



New York Is Funny That Way.

One year in NYC. 50 bucket list adventures.
Baby, it's time to write our own damn rom-com.

Created By: Allie Demopoulos

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Intro.

I once was told that I would fall in love with a person or place and it would change the course of the rest of my life.

For me, I was 22. And it was New York.

Yeah, I know. Original.

Too fucking bad. I can't change the facts.

And no, I wouldn't dare. It's not my "brand".

The fact is this: the romance of this city, that's the good stuff. The stuff that seeps in and takes root in your damn core. The stuff of rom-coms. And hit songs. And every cliché you've heard that is as fun to live as it is true.

You know you like it.

I know I do.

11 years in this city. It's official. I'm not an expert in much, but I've become one in wandering these city streets. That's what time will do. Speaking of time, I've decided to be more purposeful with it. To not ever take this fabulous city for granted. There's so much to do!

Because, Baby, we're in New York.

So, I've made a list. A bucket list of sorts. Of my favorite things about New York from the last decade. And all the things that I've yet to experience.

It's time for some adventure. To soak it all up. Everything this grand city has to offer.

Everything I've been "too busy" to do. Until now.

There's no more time for excuses.

It's time to create our own story.

Let's go play, shall we?

Intro.

Baby, the magic of the city is this: around every corner, there is an opportunity for collision.

With a man. Your dreams. A hot dog cart.

You choose your own damn adventure.

You're living in a rom-com, whether you like it or not. New York is funny that way.

So let's make the best of it. Take advantage of all those beautiful moments and chances for encounters, both sexy and profound.

And hope to hell that it's well-written. Or that even if it's well-written, may you not end up like Marisa Tomei in *What Women Want*.

Sexy as hell and given all the best punchlines. But left outside in the rain.

Which is why we're gonna write this one ourselves. You and me. And *The List*.

My motivations are pure.

A love for New York.

For adventure.

For those who love New York as much as I do. (You.)

Do I have a silly little hope that if I finish *The List*, maybe a man will magically appear in the form of a 6'4" Adonis who always walks on the car side of the street? A man who thinks that dad jokes are a waste of words? Who is kind? And understands that I will always wander alone? Just a little.

Intro.

Collisions.

They're what create space for the magic.

A gal can dream.

Oh, hello there. Ahhh, I'm back! Fantasy is fun isn't it, Baby? If you didn't like fantasy, you wouldn't be here in the first place, now would you?

But my real hope is that after all these collisions, after failing at a dream, followed by over two years of a worldwide pandemic, that I might start feeling like myself again.

Just like the city.

If any of this feels familiar, I hold the same hope for you.

So, let's go on a tour of the best New York City has to offer. And experience the magic that keeps us here in overpriced tiny boxes, dreaming of the lives we are already living.

Soaking up the little vignettes that make every square foot its own story.

Just waiting to unfold. Before your gorgeous, New York City-livin' eyes.

And always remember that we're the lucky ones.

Even on days when a stranger spits on you while you're innocently walking down the street.

When you feel like you just want to scream into the East River.

Intro.

Always know, your feet are still on the ground.
And that ground is Manhattan.

Ain't life just grand?

If you think this is too corny, as an 80s subway ad once
pleaded, "For God's Sake, Get Out!"
We don't want you here.

Has this kind of quest been done before? I'm sure.
Is it cliché? Why, yes it is.

But fuck off.
It's my story.

My New York.

In a decade, the city has never lost its wonder.
I can only hope it proves to hold the same magic for you.
I have a sneaking suspicion it will.

From my little desk, looking out the window onto Allen
Street. To you.

Welcome to New York City.
The best place to be alone.

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.
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Take advantage of it now, Pretty Baby. Because you won't
be alone for long.

New York is funny that way.

The Pitch.

The Short Pitch.

One year in NYC. 50 bucket list adventures. A weekly column detailing the story of a rom-com unfolding in real time.

Honest. Funny. Unapologetic. A little dirty. Just like our city. A tour around town with an older sister who has done the damn thing. Of course, I'll share the stories and lessons from my 20s along the way. If you live in New York City, you always have a story to tell.

