

Krista Ford

After 911

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I feel your hatred.
The t-shirt you're wearing says
"I like everyone, except Americans."
I offer you a smile anyway
and you smile back
not knowing that I'm what you don't like.
You're Asian
and I'm Native American/CaucAsian.
I'm hurt by what the t-shirt says
by all the American flag t-shirts
that pass by me
with a bold black slash sliced across
the stars and stripes.

In London, I see signs with Bush's face
and the word "Killer" written above his head

and “Hitler” on other pictures of him.
A swastika tie tack drawn onto his chest
glows like a neon sign
in the Red Light District
of Amsterdam.
He’s wearing blue.
I listen during intermission
to the people sitting behind me
who also came
to see the musical “Fame”
that’s based in New York City.
I listen to them
speaking Real English
not American English.
They talk about how bloody awful we are
to the world, even to them.
At times, I fear speaking,
so I resort to my
rusty sign language skills
because I know that my Kentucky drawl
will give me away,
give away how very American I am.

In Prague, I read graffiti on the belly of the metro,
words scraped into metal,
“AME ... Go Home”
knowing that there wasn’t enough time
in between the train pick ups
for the street artist to fill in

all the Americans that they had hoped
to scratch permanently into metal,
but they succeeded in getting their point across.
They want us to leave
with all our Starbucks in hand
with our McDonald golden arcs around our necks
like weighted charms
so heavy
that we begin to leak
brown streams of latte'
onto the sidewalks,
apologies written in cursive on concrete.
"I'm sorry, I'm sorry."
Squiggly brown apologies written in cursive
"I'm sorry."
Staining the ground
"I'm sorry"
under everyone's feet.

It's hot.
A heat wave is pulsing through New York
and as I stand looking through the fence
at the site
where the Twin Towers collapsed
an American flag
sticking inside a heap of dirt
lies flat against the pole,
but ripples every now and then
in humid air. It brushes against

a corner of the only piece that's left
of the tower.
It looks like a cross.
One day it'll be a part
of whatever may come.
I say a prayer
as I watch metal claws dig up the ground,
digging in order to rebuild,
I say a prayer.
I say a prayer.
That we'll learn how to like one another
just enough to not wanna kill.
I pray for love
in whatever may come
of us all.

Open

You sitting in buildings
just making enough for your own.

You on computers
using the word enter over and over
enter this into your screen.

You in chairs
watching people pass who you don't know
or care to know,
you looking without seeing,
you peeing on streets,
you in alleys next to trash cans
of fire warming your hands
Open. Go slowly. Keep it open.

You who stand on corners
holding signs up that say
will work 4 food
while feeling eyes that look at you
without seeing
hear you without listening.

You who wash 3 times a day
because you hate the smells your body makes.

You who stand behind food lines
serving meals on holidays.

You who stand on the opposite side
filling up your plate

before returning to the streets
to lie down
in your cardboard box home, pillow and blanket,
on park benches,
we curse you for making our
glamorous parks
dirty with your browning socks
hanging out from under your pants
we make sure not to touch them, or you. Open.

You in dilapidated corridors
that you call home,
you who sit
in hardwood chairs in nursing homes
playing checkers till the sound of their clink
makes you think
of chains.

You who recycle every
plastic, rubber, cardboard, paper or metal scrap
that comes your way.

You who throw Snicker bar wrappers out the window
because you don't want to dirty your car,

You who eat only organic food,
and say you won't touch anything processed
but wear

lipstick, eye shadow, blush, mascara, and rouge
without a thought anymore about the rabbits,
as you color your face
with your favorite

siren red, wine, berry, or pink
all depending on your mood.
You who cry others tears because somebody should care,
you also laugh to keep from crying.
You who shop in malls
and spend more money in five minutes
than my mother makes in a month.
You who pull the 8-5 shift five days a week
with one week off a year
and spend it at home
catching up on laundry and sleep
who has never been back to your hometown,
who wishes you had,
you who has never left your hometown,
you who wish you had.
You who dress up as Santa
ring them bells holler ho-ho ho
when people pass to buy more junk
to fill their homes
and others' homes,
your feet hurt from standing all day
the drumming of your headache
accompanies those bells, the
cling- cling, cling-cling of them.
You whose face turns red
when your momma
tells you to shut the fuck up
in front of her friends
because her momma told her

to shut the fuck up.
You who make sugar sandwiches
because there ain't no peanut butter or lunch meat
to put between your slices of bread.
You who watch the other kids eat lunch
while your stomach growls
because you're too embarrassed
to use your meal ticket.
You who flip people off
when they cut you off
because they piss you off.
You who stopped
using your blinker because you're as good as dead
if ya let others know your next move.
You who work the grave yard shift
because too many people
have taken over the days
and you like the quiet in the 24/7 stores,
the lack of people, the sacrifice of sun for peace.
You who drive cross country day and night
hauling produce, gasoline, and cars
who still talk on CB's instead of cell phones
who still honk
when kids motion for you to pull your string.
You who fight to live as your hair falls out
in clumps
and smiles
because you can
and you who fight to live and tell the rest of the world

to fuck themselves
because you're fighting.
You who fight for those fighting and you're hated
and loved
because you're needed for the fight.
You who arrange flowers in pretty crystal vases
for those too sick to know
and you too sick to know the flowers were cut for you.
You who live in and out of homes that are not your own,
you who sells homes, you who don't have a home
to not call your home,
you who hate because it's easier
and you who love because you can
Open.

