

If I Knew ...

Life was proceeding normally on Tuesday, Sept. 11, 2001. It was a beautiful day in New York City as businessmen left home for the office, mothers loaded children into the van to take them to school, and others had doctor or dental appointments.

Then, suddenly, unspeakable terror struck as airplanes hijacked by terrorists crashed into the World Trade Center towers, the Pentagon and – thanks to brave passengers aboard United Flight 93 – into a field near Shanksville, Pennsylvania. Thousands of lives were lost, and, for their families, no chance of a goodbye.

A poem entitled *If I Knew* is posted all over the internet, ostensibly as a result of the events of 9/11, but it predates those attacks by more than a decade. Attribution varies from post to post, with many different people taking, or being given, credit for it.

Originally entitled *Tomorrow Never Comes*, it was actually written by Norma Cornett Marek in 1989 as – in her words – “a tribute to a beloved child I lost, in hopes it would cause people to never be careless or too busy to let our loved ones know we love them.” She said she was “honored that it was used for the Sept. 11 tragedy as a tribute, but no one asked me to use it.”

Norma Marek passed away on July 18, 2004, after a prolonged battle with cancer. The message of her poem, however, will live on for generations. Here it is:

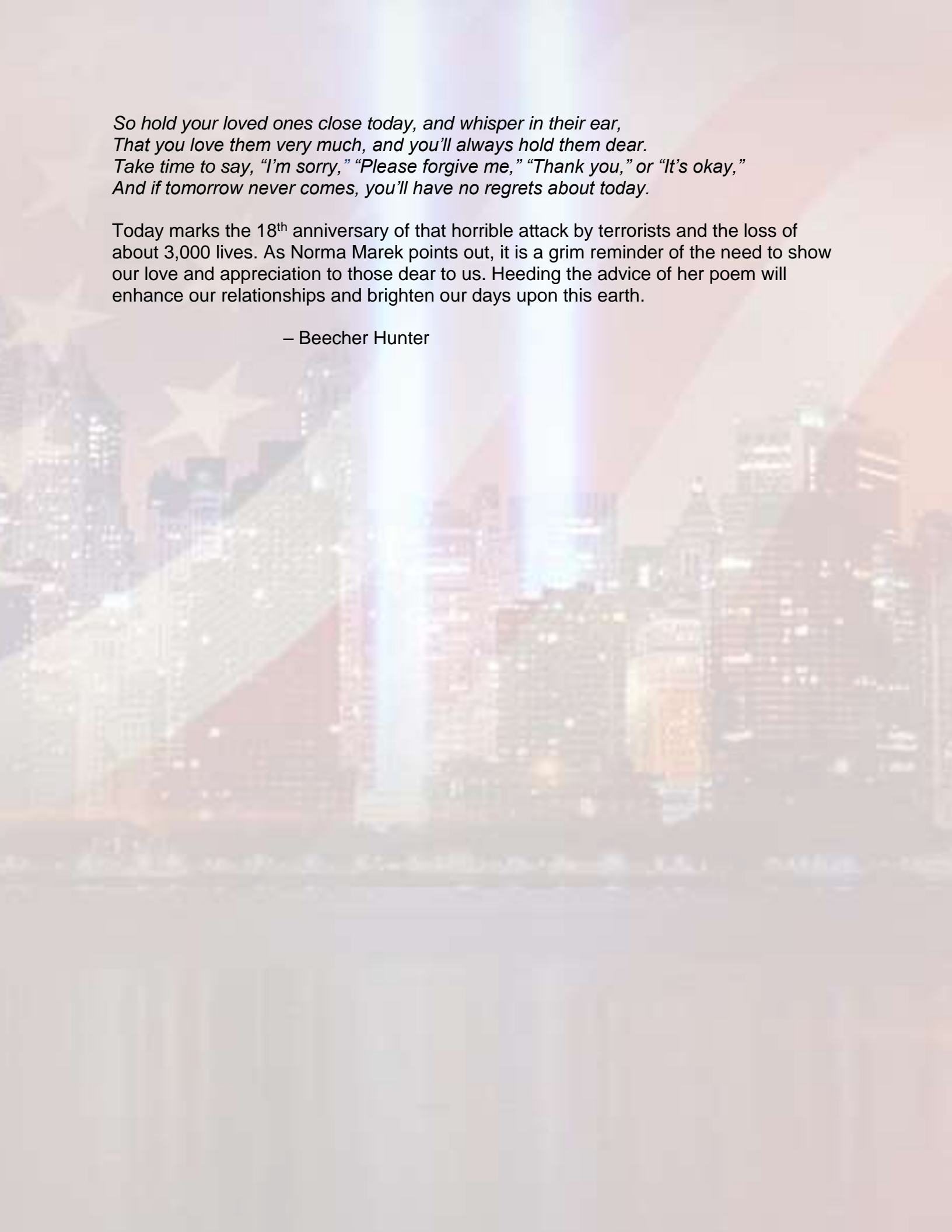
*If I knew it would be the last time that I'd see you fall asleep,
I would tuck you in more tightly, and pray the Lord your soul to keep.
If I knew it would be the last time that I'd see you walk out the door,
I would give you a hug and kiss, and call you back for just one more.*

*If I knew it would be the last time I'd hear your voice lifted up in praise,
I would tape each word and action, and play them back throughout my days.
If I knew it would be the last time, I would spare an extra minute or two,
To stop and say, "I love you," instead of assuming you know I do.*

*So, just in case tomorrow never comes, and today is all I get,
I'd like to say how much I love you, and I hope we never will forget.
Tomorrow is not promised to anyone, young or old alike,
And today may be the last chance you get to hold your loved one tight.*

*So, if you're waiting for tomorrow, why not do it today?
For if tomorrow never comes, you'll surely regret the day
That you didn't take that extra time for a smile, a hug, or a kiss,
And you were too busy to grant someone what turned out to be their one last wish.*

(more)



*So hold your loved ones close today, and whisper in their ear,
That you love them very much, and you'll always hold them dear.
Take time to say, "I'm sorry," "Please forgive me," "Thank you," or "It's okay,"
And if tomorrow never comes, you'll have no regrets about today.*

Today marks the 18th anniversary of that horrible attack by terrorists and the loss of about 3,000 lives. As Norma Marek points out, it is a grim reminder of the need to show our love and appreciation to those dear to us. Heeding the advice of her poem will enhance our relationships and brighten our days upon this earth.

– Beecher Hunter