Each week, I'll bring you along for the tales of a new bucket list mission. I'll be your guide as we increase our collisions and indulge in the best of the city and the best we've yet to experience. Won't you come play along?

The Value.

I have a bucket list of nearly 200 NYC experiences. A consolidated list of 50 full adventure days. A handful of columns already written. The ideas are endless. And so are opportunities for community building and brand partnerships. 50 adventures? Hundreds? There are no limits in our fabulous city of New York!

The city can be a lonely place. It's what makes her so seductive, so majestic, and so unbearably tough. Add in the growing isolation of our WFH reality or the "holy shit!" moment of landing here on Day 1... *The List* is a built-in community, a part of your NYC welcome basket. A must-have for any NYC beginner, a staple at every NYU and Columbia freshman orientation.

The List will create a community where women can connect. Forging friendships, creating memories, and writing their own rom-coms, together. Inspiring their unique and unforgettable New York City adventure.

The Pitch.

The Value. (cont.)

NYC dreamers united in the wonder of bucket list adventures and the magic the city holds around every corner. Each week, joining me to play along, and maybe even get 20% off admission at Fotografiska. Cause this town ain't cheap!

The Audience.

The Dreamer, turned Local.

Our main audience.

Meet Lourdes. Lourdes just touched down in JFK and has pushed her way onto a crowded rush hour A train. Carrying enough suitcases to swallow her small frame, she sparkles. Brimming with the foolish pride of a decision to navigate the subway like the real New Yorker she has always wanted to be. Cab fare? Naw, she doesn't take the easy way out. She knows earning it is all part of the fun. It's why she's here.

Her excited eyes dart all around her. Taking in every scene. Every conversation. Each second of this new existence, she's living in the unfamiliar. The feeling of anonymity is thrilling. The anticipation of a life she has always dreamed of. A 20-something gal who is about to step foot on the hallowed grounds of Manhattan. For the first time. On those same streets that have felt the soles of all greats that have come before her.

Lourdes came here for what we all come here for. Her story is a tale as old as time. I used to be Lourdes. So did you. Lourdes came here to escape. To see what was out there for her. And Manhattan? Well, it holds all the promise of everything she's ever wanted...

The chance to write her own story. Her way.

The Pitch.

The Audience. (Cont.)

Lourdes is happily single. Optimistic, but rooted in reality. She's brave as hell. Starry-eyed at the thought of finding love in New York City. Fearless. Lourdes is a gal who doesn't leave her apt without a good outfit. A gal who savors the taste of burnt diner coffee, because it's a taste as honest as New York. A gal who uses her waitressing tips to buy a subscription to *The New Yorker*, even though she never has time to read it, cause she's too busy livin' her fabulous New York life.

A gal who can't wait to get her hands on a NYON Always Park Tote.

Lourdes is on a mission. To find out who she is and what she's made of. To become one of the greats. For her, it's always been *New York or Nowhere*. Whenever I see a Lourdes, I get teary with excitement for her. I want to hug her. And tell her that she's got this. But she already knows that. And would sucker punch me if, I, a stranger, ever invaded her personal space with an awkward display of unearned affection. Lourdes is built for this town.

This is for you, Lourdes. I know your journey is gonna be tougher than you realize. Lonelier than you could ever conceive of right now. More fucking beautiful than the city skyline when it sparkles. More magical than a first kiss with that model dude who inevitably won't text you back.

It will be more. It will be less. But it will, most importantly, be all your own.

Lourdes, welcome to New York City.
You're going to be just great.

And if you ever feel alone, remember *The List* is always here for you. And so am I.

The Pitch.

The Audience. (Cont.)

Our other audience buckets.

There's always an audience for New York City.

The Visitor

The Visitor comes to New York City to experience what it's like to be dwarfed in the cocoon of midtown skyscrapers. To experience the magic of watching the best in the world on Broadway. The siren song of Soho. The storied history of Greenwich Village streets. The most satisfying experience for The Visitor is to get the rare opportunity to feel like The Local. Stick with me, and you'll feel like a Local in no time.

