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Where Were You?

For Rev. Lillie Henley

For all the children everywhere

For Amy

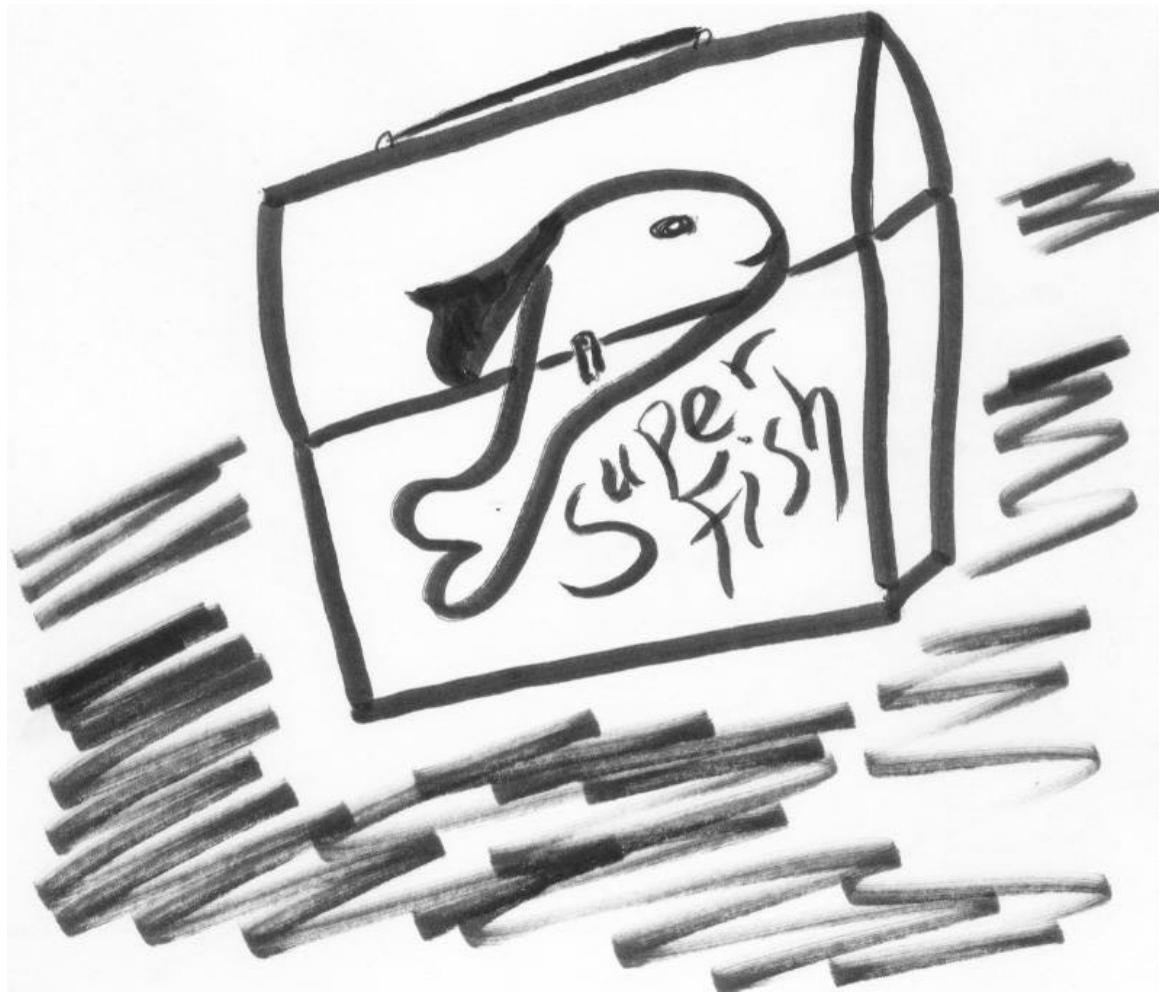
For Michelle, Sam and Erin

For Sierra, Skyler and Nicolas

Thanks to Si

On September 11, 2001, a tragedy so bad happened that it was hard for Shannon to understand.

At seven years old, Shannon had just started second grade. She had just gotten a new lunchbox and was very excited to take her lunch to school in the new lunchbox on that day.



She knew something bad had happened when three mommies had come to her class to take home their children. The mommies looked like they had been crying, so Shannon thought, "Something is definitely wrong."



Shannon's teacher, Miss Dickson told the children that they were not going to do any more class work, which was a very odd thing for Miss Dickson. Instead, she began to read a book to the class and they all went to the reading circle.

She didn't even fuss at Junior Morley for fidgeting or pulling Anna's hair. She just said, "Let's try to stay calm now and listen to the story."

While Miss Dickson read, other moms and dads came to pick up their children. After what seemed to be a long time, Shannon's mommie came to take her home, as well. Shannon knew something was wrong. Her mommie was way too quiet.



When Shannon went to turn on television to watch her one hour of cartoons like she had done every day since school started, her mother stopped her. "I have

something to tell you," said Mommie in a very sad voice.

Shannon was listening carefully.

"Something really bad has happened," Mommie said. "Two planes crashed into some big buildings in New York City and one in Washington, D.C.

Shannon began to cry. Shannon's Mommie cried, too.

"Is anyone hurt?" asked Shannon.

"Yes," said Mommie. "Lots of people."

Shannon and Mommie went to church and lit candles with the other people in their church community. Shannon took the lighting candle and lit it from the Chalice flame and lit a small candle. She recognized some of the candles. They had been used last Christmas. The one she had melted green and red wax on the outside was sitting in a candleholder.



Shannon thought, "All the candles in the church must be sitting on this table. It looks like hundreds...maybe thousands."

Rev. Lillie told all the kids and all the moms and dads, adults and youth that she was sad, because so many people had been hurt or died.



She said, "Death is often hard to understand, especially when violence is the cause."

Shannon listened carefully to Rev. Lillie. She wanted to understand what she was feeling.

Rev. Lillie said, "When people die, we keep their memory alive in our hearts. When we celebrate who they were, tell a story about them or remember an event you did with them, you keep a piece of them alive."

But Shannon wondered how she could do that since she lived far away from New York or Washington, D.C. and she did not know any of the people.

"When a tragedy happens so far from us...and yet so close," said Rev. Lillie, "it is difficult to remember any individual. But we can think of all the children and adults who were affected personally. Then, we can be thankful that our family was not involved. And you can think about how you would feel, if it were your family. It's okay to feel sad. It's okay to cry."

Shannon reached up to brush the tears off her face.

Mommie wiped her own tears, as well.

When Rev. Lillie finished her sermon, she asked the congregation to participate in a memory tree activity. She explained that in many cultures, prayers were hung in the wind.

On green ribbon, everyone was asked to write a message, wishes, prayers or something they needed to say to God, Goddess, the Source or the Universe. The ribbons were tied on one tree's branches. The particular tree had been planted in the church yard only last year.



Shannon remembered the day that the tree had been planted by the children of the church. It was Earth Day.

When all the ribbons had been tied to the branches, they sang a song.

Shannon thought, "I don't feel quite as bad."

Mommie said, "It's time to go home now."

Shannon stepped back and saw the tree with its green ribbons flapping in the breeze. She was proud of what they had done together.

Rev. Lillie gave Shannon a hug.

The End