



THE KID + THE FIREMAN

BLOWN TOGETHER

On April 15, 2013, four random souls found one another in the smoke and blood on Boylston Street. One was dying. But they all needed something

BY **STEVE FRIEDMAN** PHOTOGRAPH BY **JOAO CANZIANI**

+ THE COP +

THE RUNNER
Roseann Sdoia, a spectator
that day, lost a leg but
still stands tall.



TWO WEEKS BEFORE MOST OF HER RIGHT LEG WAS BLOWN OFF,

ROSEANN SDOIA turned 45. She was feeling sorry for herself.

She owned a house in Quincy, on the South Shore, and was renting a second floor apartment in a favorite Boston neighborhood. She had close friends, loving family. She liked her job, vice president at a real estate firm.

"I've had a good life," she says. "I've traveled. I've been to Europe many times. Summer I'd go to Nantucket, to Newport. I had lived in Florida, lived in California."

Nonetheless, she couldn't shake a feeling of self-pity. "It was the worst day ever," she says. "I was really down in the dumps about it."

"No cake," she told anyone who might have bought or made one. "No singing."



She did what she often did. She ran. She used to run three, four times a week. "Running kept me sane," she says. "Running was my time to calm down, to think things through." In the spring and summer, she would run at the gym in the morning, three or four miles, nothing crazy, just enough to stay in shape. On a Saturday or Sunday, she would run along the Charles River, and before the bombing she was up to five miles. Just the day before the marathon, she had run the Boston Athletic Association (BAA) 5-K and finished it in 29:49.

By Marathon Monday, she was no longer blue. A Boston-area native, she had been attending the race since she was a kid, when her father would take her to see the Red Sox game, then they'd walk down to Kenmore Square to see the runners go by. As a young adult she stopped going with her dad and started going with friends. Last year was no different: She and a friend, Sabrina Dello Russo, went to the game at Fenway Park, where they clocked the marathon progress of another friend, Jennifer Anstead, while drinking beer in their seats down on the field level, right behind home plate. When they saw that Anstead had passed 15 miles, they left the ballpark and walked to the bar at Forum on Boylston Street, where Sdoia had two sips of a mojito. When she saw on her phone that

Anstead was close, she hung her jacket underneath the bar and put her drink down at the hostess stand. Then Sdoia and Dello Russo walked out to Boylston Street and maneuvered for good viewing spots along the fence. Watching the runners finish, greeting other friends who met them there, feeling strong, feeling good, she turned to Dello Russo, and said something she had never said before, not in all the Mondays she had attended. "Next year," she said, "we're going to run it."

Then they heard a boom.

Sdoia thought it was strange. No one had ever shot celebratory cannons at the marathon before. And the elite runners had finished hours ago, so why would anyone be shooting things off now? Then a man to her right yelled at everyone, "Get over the fence, get over the fence!"

Sdoia looked at the fence separating her and the other spectators from the street and panicked. At 5'2", she knew she was too short to get over it. So she turned and ran, saw flashes, heard a *pop, pop, pop*.

She had run into the second bomb.

"I remember coming to on the ground," she says. What remained of her shredded lower right leg was tucked underneath her. There was blood pouring from her right knee. Did she have a lower right leg anymore? She saw an ankle in front of her, with a sock on it, and she thought, *I'm not wearing socks, so that's not my ankle*.

"I remember people running by and thinking, *No one is stopping to help me. I'm going to die here*. My head was echoing so much from the blast, and I was trying to yell for help, but it was like those yells in your dreams, where nothing comes out."

Then, from "out of nowhere," she saw someone who looked like a college kid.

SHORES SALTER, a 20-year-old college junior, started Marathon Monday around 10 a.m. with a few beers. Growing up in Reading, 14 miles north of Boston, Salter had never been to the city's daylong celebration of running. But ever since enroll-

BOSTON STRONG

The day before she lost her right leg in the marathon bombings, Sdoia ran the BAA 5-K with friends, finishing in 29:49.

ing at Northeastern University three years earlier, it had become a rite of spring. Morning beer with four roommates and buddies at his apartment on Tremont Street, then a stroll to one of the bars along the route, maybe check out another bar, a good time.

At a bar on Boylston Street named Dillon's, he got in a fight with his girlfriend, "a stupid, over-nothing argument." He turned to one of his buddies and said, "Yo, I know some people down at Daisy Buchanan's [another bar]. I want to get out of this place."

He and his friends, but not his girlfriend, headed down Boylston and were about to make a left on Newbury to get to Daisy Buchanan's when they heard something. It was the loudest thing he had ever heard in his life. One friend looked at him and said, "What the f-k was that?"

At first Salter thought it was a cannon or loud muskets, like the ones they shoot at New England Patriots games. But then he thought, *No, they've never done that before. Besides, the first finishers had crossed the line almost three hours earlier. Why shoot a random cannon now?*

Then the second explosion. "At that point people around us started screaming," Salter says. "Women screaming, sprinting by me. It was absolute chaos. And there was the smoke rising on the other side. My friend, who is a superathletic, quick kid, looked at me and said, 'Dude, we've got to get the f-k out of here.' And he took off toward the John Hancock Tower and I followed him.