The Dreamer

Whether in a small Ohio town or the center of Tel Aviv, New York City captures hearts around the globe. The Dreamer fantasizes about visiting and has lived their imagined New York lives through 90s sitcoms and an annual Sex and the City binge. It's time to give The Dreamer a rom-com in real-time. And show them the best of, so when they transition from Dreamer to Visitor, they know the inside scoop on all the best places to go!

The Local

The Local knows the romance of the city. That's why they're here. But like any relationship, sometimes things become stale. Even though our New York pride won't let us talk about such an unsavory thought. It's only natural for a lust of the city to lose its grip on our imaginations. Sometimes all you need is a new perspective. Would you let me be your third to spice things up?

You, me, and the city. I promise I'm a good time.

The Pitch.

The Timing.

New York City is back!

And this particular story? Well, it's just in time. The city is welcoming a new crop of dreamers ready to make their mark.

Our great city is starting to feel like itself again.
So am I. I hope you are too.

I'm ready to make up for lost time.
And never again take for granted the beautiful reality...
that around every corner is the chance for our next great story. In New York City.

The Romance.

Fuck a glass slipper. I want someone to kiss my face in Central Park.

The chance to fall in love in New York City?
But even better than that... the chance to fall in love with NYC all over again (or for the first time)?
And the chance to find out who you are in the greatest city in the world?

Well, that's the most magical love story of all.

With all these collisions, who knows who we'll meet. What we'll learn. About the city and about ourselves.

Will we meet a man?
A lifelong friend to gossip over Zabar's coffee with when we're 80 years old?
Will we grow to have a deeper relationship with a Levain chocolate chip walnut?

Only time will tell.

Well, what are you waiting for? The city waits for no one!
It's time to write our own damn rom-com.

The Pitch.

A bit about me.

I started my New York City adventure with an internship at *Vanity Fair* magazine. Worked in TV production and development. Then went rogue and tried to start a live entertainment venue in Queens. I currently work as a copywriter who would much rather write about her next New York adventure.

I wear all black most of the time. I know Anna Wintour doesn't like it, but I do. Sometimes I voice a telenovela style love triangle for the pigeons who flirt on my air conditioner. Yeah, of course catching the train right before the doors close is the best... but have you ever walked home in the middle of a cobblestone street in SoHo after a shitty first date with Sinatra in your ears? And smiled because, Baby, you're in New York?! Or been so swept up by the magic of the city that you actually enjoy standing in the middle of Times Square?

I'm lucky as hell to call this city home for 11 years. This is my love letter to the city, but most importantly to myself. And to all those writing their own stories in the greatest city in the world.

If I can have any impact on just one of those New York City dreamers, then, well... can you think of anything better?

The List. Examples.

- Take a day and go to all the places you would shop if you chose the life of marrying a finance dude who cheated on you and you wanted to revenge-drain-his-bank-account. Walk on Madison like you fucking belong. McQueen, La Perla, Kiki, Prada, Comme des Garçons. Enjoy them as the art they are.
- Go to Zabbar's and eat amongst the Lifer Upper West Side Ladies Who Lunch. The ancient ones who meet there to gossip in their diamonds and pearls while enjoying their dollar coffee. Get a crumb cake and a reuben. And sit in the middle of the ladies while you eavesdrop and eat. Just like you used to do as a laundry day treat when you were 25 and UWS livin' like Eloise.
- Spend a day in the New York Public Library in Midtown. Pay respect to the stone guard lions. Stare up at the lobby ceiling. Wander. Write. Then go to an old midtown bar - one that's been there since the beginning of time. Did time exist before New York?
- Where are the parties with all the NYC firefighters and NYPD? What bars do they go to? Figure out where these dudes hang out. Spend a night and try to get to know 'em. Have some whiskey. Make some friends. See what happens.
- Pretend to be Elliott Erwitt and sit in Washington Square Park. Take photos of strangers for two hours.
- Actually do something for Fleet Week. You're about to age out of your opportunity to flirt with the sailors (who are probably all 23). Is there an actual party like that scene in *Sex & The City*? Ya better find out. The clock is ticking. May your body age as gracefully as Kim Cattrall's. In the name of yoga, ACV, and Tata Harper. Amen. This is your Fleet Week prayer.

The List. Examples.

