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Chelsea's 9/11 meltdown

Nursery rhymes in her head as she fled

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and PAULA FROELICH

Chelsea Clinton says she spent the nightmarish day of the Twin Towers attacks in complete mental chaos — roaming the city, obsessing over President Bush's tax refunds and rattling off nursery rhymes in her head.

"For a brief moment, I truly thought I was going to die," Chelsea writes in the December/January issue of Talk magazine.

"I was worried about my parents ... I was worried that with the tax cut, we wouldn't have enough money to repair New York and D.C., and to help the families of the thousands I knew must have died.

"Punctuating everything were thoughts of Humpty Dumpty. 'Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall, Humpty Dumpty had a great fall' ... It just seemed as though the world were falling down, like Humpty Dumpty."

Chelsea, now in graduate school at Oxford University, says she was just 12 blocks from the World Trade Center when the towers fell, and frantically began making her way uptown with friends.

She writes, "Once we stopped running, I started praying for my country and city ... [I] thanked God my mother was a senator representing New York and that Rudy Giuliani was our mayor ...

"That day, Giuliani became my captain. Everywhere we walked, I heard his voice ... He's been a guiding force ever since."

For the next few days, Chelsea accompanied her dad around town in an effort to comfort New Yorkers. "I had hugged and cried and prayed, and even though people thanked me for being with them, I didn't feel as though I had done anything," she writes.

She also sought comfort in the arms of a former boyfriend, she confesses. "I wanted the ease of being truly comfortable with someone and I craved some good, long hugs."

Since the attack, Chelsea says she is striving to "regain an emotional balance between sadness and happiness" and now thinks back to that horrible morning as a symbol of the city's strength.

"I have never felt such a strong sense of belonging to a large community as I did that day. Thousands and thousands of New Yorkers were moving as one," she writes.

"That's when I realized I had become a New Yorker. I expect now that I'll always be one."



CHELSEA CLINTON
Worried about tax cuts.

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