

Dear Gwyneth,

As the tenth anniversary of 9/11 approaches, the memory of that day in New York replays hauntingly in my mind. Although we have never met and you probably don't remember our encounter that morning, I need to thank you for inadvertently saving my life that day.

I've been meaning to write to you for many years but found it difficult to write to someone I've never met who is also a celebrity. However as the years have passed, I have gained a deeper appreciation for how fortunate I have been both personally and professionally. I want to thank you for changing my fate on that terrible day.

We both lived in the West Village at that time and I was late to work that morning. I was making an illegal cross diagonally on 7th Avenue to get to the Christopher Street station when a silver Mercedes SUV came along 4th Street. The SUV stopped suddenly as did I to avoid a collision. Then the car started, then I did, then the car stopped then I did. It was a classic game of start, stop, start, stop. I started laughing and realized the driver was laughing too. Then I realized it was you.

I finally made the cross and laughed again, excited to share my experience with my coworkers that Gwyneth Paltrow almost hit me with her car. At the time you made me late for work. I arrived at the 1/9 stop just as my train was leaving the station. Forgive the somewhat cheesy reference, but it was my real life Sliding Doors moment.

I grabbed the next train and arrived at the WTC at 8:47am just as the first plane hit. The police pushed us back down into the subway and we exited on Vesey Street under where the first plane entered. I'm not sure where I would have been had I made the first train, either on the elevator or at my desk on the 77th floor of 2 World Trade. Regardless, I was fortunately able to make it out of the building and walk two blocks north before the second plane literally came into my office. I was blessed with being far enough away that I wasn't hit by debris and fortunate to say I'm a 9/11 survivor. It wasn't until the next day that I remembered our encounter at a random intersection that morning.

As the tenth anniversary is approaching, I feel more fortunate than ever to be a survivor because of where I am today. I want to not only share my little miracle that day, but also share with the other survivors how my life has turned out. I have spent years healing, but this is one part of my own story that I need to bring full circle. We, as a community of survivors, have grown, changed, given back and are stronger than the memory of that awful day in a city we so love.

After 9/11, I bought a studio at the corner of Jane & 8th because I still loved NYC and wanted to prove the terrorists couldn't scare me away. A few years later, I moved to San Francisco and then fell in love with and married an Englishman. We now live in Marina del Rey and every day we are grateful for everything that we have experienced and survived both individually and as a couple.

I live my life with gratitude and work to repay the generosity that fate granted me that day.

Please know that this is not an excuse to meet you, but rather a way to thank you for changing my life. If I had impacted someone's life in this way, I would want to know.

Thank you for being such a positive role model for women out there and I continue to admire your strength, kindness, and professionalism.

Warmly,



Lara Lundstrom Clarke