- Sit on a bench and stare at kids on the playground. Try not to get arrested while contemplating the future of your ovaries. Soak up that hot dad eye candy. Gauge how powerful the equation of babies + hot dads + well-groomed puppies hits on your Reproductive Richter Scale.
- Go on a night walk in Tribeca and the West Village and creepily look into the windows of those who are living in your dream homes. Criticize their interior decorating decisions. Take notes on any you like. Bring a joint.
- Get drunk in Times Square at night. Look up at all the bright lights and enjoy that feeling of being in a life-size video game. Remember how magical it was the first time you ever walked through. The first day of a New Year, confetti still covering the streets. Before you knew that you were going to move there and that it would change the rest of your life. And that it would all still feel enchanting 11 years later.
- Pay the absurd amount of \$ to go to the Empire State Building. Pinch yourself. This is not a movie. This is your home. Yes, this moment deserves a selfie. Put your pride aside. You need to learn your angles, girl.
- Have tea at The Plaza. Or a cocktail. Play Billy Joel's "I Don't Want To Be Alone" in your headphones. Enjoy the absurdity of trying too hard to create a scripted moment in reality. And of this ridiculous prompt.
- Go to an auction at Christie's. Find out how to do this with no money. Bring Monopoly money? Channel your inner Anna Delvey. If she can almost con her way into millions, you can get into a damn Christie's auction!



BERGDORF
GOODMAN

Sample 1.

Sample 1.

Today's Mission: Go to the iconic Bergdorf Goodman. Find your signature scent.

Neighborhood: Midtown. 5th Avenue to be exact.

\$\$\$\$: Best to go with a friend who has Dubai oil money. If you have a friend like this, an introduction, please?

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Ahh, 5th Avenue. A clusterfuck. Of tourists. Of the New York City elite who actually can afford to shop here. And kids taking photos with their middle fingers raised in front of Trump Tower.

A (now) New York Classic.

It may seem frivolous to some, but the symbolism of 5th Avenue holds serious weight. Taste. Fantasy. An aspirational playground of indulgence. The capital of the world in luxury.

Baby, 5th Avenue... it just hits different.

Everyone remembers their first. Mine was Barneys. The day I turned 23. I remember so distinctly the feeling of walking alongside Central Park on 5th Avenue. A Barneys bag in one hand and a Magnolia bag in the other.

My first fancy perfume and classic cupcakes in tow, I felt like a classy broad. So chic. So iconic.
So New York.

It was the first time I remember feeling like I belonged.

Sample 1.

Flash forward to a decade later.
Barneys was now the ghost of retail past.
Somehow my future felt more uncertain than it did at 23.
But, luckily, 5th Ave still gave me that same fancy feeling.

Welcome to Bergdorf Goodman.

Baby, don't you just love the Bergdorf logo?! An Art Deco masterpiece that transports you to a time when an outfit wasn't complete without a hat. Ahhh, why is the past so damn romantic?!

Right as you walk through the door, it's immediately apparent why Bergdorf is the luxury retail GOAT. The attention to detail and curation of this place is an art. Everything sparkles. Surprisingly, even the elevator buttons that have been groped by thousands of tourists and New Yorkers alike. Each person on their own journey to this fashion mecca for a tantalizing experience promising decadence. Indulgence.

Fantasy.

A playground for the senses that never failed to delight. And never failed to make you stand up straighter, in the presence of fashion greatness. While trying not to trip in Manolo stilettos.

It all began with a man who started as a tailor and then ended his career owning an entire block of Manhattan. Bergdorf Goodman isn't just a store. It's a monument to the American dream.

When people aspire to greatness - or want to know what the hell greatness looks like - they turn to Bergdorf Goodman.

Sample 1.

Bergdorf was the first American couturier to introduce ready to wear to the fashion landscape. A place known for developing young designers. Andrew Goodman was one of the first people who initiated the idea that the Met Costume Institute be created. Everyone has heard of Anna Wintour, but have you heard of the incomparable Linda Fargo?

Oh, and the windows! The windows at Bergdorf are iconic. Theater standing still. Going on a pilgrimage to see the Bergdorf Goodman holiday windows has become the beloved highlight of my yearly holiday tradition. Far more mesmerizing than that giant of a tree at Rock Center.

