inside him. She could see he was a regular guy caught up in extraordinary circumstances. She could see he was a good listener in most situations.

The roommate who was the subject of Chelsea’s murderous imaginings smoked pot at all hours of the day and picked up strange men from her waitress job uptown.

“People need to be more considerate of others' schedules,” Chelsea Pavey told John Doe 16, recalling the liquescent sex noises emanating from the roommate’s bedroom regularly between the hours of four am and six. Who fucks at five in the morning anyway? Never going to the guy’s apartment to get it on or outside in the apartment stairwell where the decency laws would be challenged but at least a good night’s sleep would be had for other dwellers of the apartment, twenty two hundred a month in Gramercy Park with absolutely nothing included but the roaches. Later on the roommate never seemed especially chastened to Chelsea. Well, the fact of the matter was the bitch had a vulgar nature to her. There was no use trying to talk to her about such matters. Animal fucking, swearing, and drinking was all she was good for past age twelve. There was no use trying to point out to her the awful error of her ways.

She thought two or three months more of this at the most then she would need to confront this woman directly, as it were, in her native environment.

“When they’ve finished with their fuck,” Chelsea Pavey told 16, “or maybe when they’re right in the middle of their fuck and not looking at what’s coming at them, that’s when I go to work,” she said. “I can think of a hundred better ways to spend my time, really can. But you know, things have to happen in a particular way or you’re not trying as hard as you should be trying with them. You need to take control of your own destiny. Just like you. And do what you think is right regardless.”

A southern girl having gone to southern schools and having been versed in the minutiae of what is usually called southern graciousness, Chelsea Pavey wanted to know whether she should knock before the *coitus interruptus* was staged. Logic said no but manners said yes. She wanted to know what was proper in such a situation. Maybe she would be forced to defend her actions at some point to her parents and in particular with her mother. She would want to know whether all the niceties involved were observed. She would want to know of Chelsea if she had acted the lady.

More than a causal attention to mores, however, Chelsea wanted to know of John Doe 16 whether she had the right to be upset with her roommate at all.

“Jesus Christ,” she said. “You remember him, OK? He advised his followers to turn the other cheek. But it's hard to remain moral when confronted with such a person,” Chelsea told John Doe and presented him with another image from the deck she was holding. This one's from Buchenwald, the famous bulldozing of a thousand emaciated bodies into a mass grave dug by allied investigators. “Jew or Nazi,” Chelsea Pavey asked of John Doe 16. “I mean, of course you care or are disgusted by the imagery. But you're going to have to decide for yourself eventually are you the bulldozer driver or the one being driven before the bulldozer. Jew or Nazi. Coach, a simple question. You're going to decide on which side of that line you want to be.”

The archetypes were out there according to Chelsea Pavey and would not disappear simply by ignoring them. According to her, one needed to embrace the provisional nature of personality and simply submit to the falseness of a true self. One needed to become what one fundamentally was not and save oneself from what one actually was. Just like R.D. Laing, Chelsea knew this instinctively. Instinctively, she was teaching her clients to lie to themselves. She was doing it for their goddamn good.

The plot behind the World Trade Center's collapse might itself have been a lie but Chelsea wasn't so concerned with this as the after effects it had on her client, John Doe 16.

“Imagine a motherfucking happy place,” Chelsea said to him, invoking a shopworn technique within her industry. She doubted it worked or, if it did, she doubted it worked particularly well. It had nothing to do with resolving the root problem of ego loss. There were no archetypes involved in such a fantastic recreation. There was no drilling down to the deeper level of personality where presumably the deeper misery dwelt.

Of course PTSD was a very real disorder but, according to Chelsea Pavey M.S., it was only a symptom of a larger disease.

“I think we're all rooting for you,” Chelsea said to John Doe 16 before wondering aloud why it was nobody yet had come looking for him. Even with the chaos at Ground Zero she thought by now somebody would have made a general inquiry. Maybe they had already and Chelsea was out of the loop. Maybe everything was already in place for a special heartfelt reunion.