"But after three steps, I don't know why, I just stopped. He kept going—I was behind him and he didn't see me. But I stopped and looked around in a circle, more or less in awe of what was happening. It was like one of those things that you never believe would happen to you until it's actually happening to you..."

"At that point I looked across the street and the smoke had cleared a little bit, and a bunch of barricades were thrown onto the street. And then I saw a bunch of bodies rolling onto the street. So I ran over toward the barricades, hopped over, and sprinted to the other side. I didn't have my sights on anyone in particular, but I heard someone yelling."

There, on the ground, was a pretty blonde he judged to be in her late 20s, one leg sticking out at an odd angle, bleeding

terribly. He wrapped his arms around her and asked if she was okay.

"I don't think I have a leg," she said, and though Salter could see that she had both legs, he also realized that her right leg was horribly injured. "All right," he said. "You've got to get out of here."

He put her arms around his neck, his arms underneath her arms, picked her up and carried her 30 feet into the center of Boylston Street. A man in a gray shirt saw Salter and said, "Are you okay?"

"And I said, 'Yeah, but she's not. We need to get her help.' And he said, 'All right, put her down on the ground and take off your belt and wrap it around her leg, just above her knee.' I did that and asked him, 'Is there any such thing as too tight?' And he said, 'No, hold as absolute tight as you can.'"

After that, Salter's memory fades in and out. He remembers squeezing as hard as he could. He remembers blood and screaming. He remembers an ambulance speeding by, then a second one, then a third, and then a female police officer arriving, trying to flag down a vehicle.

"And that was the worst part because, this lady needs help," Salter says. "This lady really, really needs help and all these ambulances just kept going by."

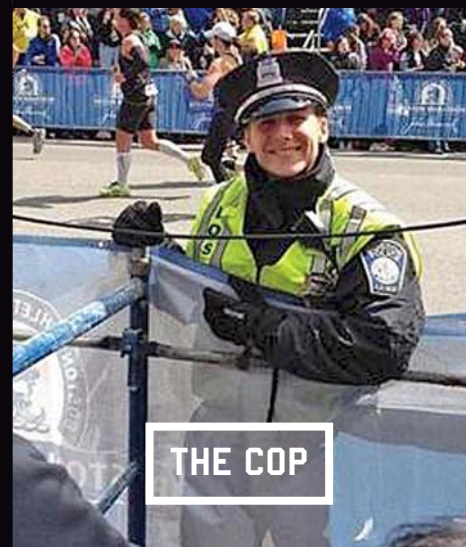
He remembers the police officer yelling at the ambulances.

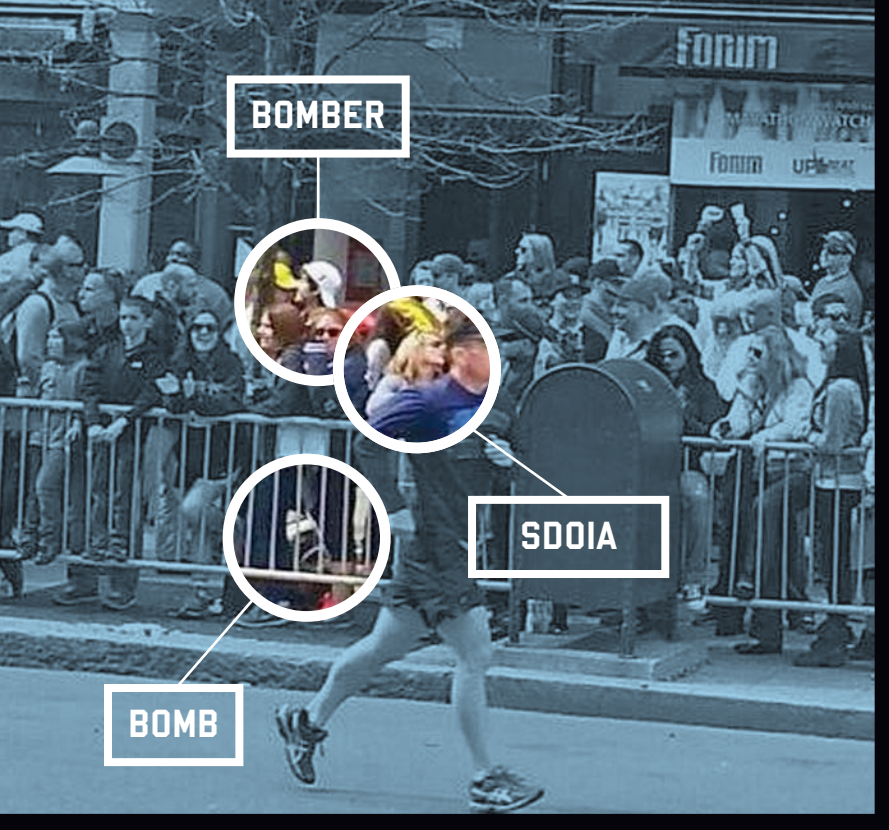
SHANA COTTONE couldn't recall ever feeling happier. For starters, it was a public holiday in Massachusetts, Patriots' Day, which meant double time and overtime for Boston police officers like her who came from other districts. Second, she had just been transferred from Roxbury, a tough urban neighborhood, and she was no longer seeing drugs and violence on such a regular basis. Most important, Cottone had just made some big changes in her life. She had quit drinking. The previous October, she had sought help for a sense she had that her life was drifting, and that help had made a difference. Twenty-seven years old, clear-headed, "I felt the best I ever had in my adult life."