There is so much more important history to be told about this truly influential OG. If you want to know more, may I point you in the direction of the wonderful, star-studded documentary *Scatter My Ashes At Bergdorf*? A must-watch for every fashion lover. And lover of our great city, of course.

Let's Get Shopping, Shall We?

"A woman that is in control of her destiny. A woman who knows what she wants and is very proud of her strong sense of femininity and that there is no place where she can express her femininity better than with the help of Bergdorf Goodman" - Oscar de la Renta

Perfume shopping at Bergdorf Goodman is a lovely little luxury. A New York City pastime. For women who are fancy. And those women that wish to be. Women like me.

Sample 1.

Choosing a signature scent was a big commitment and notoriously tough.

I know what I like.

And just like finding the right man, I believed I would know it when I smelled it.

Bergdorf houses some of the best fragrances that this city has to offer. Nay, that the world has to offer!

I would surely find my scent soulmate here.

Yes, the idea of soulmates is a crock of shit... but at Bergdorf, I'm a believer.

Bottle after bottle, shelf after shelf, I sniff around for nearly two hours.

I am Goldilocks and Bergdorf is the ultimate in promising porridge.

This may be the most insulting comparison anyone has used for this iconic retail Goliath.

I am, clearly, not worthy.

I'm on the hunt for a fragrance of spicy roses, old wood, caramel, vanilla, cinnamon, and oud. A scent that pleaded to be worn on skin adorned in black leather & lace. What you would imagine a high-class brothel in Morocco would smell like in the early 1900s. Sweet but not too sweet. With a hint of spice. And a rose base far more sophisticated than what you would find in a garden.

Something that evoked a kind of mystery and complexity. The kind of woman I aspired to be. The kind of woman that, dare I say, I'm becoming. (Woah, did I just say that confident thing out loud?)

Sample 1.

I even indulge in the theater of a very fun gentleman at Tom Ford. Who used astrology to find me a scent. Which is usually an eye roll. But again, there's something about being at Bergdorf that sweeps you up in its dizzying fantasy.

Or maybe I was just a bit scent stoned. I'm a Leo, btw. Roar.

At this point, I have befriended every salesperson, all of us unified together in the hunt for my one true match.

Despite all our efforts... we... *I* couldn't find it. If not at Bergdorf, then where?! Paris? Morocco? Outer-fucking-space? If only Elon would accept my LinkedIn request...

Deflated, I walk a few blocks to Saks. For one final gasp of hope. The frenetic energy of Saks Fifth Avenue was a sharp contrast to the spa-like calm of Bergdorf Goodman. And again, I sniffed.

As I walk out of Saks an hour later and empty-handed, I hear a voice. "Nothing's ever good enough for you, Alexandra." Like many inconvenient times in life, a mother's voice always seems to creep in. These words have haunted me for a while now and somehow always make their way back into my mind. If Bergdorf didn't have the luxury I craved, then... was she right? Was nothing good enough for me?

Did I have unreasonable standards... for... life?

Sample 1.

My Mom reminds me of this fun little “fact” about my personality when I complain about work or tell her why (*insert name here*) didn't work out. Why I didn't want to go on a second date. I tell her that I just *know*. I had spent the vast majority of my (almost) 33 years single and I knew myself pretty damn well. The perks of being alone. And also I'm convinced everyone is just settling anyway. How are so many people coupled up?? Howwww?

The math of human nature **x** chance of collision / attraction = just doesn't make any damn sense!

I refuse to settle. For a man. A job. Or a fragrance. And I refuse to settle for being less than the best myself.

Isn't this why we live in New York? Because it's the only place that's *enough*?

That will make *us* enough?

Drenched in fragrance failure and bubbling up with existential dread inspired by my mother, I wait for the bus home.

Sitting on the M15 and detoxing from the 'fumes, the reality of the past week floods in.

It had been one hell of a week.

I had fucked everything up. In a big way. I came in second place for a job that would have changed the game. Horrible news made even more gut-wrenching by the fact that I would now probably never get the chance to meet a man. One who had this effect on me. Even though we had never met in person. I couldn't shake him. And I had a sneaking suspicion that if he was in the same room with me, he wouldn't be able to shake me either.