Earlier that day a crayon-drawn mural arrived from Abraham Lincoln Elementary School in Bronxville, New York dedicated to the still living “victims” (Chelsea Pavey liked to use finger quotes regarding this word during any context of its usage) of the attack and intended to lift spirits especially to those requiring skin grafts.

“The slut will get what's coming to her,” Chelsea said to John Doe 16 referring to her aforementioned roommate once more. She didn't say by what mechanism exactly this alluded to revenge would be accomplished. She didn't say if she would be the author of this retribution or merely an innocent bystander cheering it on. Probably it didn't matter to her. She didn't say if it would matter to her straight off.

Perhaps she needed to get her own shit together before she deigned to help others. Then again (and perhaps quite likely) her own inner drama was entirely therapeutic for her patients. It showed them how to go about things in a way devoid of the depressive self-pity that they were burdened with. It showed them how to grab life by the balls that for Chelsea Pavey was coeval with a non-neurotic way of life.

Always as she talked the fate of New York City, the condition of the 2001 Charlotte Hornets was foremost in Chelsea's mind. This year without ‘Zo and Larry they seemed destined for the cellar. In her mind, nevertheless, the team was set to thrive. Probably they wouldn't thrive but that's what it seemed to her at season's outset. She hoped the season wouldn't be canceled because of this Al Qaeda attack. Chelsea thought the Hornets were one or two players away from making another run at it. She thought eventually a ticker-tape parade would be scheduled along Charlotte's Cherry Street in which she would be an active participant.

She would leave New York eventually as over time she had become progressively inured to its bristling energy and alienated of its multifarious populous.

“Right over there,” she said to Doe 16 indicating an image on the scroll on this private suite's eastern wall. This was the children's mural that somebody brought in that showed a dying firefighter absent of his skin. Trying to lighten Doe's mood on her way out, Chelsea Pavey was seeking to find a suitably absurd object of ridicule for them both to make fun of. She wanted a good report after all to be submitted to her boss, the hospital psychologist. Presently she had nothing else going on in her life. She wanted to keep this latest job as long as possible even if it was in Manhattan. When the time came to leave this place, she wanted to do so on her terms rather than being placed to the curb like so much Gramercy trash.

Maybe she was being overly critical of her own performance but she saw in this John Doe a sign that little had changed or little would change for a while. She saw this John Doe as a lost cause two weeks in. She saw him as somebody not worth of effort of communicating with at all at least in a professional setting.

This man had cold clear eyes that reminded Chelsea Pavey of the color of the sky in her native North Carolina just after a winter rain.

“You're such a nice a guy,” she told him as a means of easing herself out of the room entirely. Just at the moment she didn't think her services were either required or appreciated around here. Chelsea didn't see him as a sufferer or as anything much at all really. He stared at the room impassively and drank it all in. He seemed to be somebody either above or below grief. He might have been suffering depending on what your concept was of that word.

Maybe this John Doe had more going on upstairs than he was letting on, but Chelsea being Chelsea rather doubted this was the case.

“Whatever you do,” she said to him. “Don't get me in any sort of trouble. “Remember what I told you about you and I being pals,” she told him. Remember I said that I need to get on with my life and not look back to any of the bad stuff that's happened to me so far this year.”

When she left she had already decided to take a scissors to that fireman without skin on the mural and use it on her slutty roommate as a kind of intimidation tactic.

“Well,” she said to herself when wondering exactly where in a hospital such an object as scissors would be found. She didn't think, not really, that she would have the drive to go to street level and search for a pair herself. Too many obsessives out there who would give her shit about her actions. She didn't trust them really. And everybody in New York was up in arms about the airplanes crashing into the buildings.