At the station that morning, another cop asked her if she would mind switch-

GUARDIAN ANGELS

Mike Materia (top), Shana Cottone (middle), and Shores Salter (bottom) each had a hand in saving Sdoia's life.





A BRUSH WITH EVIL

Sdoia stood inches from the backpack that held the second bomb, which she ran toward after hearing the first blast.

small talk. She asked if she had been there to watch her husband, or a family member. And the woman on the ground snapped at her, “Why does that have anything to do with this?” *Sassy*, Cottone thought. But at least she was thinking, at least she was answering. What was her blood type? The woman didn’t know.

The woman with the white teeth told Cottone she wanted to go to Massachusetts General Hospital because she knew people there. Her primary doctor was there. Cottone said she’d do her best, but she knew that ambulances took bad cases to the nearest hospital. And Cottone knew that the woman was a very bad case. She had lost a dangerous amount of blood. If an ambulance didn’t pick her up soon, she might not make it.

Cottone smelled alcohol: “It’s Marathon Monday. Everyone was drinking. If you’re not running it, you’re drinking.” She worried that the woman might bleed out faster because of how alcohol thins blood. She worried that an ambulance wouldn’t arrive in time.

It’s not that there weren’t plenty of ambulances around. They were speeding down streets, around corners, sirens blaring, but none were stopping. Cottone had worked car accidents. She had worked stabbings, shootings. And there had always been an ambulance within a few minutes. Always. She jumped up, waved at passing ambulances, screamed at them. Some sped by. Some slowed, and someone would lean out the window and shout, “We’re full!” and speed away.

Boylston Street was always filled with people rushing one way or another on business days, but now, Cottone remembers, “There’s literally not a f—king person there except for the people who were dead and dying and the people who were trying to help them. And you know, how we’re trained is that once there’s an initial attack and then a secondary attack, what they do is they’ll wait a little while for the first responders that come in, then they’ll try to kill us, too. So sitting there on Boylston Street having that go through my mind was a feeling I never want to

ing spots with him—he wanted to work the Boston Common with a guy in his carpool. Cottone, who a few months earlier might have been annoyed, said sure, she’d work the finish line. Then she realized she had forgotten her wallet at home, so after roll call she had to drive home to get it. A few months back, that would have pissed her off no end. Today, no biggie. Life was sweet.

“I was having such a great day,” she says. “I had made some lifestyle changes and I was sharp. I was on top of my game. I was feeling good.”

She took her position in front of Sugar Heaven, on Boylston Street. A lot of her friends were in the area, bar hopping. One snapped a picture of Cottone, and even though she thinks it makes her head look enormous, cartoonish, she likes it, because her delight is so evident. Her commanders had just told her and the other cops they could stop watching the spectators, which they had been doing to make sure no one tried to jump the fence and disrupt the runners. They could now look up the race route and watch runners as they approached the finish line, and periodically scan the crowds.

About 25 minutes later, she heard an explosion, some 50 feet away, and even

though she thought it was an electrical box, she also remembered her training: *Step back. Assess. Take cover.* She stepped back, drew her gun. She looked around. Then, the second blast. She heard it and saw it. She holstered her gun. She knew you don’t neutralize a bomb with a gun. She doesn’t remember running the 200 yards to the second blast site.

People were standing in the streets. The barriers had been knocked down. A lot of people with baby carriages were standing on the sidewalk looking confused. Cottone took the carriages off the sidewalk and put them in the middle of the street because at the moment, the street seemed safer than the sidewalk. Then, in front of her, she noticed a blonde woman with a terrible leg wound whom Cottone thought had been blown from the sidewalk into the middle of the street. Next to her, holding a belt around her leg, was a tall, dark-haired kid. College kid, probably. What was he doing there? The police officer noticed how white the woman’s teeth were. That, and that her hair was singed, burned around her face.

Cottone talked to the woman, tried to keep her mind off her leg. She knew that it was important to prevent her from focusing on her injury. She tried to make

feel again. I accepted that I was going to die and there was nothing I could do about it. And it was the worst feeling because my body, everything in me, said, *Run, run away. Run, run, run.* But I didn't."

As ambulances sped past, more people arrived. Firefighters, police, civilians. There was another man, horribly burned, bleeding even more than the woman with the white teeth. Someone got an air cast on the woman's mangled leg. From somewhere came a backboard. The kid was lifting it along with one of the firefighters, and then there was another firefighter on the scene, a big, brawny guy with soft eyes. The first firefighter yelled at the guy with soft eyes.

"Get her head, Mikey, get her head!"

MARATHON MONDAY was always a great day to be a Boston firefighter. A lot of special-needs kids from Boston Children's Hospital would hang out at Engine Company 33/Ladder Company 15, Mike Materia's firehouse on the corner of Boylston and Hereford, to watch the people who were running for them, and a lot of the off-duty guys would go to the Red Sox game and then wander out to see the marathon. Materia, 33, a veteran of three tours in Iraq, was happy to be on duty. He had worked five or six Marathon Mondays. "It's a fun day," he says.