Sample 1.

I finally may have found a man who was enough. On the other side of the country. Leave it to me to not find someone in a city of 8.3 million people. But if we've learned anything from Bergdorf...

Even though I had never even experienced him with all five senses, I somehow just knew.

For once, my logical brain was quieted and my body called the shots.

The butterflies, the nerves, the stuff that makes pop songs go platinum.

In person, I could only imagine his magnetism would cause my head to explode - just like Austin Powers did to those poor fembots.

Or he would smell like a hippie health food store while packin' a lethal dose of residual manic theater kid energy. Easily realities. Easily dealbreakers.

But I had to walk down his aisles.

"You don't know me, but I know me"... I wish that line would work on future employers. Or men who live in LA. Oh, Noah! That line has stayed with me for almost two decades. It's just, well, perfect. And things rarely are.

Fuck that "you're a bird, I'm a bird" shit.
Save it for the fairy tales.

"You don't know me, but I know me"... that's real life.

Sample 1.

Also, a quick note on failure. Baby, failure is ok. In fact, if you don't fail, that means you're not taking enough chances. You're not doin' it right. Failure is good! But that doesn't mean it doesn't absolutely, positively suck. Especially when the stakes are this high. My chance at getting to the next level in my career *and* at living in a rom-com with good writing? Days were just brighter with him in them. Even through a fucking screen.

How could I have let this happen?

I feel a spiral comin' on. And just like at Bergdorf, I indulge.

I thought I had moved past it all. But I hadn't. I guess it hasn't even been a week.

Things feel so damn hard lately. What if they don't get easier? The older I get, the more I realize how in a flash, I could just end up alone. Dreams unrealized. Potential untapped. Time slipping.

Sometimes I wish I could go back to 23. A time of innocence. An afternoon at Barneys. The days of experiencing the best of New York, for the very first time.

I wish I could bottle that feeling. The feeling of New York firsts.

Because those... well, they're just pure magic.

15 blocks into a ride on the M15 and I'm still on the verge of tears. My Mom's words echo in my head. I'm starting to think that maybe it's *me* who's not good enough. For the job. The guy. *For myself?*

Sample 1.

30 blocks and my chest is heaving, but the tears are still held within the confines of their ducts. This spiral has some serious *Alice In Wonderland* potency. Maybe I'm just hungry?

"How can someone justify tears after Bergdorf?", I wonder as I realize the absurdity of my privileged state. Woe is me! Thank God I'm not in a cab. Then I'd just be insufferable.

There is a kind of poetry to wallowing in self-pity in the cocoon of the MTA and the solidarity of its strangers.

So iconic. So New York.

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They tell me everything happens for a reason. I think that's bullshit.

Things happen. And more often than not, the reason isn't cosmic, it's you.

The lack of personal responsibility (especially in my generation)... oh, don't get me started!

I failed. And now it's up to me to create the "reason" why. To write the moral in this shit fable.

The past two months had been a total mindfuck. I let it become all-consuming. The process. And the fantasy. It was a fantasy tantalizing enough to make me... (*deep breaths*)...

Lightly consider the thought of a *possible, eventual*, probably not but, like, *maybe?* but if so, *really eventual* future in LA.

Sample 1.

For the first time ever.
Yeah, I know.

Employers need to realize that we build *entire lives* around these opportunities. For months. In our heads. Just me? I feel like I belong locked up, in a room with padded walls.

With one thought based on a figment of hope for a new career path and a crush that was a long shot at best... I had become the traitor cliché. But why would I confine myself to a life in just one city? Even if it *is* the greatest city in the world.

Also, what does one *do* in LA?

I had to check my pulse. My identity. My friends even sent concerned texts.

I had never imagined a world where I wouldn't raise a kid in the city and bring them to the Met to stand in awe in the presence of greatness (don't you worry, I'd make sure they know how lucky it is to understand what greatness looks like before they even learn their ABCs, so they don't become an ungrateful little douche).

Where I wouldn't be able to get a BEC at any hour of our 24-hour day.