Somebody John Doe, Chelsea thought, could likely teach the world a lesson simply because of his stoicism in the face of the horror that had befallen him. Of course such impassiveness was a bit of a shock when on display so relentlessly but as far as she was concerned it was a behavior that should immediately be emulated by others. Like many New Yorkers, he was known to her as something of a symbol for proper behavior in the face of monstrous crimes. He was a hero of a sort according to the local news. He was a kind of object of both pity and veneration at the same time.

Around mid-October through the hallways where many of the trauma cases were kept, camera crews began to wander with increasing frequency as if they themselves had suffered some sort of traumatic event and were in need of grief counseling or at least an able guide.

“Joseph,” the WABX news reporter (and sometime habitué of Long Island's various upscale rehab facilities), Juan Estevez said to John Doe 16 when sitting on the corner of his bed one day inspecting the room for available light. 9/11as it had come to be called and its terrifying absurdities was over, to be replaced by 10/11, 11/11 and their concomitant nuances of doom and decline. Shock and anxiety had started to yield steadily to outrage and the despair held towards an America so unprepared to preserve its citizens' safety. As always people were looking for answers. They were seeking out potential scapegoats for the situation as if their sacrifice would preserve the illusion of easeful co-habitation the nineteen nineties had placed upon the world like a coat of fluffy snow over a vast expanse of toxic garbage.

Juan Estevez referred to John Doe 16 as Joseph because he said he reminded him of a Joseph.

Not any Joseph, mind you, or the Josephs of Biblical lore. Rather, there was a certain calmness in 16's eyes that reminded Juan of a man from his past. He wouldn't be surprised when the memories came flooding back into Doe that the name was the first word to be recalled. *Joseph*. Might have been his own name or the name of his brother or son but there it would be. There was a Joseph down there hiding he was sure. He was sure this was a name that would stick.

Strange it was, several of John Doe's doctors had commented how their patient had seemed to have developed amnesia only for specific personal memories.

Unlike other amnesiacs, this Doe didn't show outward signs of extensive brain damage. He wasn't outwardly confused and didn't sleep twenty-two hours a day in a type of semi-coma. He either didn't know his name and recent past or wouldn't say. He seemed to have forgotten entirely the recent events that had led to his hospitalization.

Seemingly content and not in any excessive pain relative to his plentiful injuries, doctors didn't see this strange condition as anything to investigate past a point. They too seemed caught up in recent events and were prepared to overlook the niceties if that's what they should be called. Maybe eventually they would return to the issue. Maybe the patient would simply recover on his own and then there would be little work for them to do.

According to the latest medical assessment Doe 16, apart from his amnesia was less than ten days away from discharge. The three surgeries that had thus been performed seemed entirely successful. Presently they were in the observation stage of treatment.

"Senor, if you could describe yourself," Juan said to John Doe 16 or maybe himself as he was looking away. He seemed to be in the midst of rehearsing a conversation that would happen at a later point. Maybe he was practiced in hearing himself talk. Juan Estevez seemed to be someone in need of hearing himself talk all throughout the day.

Of John Doe 16, perhaps Juan Estevez merely wanted to know after his guiding principles. All men had a set of dreams or whatever and Juan wanted to know his. Maybe a short blurb in simple sentences for the delectation of the viewers. He wanted to know if for instance the man held a grudge against the bastards who had put him in here. He wanted to know just for the sake of personal insight his nationality.

To Juan, 16 seemed a beaner through and through. Then again, Juan realized, one never knew. Lot of olive skinned Peruvians out there and some from Brazil. You never knew nowadays who part of your own tribe was until they opened up their mouth and told you especially in Nueva York.

He could have been a (northerner) from Andalusia or, now that the light had improved in this room sufficiently to display such characteristics, maybe a PR with something wrong with his skin pigments. A Joseph or a Jose turned white by the fright of the falling towers a month ago. But he definitely had Latin blood. To Juan, he seemed somebody prepped for great things in this world. A media phenomenon perhaps, *con Menudo*. He seemed somebody taking his own fame with a grain of salt.