Even after the first explosion, Materia had considered himself lucky. He had thought it was a transformer, or a manhole blowing up, or maybe a bunch of kids messing around, or maybe some kind of celebratory fireworks. Whatever it was, some old people might be having heart attacks. But he wouldn't be responding today, even though he was a firefighter, because there would already be scores of EMTs on hand and, with all the barricades blocking off the street, bringing in a fire truck didn't make sense.

Then, the second blast.

Usually, when there's a call, the firefighters walk fast, slide down the poles and get in the trucks in a quick and controlled, efficient operation. But now Materia and the other firefighters were full-on sprinting to the trucks and firing off down Newbury Street.

"I thought, *That's an IED*," Materia says. "My mind was going back to Iraq. *I don't have a weapon. I don't have my body armor. We're going to a kill zone. We're going to the*

ambush site. And when an IED does go off, they know Americans always go back and get their own, and usually there'll be a second attack. It'll be *boom, boom, boom...* and they'll get a couple more of us."

As the fire truck sped toward the smoke, he thought, again, how lucky he was. "Lucky I have a small family. No girlfriend. No wife. I remember believing, *All right, it's going to go down this way.*"

Then he jumped out of the truck and he didn't feel lucky anymore. He was used to bad situations, awful situations, and was used to focusing on the events at

NEW LIFE

Sdoia's calendar is now filled with doctor visits, physical therapy sessions, and appointments to adjust her prosthesis.

hand, doing what he could do, concentrating, but this was hard because there were *so many* bad situations. There were people on the ground, everywhere. Not one or two people—dozens. So many people yelling, "Help me, help me!"

He can't remember the next few minutes. One second, people screaming for help, blood, body parts, and then two guys from his ladder company carrying a woman with a mangled leg on a backboard, and there's a small female cop there, too, and a college kid. Someone yelled, "Mikey, grab her head!"

"Okay," Materia said. "I got it."

He was used to staying calm under pressure. "The person at the head always





BACK ON HER FEET

With the support of her Boylston saviors (top), especially Materia (bottom right), Sdoia is committed to running again.

But at the moment, he just looked at the kid. The college kid asked Materia, “Do you know more than I do? I have no medical training.” And Materia assured the young man, “Yeah, I think we’re good here, thanks.” The college kid climbed out and the badly burned man was hoisted in, and another firefighter knelt down to hold him in place. The two firefighters were on their knees, ass to ass, each holding a wounded person on the benches. Then the door slammed shut. The college kid had disappeared.

THE BUSINESS SECTION of a prisoner transport vehicle is unventilated and windowless, pitch black and reeking of sweat and vomit in ordinary circumstances. And now there were two terribly injured, bleeding survivors and two firefighters back to back, trying to keep the victims from falling onto the floor.

Materia asked the blonde woman questions to keep her alert. He asked her her name, but when she said it, he couldn’t catch the last name, so he asked again.

“Roseann, Roseann,” she said.

She had questions of her own. She asked when she could get some morphine. She asked what road they were on. She asked, again, to make sure she was being taken to Mass General.

Then, losing blood, craving morphine, the woman mapped the turns in the dark, calculated speed and distance. “We must be on Storrow Drive, right?” she asked.

Materia said he thought so.

“Am I going to die?” she asked.

“No, you’re not going to die,” he said.

The driver, flashing his lights, was having trouble getting through the sea of people. Then, in the back, Materia recognized the voice of the female cop. She had jumped into the passenger seat of the vehicle and was leaning out of the window, screaming at pedestrians to move.

When Cottone is excited, or frightened, or really wants something, she tends to swear a lot. (She swears a lot when she’s calm, too.) She was swearing now. Materia recognized the words she was yelling, but the constructions were



takes command, so I’m like, ‘Okay, I got it. One, two, three, up,’ and she was up—but then my heart sank.” Because there were sirens blaring, and ambulances speeding by. But none were stopping.

The cop was still in the middle of the street and now a prisoner transport vehicle, commonly if inappropriately called a paddy wagon, was approaching. The cop waved and yelled at it, and the driver recognized her. He stopped, and when the back doors were opened, the firefighters, along with Materia and the college kid, lifted the woman into the vehicle and onto the bench along one side.

The injured woman clutched Materia’s left hand with her right hand, which he could feel was bleeding and burned, and even though he had to hold her tourni-

quet with his other hand, and he was trying to get to his flashlight, she only let go of his hand briefly, and then kept asking for it back again. He knelt next to the bench and used his stomach to make sure she wouldn’t fall off it. The college kid was in the vehicle, too, and he and Materia looked at each other. The kid looked worried. *Who was this kid?* Later, much later, the firefighter would remember how naked he himself had felt without his side-arm or body armor, how he had flashed back to a war zone and had overcome his fear and done his job, and he would think about what the college kid did, how he ran toward smoke and noise, not because he had a job to do, because of something mysterious, and the firefighter would talk about heroism and wonder.