You who spread your legs
put your feet in stirrups and hear the words
"scoot down a little honey"
right before the suction sound begins
because you don't use no birth control
and the suction sound's the worst part of it all.
You who walk the streets in stiletto heels
clip cloppin' your way next to idle cars
peepin' your head in through open windows
repeatin' over and over 50\$ a blow 100 for the hole,
you bob your head up and down
over a stranger's dick
because you ain't got another
skill that could make you more

than suckin' cock
and a woman's natural born ability
to make the dough
is between her legs.
You wipe your mouth
return to your clip cloppin'.
You who drive up and down the hole strip
wearing jersey's with the name
Nickerson, Dickey, and Smith on your back
while lookin' at the fine selection tonight
because you need it man
and your old lady ain't givin' you none
and you're damn tired of the headache wraps
so you take your shit to the hole strip
because you got the dough for some hole
and want a hole to suck your big ass anaconda
cause she's gonna suck your big ass anaconda
and she's gonna beg to taste
your special spice.
You say I'm gonna get me some of that
when some tight ass bitch
rubbed past your wheels.
Your wife's pissed like one's business
cause she's tired of pork n beans and hotdogs
and damn tired of you
comin' in late only to cut her down like some
tree in the Amazon.
You say she's gettin' thunder thighs
that her saddle bag ass is so big words can get round 'em

and you tell her to get her lazy ass up
and start workin' that shit off.
You who hear doors slammin'
and thumps from somebody's body goin' down.
You turn up your tunes and say
she probably deserved it any oh how.
You who keep to yo-self cause it ain't yo business,
you who rape prostitutes because their ain't such a thing
as raping prostitutes.
You chopped up their bodies
after fuckin' them
fed them to your hogs
then fed those hogs to your hometown
Open.

You who stand behind bars
viewing the world through mirrors
while wearing orange jumpers
like the fruit you eat.
You who say he put himself there
who say he shouldn't of stole,
punked out a hole , jacked up
innocence, whatd'you know?
You who eats when told, sleeps when told
who stop writing home
cause contact with the outside
made the inside worse than it already is.
You who use toilet paper rolls,
plastic and vasoline

in place of your woman.
You who hold the back of another man's head
as you pound yourself into the deep of him
splitting him in two, his mind and body
in halves, splitting him into a woman and a man.
Making him both your woman and man. Open.

You in your cubicle
staring at the carpeted walls
that shield the other cubicle workers from your sight,
you enter all kinds of names
that you don't know, don't read
but copy and type till shocks
shoot up and down your arm.
You who drink your life, shoot up your life, tremor
with addiction and puke if you don't get your fill. Open.

Hearts possess an ear to hear.
You who tell faggot jokes
talk about 'em packin' fudge
about them suckin' a golf ball through
a garden hose
and crinkle your nose
as you rap on about how disgusting
carpet lickers are and how it bugs you
that they fasten chains to their wallets
and cut their hair shorter than your own,
you say Santa Claus is a faggot
cause he says "Ho Fuckin' Ho"

to little boys and girls.
You cross your legs a little tighter
and rock a little in your seat
before changing the subject
which you brought up.
You who walk with your lover
and hold a cell phone to your ear
and your lovers hand in your other hand.
You who sit on a front porch swing
drinking Pabst Blue Ribbon
while listening to the sound of wind
blow against your Confederate flag
you say you're open minded
as you tell jokes about the darkies
about their lip size and their flat noses
that you think must be hard for them to breathe through.
When you're good and drunk,
you say Nigger loud and clear
and dare all chicken eatin' watermelon lickin' souls
to touch foot on your porch
because you'll blow them away like no tomorrow
if they do.
Open.

You who hang diplomas on your walls
who say all the right things
your body's screaming the opposite
of what you say.
No degree in the world

can hide a cold heart.
You who put a sticker on your bumper
that says "Save the Whales,
Harpoon a fat chick."
You who wrote
on the metros walls in Prague
A,M,E, next to the words "Go home"
you ran out of time
to add the letters R, I, C, A.
America, Open.

You firing missiles into
"everything that lives..."
into the "City of Peace"
our liberty
where -in- laws of a girl
held her legs apart
burned her genitalia
with a hot iron,
sizzled the thought of others
out of her vagina.
Where houses are bulldozed
with people still in them.
You say inside lies cancer
because in your eyes
everything that lives is not holy
and you have no problem
puncturing skin, shattering bone

leaving it open for gangrene to suck.

Open.

Where humans are used as shields during gunfire
because to you everything that lives is not holy
even as the holiest of holy die
underground in their basements
shut inside the womb of war
because they were too afraid to come out.

Open.

You who strap on belts
with explosives hidden in them
you're ready to kill yourself
blow yourself up with others
because you hurt.

You saw walls and roofs cave in
crush a pregnant woman
you saw the womb of war
swallow her whole,
you saw the womb of war
you saw the womb of war
and you don't like what you saw
don't like your people dyin'
don't like dyin',
but you saw the womb of war,
YOU SAW THE WOMB OF WAR.

Poems are written to praise you
where the smoke rises past war debris.

Where limbs are severed from bodies
in the holy land.
Where smoke and clouds fold
past themselves,
past the crosses of Jerusalem
past The star of David
past the Cobra's head
no longer able
to bite at its own tail.
Are we forever split?
Open.

Hearts possess an ear to hear.
Release your own ta dum ta dum
and search for another ta dum ta dum. Open.

Yes. You saw the womb of war,
but hammers of "eternal forgiveness"
strike your heart. Open.

Hearts possess an ear to hear.
Don't be afraid, just open.