Thirty-seven years old and, as he would describe it, tanned to the point of exhaustion, Juan Estevez considered himself on the backside of a New York TV reporter's career. With any luck it would end with some sort of promotion or transition into a more lucrative field. Maybe a behind-the-cameras position or something at such a remove from his present job that the changeover would seem miraculous.

A middle-aged token ethnic (Mexican), Juan's present career trajectory seemed entirely downhill. Not a lot fifty-year-old Mexicans standing in front of apartment complex fires in New York he realized with a mike in hand. Observe for yourself, *cholo*, if you don't think so. Juan Estevez knew something would have to be done along these lines to rectify the situation. He wasn't overly cynical in thinking this. His boss had said much the same thing to him several years back during their annual review.

He needed a fresh start not because he was tired of what he was doing but that he assumed the decision would be taken out of his hands over time.

"You could be a rock star, *esse*, if you wanted only halfway trying," he said to Doe staring at a spider taking a tentative step up this hospital wall. In Estevez' right hand was a rolled up piece of paper he was holding like a long-stemmed mike. Whether John Doe 16 was listening or not he seemed presently indifferent about it. He seemed to be having difficulty differentiating one form of humanity from the next. He seemed to be not to intent on holding a conversation with anybody at all.

Having bribed the on-duty nurse to let him up for this interview, suddenly Juan Estevez was wondering whether or not this was any sort of good idea. Not so concerned about either his reputation or this John Doe's health, presently Juan was finding it difficult to conceive of reasonable questions to ask the motherfucker. The calmness that his subject emitted in other circumstances would have been reassuring but in the context of a television interview it had suddenly seemed an obstacle to be overcome. He assumed once the camera light clicked on John Doe 16 would simply open up to him. Most Americans after all simply wanted to put on a show for the viewers at home. The man had a heartbreaking story to tell incidentally. Estevez assumed that most people were dying to tell others their heartbreaking stories if only to bask in the attention it garnered them later on. It tended to make them think of themselves as elevated by suffering. He assumed in this regard John Doe 16 was no different than anybody else.

Being no different than anybody else, this man had ulterior motives. But they were deeply buried under the unfocused expression at the moment and the silent way he surmised you as if he were some sort of alien just beamed down to Earth.

"Fucking bastard. Fucking cunt. Fuck. Him. Hard," Juan Estevez said to no one in particular then rose off the bed and looked around the hospital hallway outside. His camera crew was somewhere on the premises likely being irresponsible as always. Across from him on the wall the elementary school mural was in tatters having been over a course of days picked to death by relic seekers energized by a newsworthy object. He didn't think it was a telling detail at all.

Probably if it wound up in the background of his news crew's report it would have to be tiled out by a line producer as ordinary people would find its tattered state disturbing in some way if not entirely respectful of the still undiscovered dead. It was the weird magical thinking New Yorkers had come to assume as common sense during these past few weeks. They had come to believe that inanimate objects such as the mural would ward off acts of future evil. Even now corpse dogs were on patrol around Ground Zero in hopes to recover a single wretched form. Those reporters still on that duty had Juan Estevez' sympathy. There was nothing new to report about Ground Zero. Even the corpses now were un-salvageable and awaiting a proper burial by bulldozer just like the dead at Buchenwald.

Slowly but surely, Juan supposed, reason would re-establish its icy grip on society and the necessary planning and hygienic steps needed to take control of the situation would move forward. Might take years to find every last fingertip after all and nobody was prepared for that. Cholera, Juan had heard from the station's medical reporter, was a very real fear if the dead were not given their final rest. They needed to bury the remains as quickly as possible. They needed to pour concrete on the fissures in the sub-structures before the snows came in earnest.

Perhaps the ultimate fate of Ground Zero would be as a shrine where people of all faiths could get together and perform quasi-religious rituals designed to ameliorate religious rivalries.