UNBREAKABLE

Like Roseann Sdoia, these three survivors underwent post-bombing amputations and are reclaiming their independence, one step at a time

Including Roseann Sdoia, 16 spectators lost parts of one or both legs in last year's Boston Marathon bombings. For some survivors, running—the very spectacle of which brought them to Boylston that day—has become a long-term goal, a symbolic pledge that they won't stay down long.

Stephen Woolfenden (center, with family) was with his 3-year-old son, Leo, watching for his wife, Amber, to finish, when the second blast severed his left foot and left his son with minor injuries. In June, Woolfenden, 39, was able to take his first steps, and he's since returned to work in oncology research. He's also skied, biked, received a running blade, and, in March, began training to run again. Before the bombings, he did shorter races, and plans to mark his progress by running a 5-K with family on Mother's Day. His emotional recovery, though, is ongoing. "I have mobility, I'm ambulatory,

but at the same time, this is for real," he says. "I'm trying really hard to embrace it."

Heather Abbott (right), now 39, was watching the race near the Forum Restaurant & Bar when shrapnel from the second bomb struck her, costing her her lower left leg. She returned to her Newport, Rhode Island, home a month later and has, in short order, ridden a stand-up paddleboard, gone back to the gym, and walked in high heels with a custom prosthetic. The Challenged Athletes Foundation (CAF) presented Abbott—a casual runner before the injury—with a running blade in October, and she is training on tracks and treadmills with the long-term goal of doing a 5-K. Connecting with other bombing amputees has helped her heal. "They have become like family," she says.

Celeste Corcoran (left; also on page 72) was with her daughter, Sydney, waiting for her sister, Carmen, to finish the

marathon when the first bomb went off, destroying her lower legs. (Sydney, 18, sustained a severed femoral artery but, amid her own difficult recovery, has graduated high school and started classes at Merrimack College.) By July, Corcoran, 48, could walk on prosthetic legs. Since then, she's started swimming and resumed working part-time as a hair stylist. CAF gave her blades in January to help her start running—something she's never done before. "I want to embrace life and live it to the fullest," Celeste says. "I don't want to live in fear."

Woolfenden won't be at the marathon this year, but his wife is running again. Abbott will be in attendance. Corcoran plans to start at Carmen's stopping point and walk the last mile with her sister and her daughter. "We want to link arms and cross the finish line together," she says.

—MICHELE MOSES

the hospital personnel staring at him. "One nurse just pointed to the bathroom," he says. "She knew what I was looking for." He rinsed off the blood, splashed water on his face, and when he returned to the ambulance bay, he saw Cottone doubled over.

While she and the driver had been waiting for the firefighters, Cottone says, "All I wanted was somebody to say to me, 'No. You have to stay here.' Because I knew I had to go back to Boylston, and I just didn't know what I was going to go back to. Was I going to end up getting killed? But that is what I had to do."

When she realized no one was going to ask her to stay at the hospital, she was sick. That's what Materia saw.

Materia and the other firefighter caught a ride back with Cottone and the driver in the PTV. The back smelled of sweat and blood, so they rode with the outer door open. In the front of the truck, Cottone telephoned her father, a construction worker who lives on Long Island, New York. "It was terrible," she says. "Not a call I thought I'd ever have to make. I was in 10th grade when 9/11 happened, and my father was in Manhattan. I remember that feeling when we couldn't get in touch with him. It was the same exact thing. I didn't want to scare him. He didn't know what had happened. But I was kind of saying goodbye, just in case. It was not good."

The cops dropped the firefighters off on Boylston, then picked up a bomb squad and drove them around the area, investigating stray packages. Cottone felt safer having the bomb squad with them.

Materia looked for his company and found them after walking down a long alley off Boylston. He worked till the next morning at 8 a.m., mostly responding to "suspicious package" calls that turned out to be false alarms. The entire time, "I worried about the lady with the weird last name who I helped the whole time.

"No one ate much that night," he says. "All the restaurants were closed, as were the food markets. Most guys weren't hungry, anyway. The streets were all vacant except for a huge police presence and emergency vehicles responding to many false alarms. It was eerie."

While Materia checked on packages, Cottone watched the bomb squad do the same, in different places. Afterward, she

novel, even to an Iraq war veteran, even to a Boston firefighter.

That's impressive, he thought. I like that mouth.

ATTENDANTS AT Mass General furiously waved the transport vehicle out of the emergency room bay, which was reserved for ambulances, and when it didn't move,

they yelled. Cottone jumped out, and as she opened the back doors, she yelled back. "We've got two amputees in here!" When the attendants saw the blood they rushed forward with gurneys, took the two victims and hustled them inside. Cottone stayed with the truck while Materia, who was covered with blood, still wearing his helmet and full gear, saw

and the driver of the transport parked at Boylston and Hereford, blocking the road, “slowly absorbing the reality of what had just taken place. It felt surreal, an out-of-body experience. But then I saw a foot, still in its shoe, sitting on the sidewalk. That was very, very real.” They walked into Uburger at Kenmore Square, where a girl thanked them. “It felt so strange,” says Cottone. “That doesn’t usually happen out of the blue. Usually it’s something negative being screamed at us.”

