

# 102 minutes by mary whitfill



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BUSTER**

The Untold Story of the Fight to Survive Inside the Twin Towers The Twin Towers stood tall in Lower Manhattan as a symbol of urban renewal for 30 years until an event brought them, and 2, 749 innocent victims (xxiv), to the ground. The 2001 terrorist attacks struck fear into the bones of Americans and brought the country into its first war since Vietnam in 1975. 102 Minutes: The Untold Story of the Fight to Survive Inside the Twin Towers tells the ghost stories of those who lost lives in the towers that day due to lack of appropriate response before the South Tower was struck.

Through the stories of thousands of victims and survivors of the September 11 attacks and the structure of the novel, Flynn and Dwyer told the world of the disturbing number of people who were effected and the lack of communication and information being passed between emergency personnel, those who were experiencing attacks and those who had yet to fall prey to the crashes.

From the beginning of the novel, Flynn and Dwyer use the stories of those affected by the crash to paint a picture of the destruction and the lack of communication that occurred between the victims and the emergency officers. The most insightful of the examples and stories used are the snippets of actual conversations that occurred after the North Tower had been struck, and before the South was hit. The authors are able to communicate how uninformed everybody was and that nobody had a "clear understanding of what was happening" (27) which was arguably why so many lives were unnecessarily lost.

Even during the small windows of opportunity that were presented, those who knew what was going on failed to quickly pass the information on to those whose lives could have been saved, something that Flynn and Dwyer use to point out the incompetence of emergency professionals. The authors emphasize the lack of knowledge passing from the help desk operators to the people of the South tower by using evidence from contradicting conversations where one of the emergency personnel would tell a caller to "wait there until further notice" (70) and "Just stay put" (71) while another would have directed people to "get everybody out" (70).

Many lives were lost due to this lack of organized evacuation, such as Stanley Praitnath who "made his way down to the lobby of the south tower less than ten minutes after the first plane's impact but he was told to return to his office. He watched from a window on the 81st floor as United Airlines Flight 175 streaked across the harbor toward his building" (photo excerpt). Flynn and Dwyer use the structure of the novel to point out the panic and mass chaos could flow from one person to another in such a situation as the September 11 attacks.

All of the individual stories are meshed into one by the lack of standard transitions between each narrative. Through the continuity of the works, the authors emphasize that "no single voice can describe scenes that unfolded at terrible velocities in so many places" (xxi). By allowing the characters to flow as one, there is a single story in which many are affected instead of many stories connected by one to show how even though each person once led lives completely separate of one another, "spread across more than 220 vertical acres [and] 110 floors per tower"