"Nice to have you on our side again," Estevez said to his producer, Doug Johnson, when finally spying him down the hall next to a dialysis unit paused in mid-transport. Having loitered for the past half hour in a vending machine alcove twenty paces aft, Doug was unsure of the status of the present situation. He didn't know if they were ready to set up their cameras or whether, as usual, Estevez had struck out. He had been genuinely hoping that the story would go away. He had been genuinely hoping fate would intervene on his behalf so he wouldn't have to participate in what he had come to see as an embarrassment for both his profession and himself.

Maybe he was being uptight but he saw this as a sort of media ambush. To Doug it had the real potential of backfiring on its perpetrator.

"Do we have the signed release," Doug asked Juan Estevez and immediately regretted saying it. Of course it was *Doug's* responsibility to have gained the signed release from the interviewee, not Juan's. He was in a way indicting himself by posing the question. He was tacitly admitting he had done no work at all since this morning.

Then again, trying to gain sign-off for a bloke who seemed the breathing definition of *non-compos mentis* was a fool's errand at best. He thought it was a task, therefore, better left to a bottom feeder like Juan. Maybe he could use it as an excuse for why the interview should not take place at all.

He was nervous about being in hospitals generally and had over the course of the past few days repeatedly questioned the wisdom of trying to gain an exclusive on Manhattan's Mystery Man. Nobody knew John Doe 16's real identity or even what he "stood for," so to speak. They didn't know if he was a plant from a rival network (which many at rival networks believed) or even why he had been in the WTC in the first place once the towers began to collapse.

Your heart went out to him and his family absolutely, but this story was so lacking in background that it seemed almost the type of case study journalism schools raised when they investigated instances of shoddy reporting of the sort that usually wound up in front of a judge on defamation charges.

Trying to right the wrong of his unintended admission, Doug Johnson explained to Juan Estevez that he had been trying to secure the signed release from John Doe 16 all along. He told Juan that in the past hour he had made several calls to the nameless man's self-appointed attorneys. He told Juan he was waiting for a response from them or whoever it was so that they might proceed in earnest.

Estevez at his best was a prickly character and always somebody who was prone to excessive criticism of others. He seemed to think he was network-level talent and sported a network-level ego to support the contention. Seldom went out with the crew on social occasions. He gave off the vibe of somebody on the way up but he was too old and too brown for that and everybody knew it. He seemed to think of himself as somebody with a deep influence in the industry when entirely the opposite was true. He had no ability to look at himself in a dispassionate way. He had no ability to gauge accurately the way others saw him.

Nobody said anything to him about his unlikableness as, strictly speaking, nobody thought it was their place to do so. Estevez' co-workers and underlings tended to roll with the punches, as in this business it was the prudent course of action. None of the tech people in the news industry were dumb enough to mistake the collegial relations that sometimes existed between them and the talent as something like genuine respect. They knew their place and how tenuous it was in the unstable hierarchy of local news. Nobody was dumb enough to pull the dragon by the tail and see what happened as a result.

Doug's problem always had seemed to be that he couldn't play the game of office politics well enough to be assigned to a reporter other than Juan. Probably he had been marked early on as somebody who wouldn't fight back and this was the result. He was condemned to absorb the body blows Juan aimed at him for now. He was ten years to retirement and had no prospects whatsoever beyond the immediate job.

Juan Estevez would do the interview regardless of whether or not a signed release had been obtained. His rationalization for the decision was that the piece fell into the category of "legitimate" news and thus was squarely in the realm of first amendment protections regardless of what the subject of the piece had to say about it. In reality, Doug was hanging out by the vending machines hoping Juan would get himself arrested. He saw this sort of stunt as an exit ramp for the misery that was his own career. He was hoping common sense would reign supreme on the part of the hospital providers. He was hoping the needs of the patient would ultimately overwhelm the needs of the overheated media.

