

Free – By Candlelight (2m, 1f) by Claudia I Haas

ERIKA, PAUL and AARON witnessed the 9/11 attacks from their high school window. They are making their way uptown. Aaron has a camera. They are all high school seniors.

ERIKA

Let's stay here. In Abingdon Square. It's empty and you can't see anything.

PAUL

I can see the smoke.

(AARON snaps a picture.)

ERIKA

What are you taking a picture of now? There's nothing there!

AARON

That's what I want. The nothing that is there.

PAUL

It's surreal. When we were evacuating, all I could think of was – we must be in a movie – with amazing special effects. Because nothing this horrible could be real.

(There is a truck noise.)

ERIKA

What was that?

PAUL

It's just a truck – I think. From the highway.

ERIKA

I thought –

PAUL

Yeah – me, too.

AARON

Paul – I snapped a picture of your mother.

PAUL

Did you see her? I couldn't believe it. She ran from her office and found me. My mother ran an entire mile! My mother is not a believer in aerobics. She couldn't even talk/

AARON

/She did seem a wee bit out of shape/

PAUL

/Watch it – that’s my mother we’re talking about –

AARON

I’ll be careful.

PAUL

I’m so glad she had to pick up my brother. I thought she’d never let go of me.

AARON

She was pretty clingy. Got some good photos of you two.

PAUL

I wouldn’t mind a copy.

AARON

Remind me later. I’d sort of like to go back to Union Square. Everyone’s gathering there.

ERIKA

No – away – we have to get away –

AARON

They’re coming together, Erika.

ERIKA

But if we go there – it’s still happening. *What* are those noises?

PAUL

Just traffic – I think.

ERIKA

Are you sure there’s nothing in the air?

PAUL

Skies are clear.

ERIKA

I have to get home. I told my Mom I’d be home in an hour – that was two hours ago! She was rushing home from work. I don’t want to call her again. I can’t stand in line at another street phone.

PAUL

Those antique phones came in handy.

ERIKA

They're horrible. A city with millions of cell phones that don't work. On those pay phones – you hear everything – people asking who hasn't called – who hasn't been found – these things should not be overheard. I –

PAUL

Erika?

ERIKA

Nobody told me what to do if there was a terrorist attack outside my school. Besides, if I cave in now –

(PAUL goes to hug ERIKA who stiffens but accepts the hug. AARON tries to take a picture of ERIKA shoos him away.)

ERIKA (cont'd)

Aaron – I don't – want a memory of this.

AARON

You have no choice.