

Up the stairs

written by Holly

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By Holly Lisle

This time last year, nothing had yet happened in New York. I'm thinking about that, and thinking – There are two ways to deal with the aftermath of such senseless violence and such evil. **The first** is to dwell on all we have lost, to focus endlessly on our pain and grief, and to weaken ourselves. We always have the choice to be victims. **The second** is to focus on all that remains, to focus on both anger and hope, and to make ourselves stronger. We always have the choice to be survivors.

On this day, I will light my candle for those lost, and I will remember, with anger and with hope – anger that good lives were lost, hope that in the midst of such darkness heroes arose. And knowledge that heroes walk around me – men and women who risk their lives daily in service to others, as well as those who do not know yet that they have the capacity to be heroes. And I hold in my heart the determination and the promise that if **I** am faced with such a situation, **I will run up the stairs, not down. I will run to the front of the plane, not the back.** I will die fighting, not die weeping. Because of me, if there is breath in me, someone else will live. Or fewer will die.

I will be no one's victim.

America need be no one's victim. We are a strong nation, and weeping does not become us. Evil came to us, but we survived, and we are stronger now. We have earned both our anger and our hope. And as a nation, too, we can run up the stairs, not down. Run to the front of the plane, not the back. We are a nation of survivors – the descendants of hardship and poverty, of revolutionary war and massive civil war and massive World Wars, of a Great Depression, of endless little disasters. Our

citizens have arrived on our shores from concentration camps and torture in enemy hands, civil wars, blinding poverty, terrifying oppression, and they have built good lives here, for themselves and their children.

We are who we choose to be. I choose hope, and anger. And the image of men in heavy coats and yellow hats running up the stairs, not down.

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