Where I wouldn't, in a great outfit on a non-bloat day, strut on the sidewalk and feel like I owned this damn city. My strong 5'10" frame reaching the heights of the Empire-Fucking-State-Building.

Sample 1.

Who would I be without New York?

Fantasy is dangerous when it's on the cusp of becoming your reality.

Making you question everything you thought you wanted. And then stops just short.

Next time I wouldn't get so swept up.

I haven't even cum properly in an entire week.

That's now my new barometer for being ok.

So, I guess I wasn't.

But I will be.

Because that's who the hell I am. Who this city has taught me to be.

And I'm not done with her lessons yet.

Baby, I just prefer to learn them while nostril deep in a base note of Moroccan Rose.

Sometimes an afternoon on 5th Avenue causes an existential crisis. If you're lucky.

New York is funny that way.

Sample 2.

Today's Mission: Sit in a park on a Sunday. Get a Levain cookie and some coffee. Read the obituaries in *The New York Times*. Get an actual paper copy from a bodega or a newsstand.

Neighborhood: Anywhere with a park. Today, Flatiron. Madison Square Park.

\$: The price of a cookie, coffee, and the *Sunday Times* (roughly \$15).

There's nothing better than a gorgeous, sunny, New York City Sunday with no plans. Baby, it's the perfect opportunity to slow down and take in the everyday motion picture magic.

The magic we New Yorkers take for granted.

Today we're going to enjoy a timeless New York pastime. Reading the Sunday paper on a park bench. And add a Levain cookie to sweeten the deal.

If you haven't had a Levain cookie. Let me just tell you... Levain created its own category. It's not just a cookie, it's a religious experience. They just opened a Los Tacos No.1 right next to Levain and now I can't walk stoned anywhere near the corner of Lafayette and Bleecker.

Sample 2.

A cookie magical enough to finally give me the answer for the question every man asks and always three dates too soon.

What's my fantasy?

Well... (I pause to savor the moment before I see the hopeful expression on their face drop, as my fantasy has everything to do with a baked good and nothing to do with ass play or a 22-year old third)...

My fantasy is walking around New York City with a bottle of wine and a sexy man who makes me laugh. Then coming home and laying on my bed. Joint in one hand, Levain in the other. The man's head between my legs.

Baby, of course, I'll return the favor.
Life is always better with a cookie waiting.

I did this once with a Jacques Torres double chocolate chip. But, we've graduated.
It's time for Levain.

I wipe the drool from my lower lip, just in time to see a dead rat on the street.
A macabre smile finds its way to my face at this classic scene.

The city somehow knows. She never lets you live in fantasy too long.

But isn't that why we love her so?

Sample 2.

I'm on the hunt for the *Sunday Times*. IRL. In all its ink-splotched glory. All the newsstands are closed! Is that a thing on Sundays? Two bodegas. No luck. How can you not find *The Times* in Manhattan on a damn Sunday mornin'?! I finally walk into a magazine store. Ah, here she is!

\$6?! *The Times*, they are a-changin'.

The last time I bought a physical newspaper was the day after Obama got elected. Which was, fun fact, also the day I lost my virginity. Right after my Sophomore year college boyfriend and I drove in his pick-up truck and stole an Obama-Biden campaign sign from the highway in good 'ole Pullman, WA.

That day. #Historic.

That guy. A big reason I remained emotionally unavailable for most of my 20s.

Madison Square Park.

There's something about this park that is just beautiful. Don't get me wrong, Central Park is untouchable. But there's something I love about looking up to see the tall buildings. A special kind of cocoon. On a park bench right in the middle of it all.

It gives me that Manhattan smile.

My speed quickens as I have to force myself to slow down the cheetah pace that has become my default setting in our concrete jungle.

And enjoy a morning meditation on the city.

Sample 2.

Madison Square Park, I have recently learned, is a pretty historic spot. It's been designated as an urban public space since 1686. In 1811, when the Manhattan grid was first created, it identified the park as its largest public space in the city. Madison Square Park has lived many New York lives. Once home to the Lenape people, the original inhabitants of Manhattan. Once a training ground for the U.S. Army and also home to the first baseball games of the New York Knickerbockers. Once home to the Statue of Liberty's right arm and torch. Once home to the first public Christmas tree in the United States.

