call volunteered on Monday nights, often spending the entire evening dancing; Broadway stars Katharine Cornell and Helen Hayes bussed tables; Alfred Hunt even took out the garbage. Onstage, everyone from Benny Goodman to Ethel Merman performed, and on an average over 2,000 GIs passed through the door."[94] The club closed when the Japanese surrendered in 1945, and New York could resume its normal role as the city of individualistic ambition "where you go to seize the day, to leave your mark, to live within the nerve of your generation."[95]

Hong Kong, September 11, 2001. It's late at night. Bing and Julien have gone to sleep. Daniel switches on the television. Oh no, it looks like a disaster movie, like The Towering Inferno. *Boring. He switches to another channel. The same movie: what a coincidence! Another channel, same movie again! This time, Daniel realizes that he is not watching a movie. The World Trade Center has been attacked and the two towers have collapsed, with thousands killed, including more than four hundred firefighters, police officers, and other rescue workers. It's far more horrifying than any movie he could have imagined.*

In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks, civicism reemerged in its strongest form yet: "The rancorous racial tension in New York was sharply reduced. Communities that formerly defined themselves in terms of their conflicts with the police were able to feel a common sense of civic identity. The city's firemen are heroes in the eyes of everyone."[96] Mayor Giuliani, formerly viewed as a combative, moralistic, and deeply partisan figure, transformed himself into a resolute and compassionate leader who was spontaneously applauded when he walked down the street. For John P. Avlon, Mayor Giuliani's chief speechwriter,

> the greatest inspiration came from the deep grief of ordinary New Yorkers: makeshift memorials of notes and melting candles in parks outside firehouses; the American flags that hung from almost every apartment building; the steadfast souls who stood along the West Side Highway every hour of the day and night for more than a month, holding handwritten signs and cheering the rescue workers on their way to and from ground zero. . . . Most startling and beautiful was this: along the walls of the church [St. Paul's Chapel], posted on pillars and taped in pews, were letters and cards written by children from across the United States, covered with brightly colored drawings of eagles, firemen, the towers under attack, and American flags. They bore messages of hope, faith, and gratitude: "Thank you . . . you are my heroes. . . . I am sorry the people died . . . thank you for saving the people. . . . I love the city. . . . God Bless America."[97]

Summer 2003. Daniel and his sister Valérie climb up Mount Pinnacle on the border between Canada and the United States. They are carrying their father's ashes. He was born in the United States and spent most of his life in Canada, and he had asked that his ashes be scattered on the border between the two countries. Daniel and Valérie improvise a ceremony. This place looks like the border. They open a bottle of rum, add a bit of Coke, and drink a toast in his honor. The ashes are taken by the wind into, they hope, the two countries. But now Daniel wonders. His father was the least nationalistic person he had ever met; why would he want his ashes to be scattered on the border between countries? He loved New York and Montreal; why not scatter his ashes in those two cities? Oh, yes, perhaps some ashes in Paris as well. Nationalism has become so deeply rooted in our psychological makeup that it seems hard to think outside the box, even for Daniel's father.

God bless America?
God bless New York.