The cops watched the TV news inside the restaurant, then returned to the truck and stayed there until 11:45 p.m. Driving home, “as I put more and more miles between Boylston Street and myself,” Cottone again felt afraid. When she got home, her dog jumped up to greet her. It was only then, after a day of explosions and blood, of screaming for ambulances, of telling a dying woman she would be fine, of saying goodbye to her father, that the police officer let herself cry. “No one wants to see a crying cop,” she says. “I’ve seen my fair share of crazy and sick s-t at work. This was different. It was too much. It was a really lonely feeling that day.”

THE NEXT MORNING, Materia returned to the hospital, but no one would give out any information. “I told security I knew

her name was Roseann,” says Materia. “Last name began with an S, probable leg amputee, had burn wounds to her right hand, the hand I was holding in the police vehicle. I just wanted to know if she was alive. A fellow fireman was with me and knew the MGH [Mass General] police officer from high school, which helped. The officer went to Roseann’s family, told them about the situation, and my request was answered immediately. And, it was the best news I ever heard: She was alive.”

By then, doctors had amputated Sdoia’s right leg below the knee. When she came to on Tuesday evening, she had seen a doctor in her hospital room. When he told her about the surgery, Sdoia had said, “Okay,” and remembers that he seemed surprised at how well she took the news.

Although she was later moved to Boston’s new Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital, Sdoia stayed at Mass General for a week, which is where she was when Cottone found her. The cop had tracked her down by typing “Roseann bombing victim” into a search engine.

Among the friends and coworkers and reporters and family who visited Sdoia in the following weeks, Cottone and Materia were regular faces. The three of them discussed, among other things, the mysterious college kid. Materia laughed at the kid saying, “Do you know more than me?” Cottone remembered how afraid she had been, how afraid everyone had been that day, and she expressed astonish-

ment that someone who didn’t need to be in the midst of so much danger was there.

To reporters, Sdoia called the college kid “my mystery angel,” and she wondered if she would ever know who he was. She wondered how he was doing.

“WHAT DO I DO?” Salter asked a cop, after the prisoner transport vehicle sped away.

“Go find somebody else,” he was told. “Go find somebody else on the street and help them out.” Which Salter started to do, but he was quickly approached by another cop and told to “get the f-k out of here.” So Salter left that area and walked over toward Huntington Avenue, near the Prudential Center. “And that was the point,” Salter says, “where it all started to sink in.”

He ran back to Boylston Street, to try again to help, but it had been sealed off, and he couldn’t get through. So Salter started to walk home. On the way, he sat by the reflecting pool near the Pru and remembered when he was in fourth grade and heard about the attacks on the Twin Towers in New York City, and he started to cry. He cried as he walked. He called his parents to tell them he was all right. As he was talking, he noticed that on his pants and his shoes was the blood from the woman he had tried to help.

When he arrived back at his apartment, his roommates looked at him and registered the blood and tears, but he didn’t tell them much. He tried sleeping that night but woke up after 30 minutes, so he turned on the television. For the rest of the night he sat on the couch, wide-eyed, and watched *River Monsters*. He thought there was a good chance the woman he had carried was already dead.

The next two weeks, he couldn’t stop thinking about the woman. When he saw that a spectator named Krystle Campbell—blonde, in her late 20s, with a sparkling smile—had died from the blasts, he searched for details. Was it the same woman? He wasn’t sure.

He had told some of what happened to his parents and a few friends, but didn’t tell anyone how he was feeling. He had trouble sleeping. Why had he run toward the smoke? Had he really helped anyone? Had anything been gained?

Finals were coming up. His parents asked Salter if he thought it might be better to postpone (continued on page 116)

FROM THE ASHES

Sdoia, Materia, Cottone, and Salter were brought together by a tragedy but in its wake have forged close friendships.



BLOWN TOGETHER

Continued from page 106

them. He had been through so much. Maybe he could talk to someone at Northeastern.

No, Salter said. He wanted to put the exams behind him. He wanted to put a lot of things behind him. He passed his exams and moved home, to Reading, for the two weeks between semesters. Sleep was still a struggle.

By then, Sdoia had been shown a photograph of Salter at the scene, and she had recognized him as her rescuer, though she still didn't know his name. But when boston.com, the Web site of *The Boston Globe*, ran the photo, a friend of Salter's put it on Facebook and sent him a message. He sent his friend a note asking her to please remove the photo.

It was too late. He got about 100 calls and texts that day from people he hadn't talked to in a long time, and from friends who hadn't known what had happened. News-Center 5, Boston's WCVB, called at noon and they said they were going to be at the Salter house in 15 minutes. He asked his mother, "What do we do?" And she said, "I guess we'll take the interview."

The spot aired that night, while Salter was meeting friends at a pub in Cambridge. Afterward, he walked to the apartment of another friend, who had recorded the segment. While they were watching, he got a call on his cell phone. He didn't recognize the number, but picked up. He had a feeling.

It was a woman's voice: "Is this Shores?"

SOME DAYS, she's down. Looking in her closet in the morning, trying to figure out what clothes and shoes to wear, worrying about which clothes fit and which don't. Worrying about how she looks. Wondering whether she'll ever find the right heels to work with her new leg.