If there was a ruckus that was caused by Estevez' blustery style, Doug had planned to phone it into the news station anonymously. At that point likely they would put the brakes on the entire affair. They were always made nervous by conflicts with prevailing authority regardless. They never had a stomach for a fight. They were always trying to walk the line between the pretensions of their "journalism" and the reality that they were simply producing bland content to hold an audience for deeply apolitical advertisers.

He felt that he had to hold out for a while and let the scenario play itself out. If, given enough time, chances were that Juan would get into it with a doctor or nurse and get himself arrested. He felt time was on his side. He felt the longer the actual work of the day lingered the better it was for him.

The fact that they were having this conversation now, however, meant that Estevez had managed to keep his shit together to the point that actual work was still being contemplated even after several hours spent under the aegis of outside authorities.

"I think we can go anytime you're ready," Doug told Juan Estevez and began to list all the accomplishments they had made already in the set up process. In reality they were a good hour away from starting the interview in earnest. They needed to place cameras at appropriate angles in the hospital room and, as it was a preset interview, calibrate the sound levels correctly. Juan Estevez had a set of rote questions that would need to be transferred to a teleprompter as a matter of courtesy. It's not that he had a bad memory so much as he tended to freeze up at the slightest provocation from a subject.

As far as the interviewee, it had been Doug Johnson's initial assumption that he was still not able to hold his own in a conversation. Juan Estevez believed differently and apparently he knew better. He claimed the victim was playing possum regarding his ability to talk. After a very few seconds once the interview was initiated he claimed everything would come clear. Juan claimed, furthermore, that there was a bit of insurance fraud resting behind this reticence.

Juan Estevez believed that he would be vindicated completely once the lights came on and the well-known impulse to open up and talk on the interviewee's part began.

According to the doctors Juan had talked to, there was nothing that structurally inhibited John Doe 16's ability to speak. It was just that, up until this point, he was unwilling to communicate with anybody. This was a wise career move as interpreted by Juan Estevez as when it came time for a man under intense public scrutiny to talk he was wise to make all such utterances count. He didn't think offhand there was any advantage in Doe even recalling his name out loud. Maybe he owed child support, back taxes. He felt during the interview there would be great surprises for all. He felt that once it began any sort of trepidation that Doug possessed about the ethics of what they were doing would vaporize in the face of the likely Emmy nomination for himself and his crew come the next spring.

"When you walk to the podium to accept your yellow angel," Juan Estevez told Doug referring to the award's shape. "Recall who gave you this fucking honor in the first place. You're lucky to have a job and I'm getting you a motherfucking award," Juan Estevez said to Doug then marveled that this was the case. Hearing him say the words made him believe it suddenly. It was as if he couldn't believe his own generosity all of a sudden. It was as if he was having a hard time believing what a great guy he was and so misunderstood all at once!

Juan figured the more quickly they started the interview with this *cholo* the better. So Doug Johnson was well advised to round up his crew and walk on over to the Doe's room.

"We start with a little coverage," he told Doug, describing the shoot, thus doing his work for his producer. According to Juan Estevez, if you leaned your head out the room's window the 9/11 smoke plume was still visible. Juan said that a fade-out from that shot to Doe's stony face was very much called for on this story. He said it was the way things ought to be done. There was his way and everybody else's and guess which one was usually right.

A diabetes sufferer for the past twenty years, Doug Johnson kept a Baby Ruth bar in each pocket of his windbreaker for just such stressful situations. Sometimes he would eat three Baby Ruths in the span it took for a facial tic to complete its spastic progression. He acted unconsciously at moments like these as if driven by primal forces. Sometimes he wouldn't know what he had done even as it was being described to him later on.

Eventually Doug would have enough saved for retirement at which point he wouldn't have to put up with any of Juan's bullshit even a little. On the day he retired he believed he might throw a punch at this Mexican devil's lacquered cranium. On the day he retired he might wind up under arrest as a parting gift from the City of New York for all the fine work rendered on its behalf.

