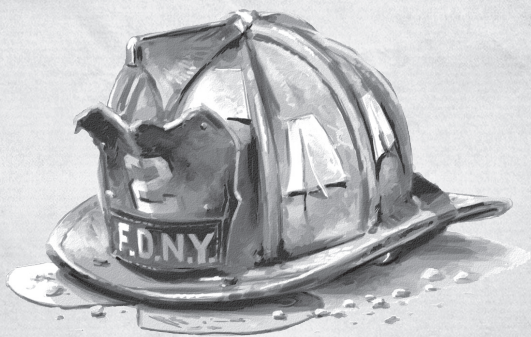


I SURVIVED

THE ATTACKS OF
SEPTEMBER 11, 2001



by **Lauren Tarshis**
illustrated by **Scott Dawson**

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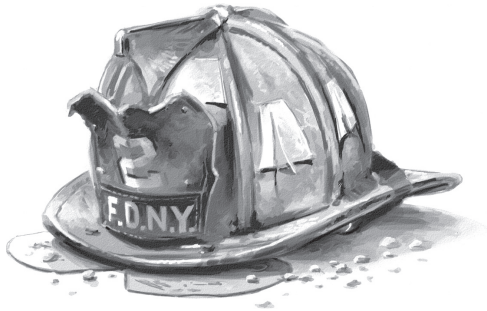
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CHAPTER 1



TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2001

8:46 A.M.

NEW YORK CITY, NEW YORK

A bright blue sky stretched over New York City.

It was the morning rush. Men and women hurried to work. Taxis, cars, and buses zoomed through the streets.

And then there was the plane.

Many people in Lower Manhattan heard it before they saw it — the screaming roar of jet engines.

The massive aircraft streaked through the sky, barely skimming over rooftops.

Up and down the sidewalks, people froze.

Eleven-year-old Lucas Calley wasn't supposed to be in Manhattan that day. His parents had no idea that he'd caught a train into the city, that he was there, on a crowded sidewalk, looking up as it all began.

Lucas watched, almost hypnotized, as the plane careened through the sky.

He'd never seen a plane flying so low.

It was so close he could read the letters on the tail: *AA*.

American Airlines.

Panicked questions swirled through his mind.

Was there something wrong with the plane?

Was the pilot sick? Lost? Confused?

Pull up! Lucas wanted to shout. *Go higher!*

But the plane kept getting lower.

And faster.

And now Lucas's heart stopped as he saw what was in the plane's path: the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center. The silver-and-glass buildings, each a quarter of a mile tall, rose high above the New York City skyline.

The plane sped up.

No!

With one last ferocious roar, the jet plunged into the side of one of the towers.

There was a thundering explosion.

People all around Lucas screamed.

And then the bright blue sky filled with black smoke and fire.

CHAPTER 2



WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 29, 2001

PORT JACKSON, NEW YORK

10:00 A.M.

As usual, football practice was brutal.

It was ninety-five degrees. Lucas was soaked in sweat. Three guys had already puked up their Gatorades. Lucas's body felt like one big bruise.

A football came sailing through the air. It looked like an impossible catch — Lucas’s favorite kind. He took off, legs pumping, eyes on the ball. At exactly the right split second, he leaped up as high as he could, plucked the ball from the air, and grabbed it to his chest as he crashed to the ground.

All around him, guys hooted and cheered and high-fived.

A familiar happy feeling rushed over Lucas. Sure, his entire body ached. Yeah, Coach B. was always screaming at them. But this is where Lucas was happiest, where he belonged: on this broiling hot turf field with his football team, the Port Jackson Jaguars.

It had been Uncle Benny’s idea that Lucas could be a football player. Benny was Dad’s best friend from Ladder 177, the New York City firehouse where they both worked. Lucas had



always liked Uncle Benny — everyone did. Dad once said that Benny was like the firehouse cheerleader.

A six-foot-two-inch cheerleader with a shamrock tattoo.

But it wasn't until Lucas was in third grade that he really got close to Uncle Benny. That year,

Lucas's dad was badly hurt in a warehouse fire in Brooklyn. He was in the hospital burn center for almost two months. Uncle Benny practically moved in with Mom and Lucas until Dad was better. Lucas would wake up some mornings and find Uncle Benny reading the sports pages at the kitchen table. Before Lucas could say, "Where's Mom?" Uncle Benny would grab him by the arm and sit him down. "You gotta see this," he'd say, holding up a picture of some football player Lucas had never heard of.

Lucas would sit there, pretending to be interested. He'd never been a sports kid. He and Dad were always so busy working on their projects. Before Dad got hurt, they'd been spending every weekend in their basement workshop, building a model of the Ladder 177 truck, the Seagrave 75.

But Uncle Benny wasn't interested in truck models. What Uncle Benny loved was football.



And soon enough he had Lucas glued to *Monday Night Football*, cheering for Uncle Benny's teams, watching ESPN, and booing the players Uncle Benny hated. Uncle Benny bought Lucas a football, and then spent hours with him in the backyard, teaching him to throw and catch.

And then came the day when Uncle Benny appeared with the form to sign up for the Jaguars.

“I can’t really play football,” Lucas said.

Back then Lucas had been pudgy, shorter even than some of the girls in his grade.

But Uncle Benny got his mom and dad to sign the form. And the next thing Lucas knew, Uncle Benny was driving him to his first practice.

Lucas had to smile as he thought back to that day — he was a little butterball stuffed into his pads and brand-new cleats.

“I think we should go home,” he said to Uncle Benny, choking back tears.

“No, you don’t,” Uncle Benny said. “You want to get out there and show what you can do!”

And Uncle Benny’s eyes were so big and sparkling, like bright lights spelling out the words *You can do it!*

So Lucas did it.

And from that first day, Lucas felt like he'd found his place.

It wasn't really the game he loved. It was being on the team, being surrounded by the guys. They watched each other's backs. Winners or losers, they stuck together.

Uncle Benny had also taught him the secret of catching a football: that you had to *believe* you were going to catch it.

"You have to feel it in your heart," Uncle Benny said.

It worked every time.

Almost.

Toward the end of practice, someone threw another impossible pass.

"Go get it, Lucas!" the guys screamed.

And off Lucas went, his eyes glued to the ball, his arms stretched out so long he felt like he could

grab the sun. But something went wrong. His heart knew he would catch it. But his ankle didn't.

It wobbled and Lucas lost his balance. Suddenly he was flying through the air, a missile out of control. He crashed headfirst into the hard turf.

Crack!

He could practically feel his brain smacking against the inside of his skull.

A white light of pain exploded inside Lucas's head.

He saw stars — a whole galaxy behind his eyes.

And then he blacked out.