Sdoia has been through six surgeries: three on her right leg now amputated above the knee; an exploratory one on her left; another on her abdomen to remove shrapnel; another to repair a broken eardrum. She's had dialysis. There have been three different "sockets" fitted to her stump. There have been three bottom attachments. There will be more fittings, because after an amputation, muscles in a limb continue to atrophy during the first year. There is still physical therapy twice a week, group amputee pool therapy once a week, varied sessions of amputee yoga, and personal training twice a week.

When she left Spaulding, Sdoia had a wheelchair, but she had already decided she wouldn't use it, and returned it six months

later. And she got around on crutches okay, until she used them incorrectly and pulled a muscle in her shoulder. While recovering, she worried about what would happen if she got up in the night to go to the bathroom. "So I went to Kmart and bought a little office chair. In the middle of the night I get on it and just roll to the bathroom. It was so sad," she says, laughing. "The downstairs neighbors must have thought, *What's she doing?*"

Almost a year has passed since the afternoon she promised her friend that next year—now this year—she would run the marathon. Before the bombing, Sdoia would start her day at the gym, the Boston Sports Club not far from her office. She'd arrive for her run at 7 a.m., work till about 6 or 7. Then she'd head home, maybe stop at the convenience store, walk to the bank, the dry cleaner, then home to dinner. Finding street parking was always an adventure.

Things she never had to think about she now has to think about. Showering is a pain. Heels, which she used to wear all the time and would like to wear again, terrify her. She has been driving since last June, and she rented a parking spot close to her apartment, but getting up and down the stairs, and in and out of the car, is a process. It's something she has to think about. There are 18 steps to her apartment on the second floor. She has to think about every one of them. Friends and family have encouraged her to move, to find a nice high-rise with an elevator, but she has refused. It took her awhile to find this apartment. She likes the neighborhood and the restaurants in it. She's going to stay.

She has been back to work since October 1, three days a week, four or five hours a day. Some days, she just wants to lie on her couch and do nothing but cry. No, not some days. She'll be honest. "Every day," she says.

She doesn't, though. She does her best to act strong, even when she feels weak. She sees more handicapped people, more amputees. Not that there are more of them, she just sees them more. "I have a lot more patience," she says. "There's nothing I can do to change anything. But do I want to be walking and running again? Absolutely. Do I want it tomorrow? I want it five months ago."

She's been fitted with a running blade, though she knows she's not close to running again. But she thought skiing would be possible, and maybe fun, because there would be no impact, and she thought she could use the outriggers to balance. So she joined Disabled Sports USA for a ski trip to Colorado in early December. But it hadn't been easy. It had been hard. She had cried.

She doesn't love all the interviews and the cameras and the interrupted meals, but she endures them with a smile, and she still isn't crazy about celebrating her birthday, and no, she doesn't want anyone to know the neighborhood she lives in or what kind of pets she has ("Just say I have two"). And she's not so sure she wants to talk about her romantic life, but she'll think about it, and in the meantime, she would like her Web site mentioned: gofundme.com/Roseann. She's managing the financial burden of her injuries just fine, but the site raises funds for what will be a lifetime of expenses that might not always be covered by insurance.

Three people were killed at the marathon last year, and more than 260 were injured, many critically. Sdoia keeps in touch with 16 of them. Strangers share stories with her. One tells of a brother who lost a leg. Another a story of injury. Another, a death.

"I embrace it," she says. "It helps with my recovery." For the same reason, she's participating in a documentary entitled *Who Says Roseann Can't Run*. She might feel frustrated occasionally, but she doesn't want anyone to pity her. She *demand*s that no one pity her.

"I'll say this over and over and over," she says. "I feel lucky. All my stars aligned. The people on the periphery of the bomb blast got hurt worse than me, and I feel for them. I had no serious burns. And rule number one when someone is injured and they fall, don't move them. But Shores did, and it put him right in the path of someone who directed him to apply a tourniquet, and it saved me."

No, she doesn't feel like she's done anything special. She's just trying to get back to a normal life. She'd like to ski without falling so much. She'd like to run. She'd like to confront her closet in the morning without crying. No, she's not an inspiration. "I'm just Roseann Sdoia," she says. "I'm a nobody."

WHEN AFTER 22 DAYS she left Spaulding and returned to her second-floor apartment, her boss and some friends made sure she had grab bars installed in her shower, treads put down on the 18 steps to her apartment. Her boss nagged her about practicing fire drills.

She asked Materia to help her practice using the fire escape. He spent four or five hours at her place on a late spring afternoon. They talked about all sorts of things.

"I have a lot of time," Materia said. "So if you need rides to appointments or whatever, I can help you." He volunteered to go along to interview potential prosthetists with her. This meant sessions that lasted two hours without interruption, as well (continued on page 118)

BLOWN TOGETHER

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as drive time. He went to every appointment anyway. They would have lunch before the appointments, or after.

He traveled with her elsewhere, too. At an interview and photo shoot at Spaulding, a *People* magazine reporter, working on a story about marathon survivors, saw him holding Sdoia's purse, and asked, "Who are you?"

"I'm a friend. I'm a fireman," Materia said.

"That's cute," the reporter said. "But really, who are you?"

"I'm her fireman," Materia said.

Man of few words.