Once in the hospital room with his Dominican cameraman whose first name he frequently mispronounced, Doug could see that any visitor who had thus far come to the man's bedside had come in an official capacity only. There were no flowers to speak of apart from the official thirteen roses sent by Delta Airlines as a way of forestalling a farfetched lawsuit. The chairs in the room were exactly where the chairs should be. Nobody had gathered around him in an attempt at rekindling love. It was obvious nobody, not yet, would want to claim this John Doe 16 as entirely their own.

Vaguely handsome and seemingly diffident, Doug Johnson still couldn't help wondering how much this man had going on upstairs. When he looked at you he seemed to look past you as if not properly seeing everything that he should. He seemed to recognize words but not say them. He seemed to have no trouble keeping the world exactly as it was.

A perfect image of suffering exactly in the manner of the Lord Jesus Christ, in other words, as imagined by an apostate like himself. Taken in this light, Doug Johnson could see why Doe 16 was an object of fascination to so many. He could see why people could look at him and assume something profound dwelt inside him even though all available evidence pointed to a bit of brain damage and an anti-social streak preceding the injuries. Maybe he was just playing possum like Juan said. Maybe when the time came to talk he would talk to them just fine.

For himself, Doug didn't see how it was they were allowed in here in the first place, bribe or no bribe. Didn't the medical professions set higher standards for themselves than the wretched media set for itself? Maybe eventually somebody, a crusading doctor or nurse, would put a stop to this minutes after the cameras rolled. This too, Doug knew, would be in Juan's best interests. He loved bust-up scenes like this. He loved playing the muckraking journalist even as little light was brought into the world through all the raked muck.

The problem with Doug Johnson was that he couldn't see the lighter side of things when it came to the news' production. For example, he couldn't see that, in the words of a colleague, Estevez was a spectacle to be enjoyed. There were a thousand like him in this business and a thousand more being produced every second. If you rationalized everything as a work of capitalism things went more smoothly for you entirely. If everything was business, there was little in the way of moral considerations to be rendered and thus the problems relating to a clean conscience and strong stomach began to magically fade from view.

Doug couldn't see this likely because his hate for Juan blinded him to the truth.

Once in the room he looked around and wondered vaguely what would happen if he was to put his foot down and just refuse to conform to Estevez' wishes. Probably he would be fired on the spot or worse. He wondered if he could get his colleagues involved in it, however, and threaten an impromptu strike if this should be taken any further.

Likely the Dominican cameraman, Diaz, hated Doug with as much fervor as Doug hated Juan Estevez. So in this way order, or at least equilibrium, was preserved. It was a self-evolved system that had come to equilibrium on its own. Probably it would end exactly when humanity ended or sometime after that even, it having been bequeathed to the evolved roaches or whatever creature survived man as a gift from the wise to the wise. Probably it was all life's gift to the universe and would survive it, too.

Presently Doug Johnson required a light meter if only to assure himself he was still a professional involved in a professional activity.

"Hold, not yet," he said to Diaz and reached into his windbreaker for one of the Baby Ruths. On John Doe 16's bed there was a bottle of piss flowing from a catheter that needed to be removed before the shoot could continue. Doug insisted on it having been removed before the shoot could commence. There was a standard of decency to be observed even with Juan Estevez running the show. There were certain bodily functions one did not show gratuitously.

The catheter was long enough so that the collection bottle could be placed on the floor on the side of the bed opposite from where the camera was now mounted. If Juan wanted it in for dramatic effect he would have to go above Doug to get it. Doug was prepared to pull out the camera's battery pack if necessary to put a stop to it being filmed. He was prepared to threaten to run to the FCC himself and file an indecency complaint anonymously on-line.

Slightly nervous at the interview's outset for some reason, Estevez had no desire to fight over such atmospherics even slightly. He had performed such impromptus as this at least three hundred times over the years but presently for some reason he was uptight. He couldn't rationalize why this was exactly. He couldn't say exactly why this interview felt so different from all the others that had come before it.