As they tell the story, Sdoia and her brawny, soft-eyed boyfriend smile at each other. Cottone and Salter smile, too. The four of them—the cop, the firefighter, the college kid, and the nobody who brought them together—have gathered on a frigid winter night at a restaurant on Boston Harbor.

Sdoia and Materia see each other every day. The cop and the firefighter hang out every few weeks. "Mike will come over and help make dinner," Cottone says. "We go to the movies, take walks." The four of them text or talk as a group once a week, and get together for dinner or a birthday or to attend a hockey game once every month or so.

Over appetizers, Cottone and Materia argue about whether cops or firefighters get (and deserve) better contracts. Salter talks about college, and Cottone admits to swearing too much and they all laugh while recalling one of her first visits to Mass General, when Sdoia and her mother and sister and nieces were watching the news about the hunt for the bombers, and Cottone yelled, "We're going to get these f---ing a--holes!"

Sdoia cringes and laughs when she talks about how producers at ABC's *World News Tonight* had to keep reminding her not to say "paddy wagon."

They don't talk about the bombers. It's been said that one or both of the criminals were loners, or that they weren't. That they were confused, or not. Neither Sdoia, Cottone, Materia, nor Salter think about the young men's inner lives or how or why those lives bent toward and curdled into violence. Nor do they talk about vengeance, Cottone's hospital outburst notwithstanding. They would just as soon not mention the bombers' names. They would just as soon no one ever did. It's not that they are uninterested. They just care about other things.

They talk about Cottone's upcoming sergeant's exam and Salter's social life. "Of

course he doesn't have a girlfriend right now," Cottone says, as Salter blushes. "Can you imagine, with his looks, and being the marathon hero, the last thing he needs right now is a f---king girlfriend."

Salter is now in his fourth year of Northeastern's five-year B.S./M.S. chemistry program and plans to work as a research scientist in biotech/pharmaceutical when he graduates. Before he received the call from Sdoia, Salter remembers, "That was a real dark time. I didn't know what happened to anyone that I was with. I didn't know what happened to Roseann. It was a sick feeling."

Taking the call, he says, "was the most unbelievable relief ever." A few days later he visited Spaulding. Materia and Cottone were there, but Salter didn't recognize them.

"Shana came up to give me a hug and I was like, 'Who are you? Roseann's friend? Her sister?'" Cottone told him who she was, and Materia introduced himself. "It was awesome," says Salter. "Indescribable. When I met them, I knew we had a bond different than any I've made with any other person. It was like meeting someone for the first time and immediately feeling like they're family. You care about them like family."

Salter is sleeping better now.

Before the marathon, Materia didn't have cop friends. Cottone didn't hang with firefighters. But they talked. Cottone told him about the problems she had had months before the bombings, how she had gotten help. She told him about a program she knew about that helped her deal with stress.

Materia listened, but declined to join her.

"Being in the service, I had seen my share of things, but didn't really deal with it," he says. "It was just, *Suck it up and move on*. But it's always there. And then you're a year out, two years out, three years out. And then this happens on the street where you work, where you hang out with friends, where you go past 10, 15 times a day on calls for work. "It's your neighborhood, your street. It's like, *God, I can't get away from this.*"

Cottone kept talking.

Materia knows that quiet, proud men who witness violence can go through tough times—divorces and drinking too much and spending too much time alone. Are those difficulties connected to the men's pride and stoicism? Sometimes he wonders.

Eventually Materia got into counseling. "Shana kind of forced me to deal with it in a certain way," he says. "And I'd be in a much darker place had I not confronted those things. I was very fortunate that Shana said, 'Hey, I want you to check this out with me.

You want to do this?' It helped me out a bunch and I'm thankful that she was there."

"Thank you, Shana," Sdoia says, after Materia has finished the story. Sdoia is not thanking Cottone for saving her life. She is thanking the cop for saving Materia.

Sdoia doesn't have plans to enter any marathons yet. She'd be happy to get back to running a few miles, a few times a week. "I wouldn't say I enjoyed running like some people," she says. "It was more of a love/hate thing. But after, I always felt good. It was always a place for me to shut everything down and to think. I'm hoping to get back to that again. People tell me it's early on. I'm trying to find my new normal. And like they say, you have to walk before you can run."

FOUR FRIENDS in a warm restaurant on a bitter cold night. Less than a year from the maiming violence that bound them together. Each wishes it had never happened. Each feels blessed to have found the others.


Cottone hasn't visited the bombing site and, as far as any ceremonies at the location this year, "I don't want to f---king be there." The others share her feeling. Salter doesn't even like walking down Boylston Street. Materia passes the site often, and though it helps that he's always with "three knuckleheads complaining about God knows what," it still makes him think about that day.

Sdoia would just as soon stay away from the site, too. But if she's asked, she'll likely go. "My goal"—in the documentary, in public appearances, in this story—"is to inspire other amputees. To show your life doesn't have to end because of this new situation."

If she goes, so will Materia. "My place of business is wherever she is. So whatever she has to do to move on, I'll be there. And I'd like to share it with Shana and Shores."

If Materia goes, so is Cottone. "If you want to go, then I'm going to go," she says.

And if those three go, then Salter is in, too.

"I've gotten a relationship with three people that I love like family," he says, "even though I never knew them before. I'd kind of like to be with them." 

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