Perhaps he knew he was going to have to carry the water with this thing as, even when the light was activated, the interviewee hadn't so much as recognized its presence. Juan at the very least was going to have to justify his continued presence in the room for his viewers. Too much silence had occurred and it would look like a joke otherwise. It wouldn't make it on the air if it looked too much like a joke, like a parody of the news instead of the semi-parody that is the news in most circumstances. It needed to be toned down altogether and, in this circumstance, lit up. The interviewee at the very least needed to be self-conscious of being the interviewee. He needed to be in on the joke, as it were, so the program couldn't be accused of exploitation.

Uncharacteristic for his showy style, Juan thought he would start with the easy questions before easing in. Eventually he wanted to have John Doe provide his recollections about the tragic events still on so many people's minds.

"If I were you," Doug said as Juan was handed his mike, "I'd stay away from the amnesia angle altogether. I'd stay away from the 'what was the last thing you remember before the lights went out' angle because you don't know where the pressure points on this man reside."

A bit of unsolicited advice was usually un-welcomed regardless of the circumstance and Juan Estevez told Doug Johnson this using the exact words.

"My friend, Joseph," he said to John Doe 16 and turned toward him from his perch on the tiny stool he had imported from the news room for the purpose of this interview. He realized for the first time that he was being investigated by his subject just as he was investigating him. And for the first time he was made aware that his subject was fully aware of his surroundings. He was just a reticent sack of shit was all with his closed-lip stance. Juan figured that maybe Doe thought women would find that sort of posturing attractive. He was just not intent on answering any questions any more than was necessary apparently.

In Estevez's imagination, the interview would proceed apace and in a predictable enough fashion so that the answers were already known by him in advance:

"Do you know why you're here?" he would ask him and let the blood drain from his face casually while waiting for a response.

"No," Joe Doe would reply, "*But then I couldn't answer that question either before I was hospitalized.*"

Probably the fucker's wanted for something, Juan thought, or else waiting for the proper time to reveal whatever it is. Maybe he knew his name all the while and was waiting for the proper time to spring it on his doctors. He was embarrassed about that. Or maybe Joseph was in debt to a bookie and didn't want his name being broadcast across the local and now national news.

It was a weird way to lay low, feigning impassiveness. And now obviously it had backfired on him. Other than Giuliani and maybe Derek Jeter, John Doe 16 was the most famous man in New York. Nobody knew the fucker's face or name but he was famous, nevertheless.

A series of low guttural grunts greeted Juan Estevez on the occasion of the interview's outset and for a while there Juan wondered if he wouldn't have to lean over the hospital bed and bitch slap the motherfucker in lieu of asking the next question.

“Brother,” Estevez said to John Doe 16 growing weary already of his bullshit. “You got a name now or what you can remember? You got something to share, brother, with all the viewers at home right now?” he asked him. “Brother, you got something to say to those glued to the set at home?”

A squeak, or maybe an eruption was expected at any moment but none came. The patient didn’t seem, oddly enough, to be at all put out by Estevez’ questions. He didn’t seem in any way prepared to take the bait.

Just sat up there for an uncountable number of seconds instead, waiting for something like an apology to spring from Juan Estevez’ mouth. The times demanded obsequiousness even from self-styled inquisitors such as Juan. Nobody wanted to play the bad guy any longer in the light of the still smoking ruins downtown. At least temporarily nobody wanted to be the hard ass especially in the presence of the intellectually feeble. Nobody wanted to be accused of letting the terrorists win.

Content to sit in silence for an extended period, John Doe 16 seemed assured to judge by his equipoise that the universe itself was on his side in the fight.

“Do you want to continue,” Juan asked him coolly. “Yes or no?”

When no answer was forthcoming, he waited for events to take their course.

Doug Johnson by this point was reaching for the day’s second Baby Ruth.

And, oh yeah: the fucking Dominican Diaz had forgotten to take the lens of the camera.