And current home to my existential indulgence.

A bit about death. Oh how fun.

I had just found the perfect bench and opened the paper to the obits, as a trio of grandparent-aged folks walk on by. On the search for a particular bench, dedicated to a loved one, I presume.

I get teary.

You see, my death dream is for my ashes to be made into a bench in Central Park.

So strangers can sit on my face.
For the rest of eternity.

Or until Manhattan inevitably ends up underwater due to our ever-warming mother earth.

The thought of the end of humanity isn't that scary. But, the end of Manhattan?!

Baby, the horror!

Sample 2.

But first, I have to live a life worthy of a bench. Worthy of spending the rest of my days people watching and providing comfort to those wandering in the greatest park, in the greatest city in the world.

Living a life just to qualify its final form in death? Now that's a special kind of fucked up poetry. Come to think of it, isn't that what religion is?

That great Gladys Knight and the Pips tune "Best Thing That Ever Happened To Me" plays on repeat in my head as I wonder if someone will be searching for my bench someday? Or care enough to write my story.

Who would I leave behind?

- .
- .
- .

I have a problem with obituaries. They feel like a stat sheet. Sterile. But life isn't sterile. And neither is death. I want to feel the person's essence. *Who* they were. Not their resume. People's stories deserve to be told.

My grandmother died earlier this year. My aunt wrote her obit. Aunt M was dealing with the million and one things one has to deal with when a loved one dies... and still managing to keep her shit together, an accomplishment deserving of a write-up in *The Times* in and of itself. The obit accurately detailed Yia Yia's life, but it just didn't sound like her.

I know everyone says this, but Yia... well, she was truly special. Talk about a woman who made her mark.

Sample 2.

So, I took a chance at offending one of my favorite people during one of the worst times in her life... and I rewrote Yia's obit. It's one of the few times in my life that I felt truly compelled to act, despite the consequences.

I was writing about one of the most important lives in my life. In the time it takes to get from NYC to Philly. A two-hour deadline, give or take traffic on I-95.

That's the other thing about death.

Just when you think it's the final deadline, there are so many more.

In the dark bowels of the lower level of the Megabus, I tried to capture the essence and spark of the woman she was. Tears illuminated by the light of my MacBook. Watching videos I had secretly taken of our conversations the last time we were together for Thanksgiving.

A sexy (but mostly sad) side note: Thanksgiving also happened to be a time when I was talking to a finance dude on Hinge. Who was more interested in the dirty details of his request for me to dominate him than the beautiful fact that I had finally made my grandmother spanakopita. For the very first time. The woman who taught me what food is. Did he not understand the magic of this moment?! Of the baton being passed. The weight of a recipe, the taste of every family holiday, a legacy of caring for your own through shared meals.

Of Yia's smile of approval. Her clean plate. Details of my life he would never deserve to know.

Fuck latex. I want love.

Sample 2.

Sometimes the last memories of your grandmother also include some annoying random finance sub you met on Hinge. Such is the twisted reality of life in the big city.

A bizarre reality it is.
New York is fucked up that way.

Baby, if you take anything away from this, make sure you secretly record your conversations with your grandparents. And cook for them. You'll be so happy you did. And they don't know how cell phones work anyway.

Also, know that being with men who make real money usually comes at a price.

A palette cleanser. The I Dos.

As an antidote to the afterlife, I decide to browse the last page of the style section.
The Vows.

And sometimes reality is better than fiction.

"Ms. Im recalled being immediately drawn to Mr. Butt and saw their meeting as serendipitous. Just a year earlier, in 2007, she had lost a college boyfriend in a car accident, and felt that perhaps he was looking out for her by sending Mr. Butt her way."

I know I'm a terrible person, but it's been a total of three minutes and I can't stop laughing. People are starting to stare. If that guy did work some magic from the afterlife, he sure as hell has a great sense of humor.

It's a shame when we lose the funny ones. They really are a dying breed.

Sample 2.

Despite the truly brilliant antics of a dead dude, these write-ups were just... eh. They all felt like little houses made of ticky tacky that all look just the same.

Well, they're just not my kind of love story.

No one really cares about where you both went to college. Multiple paragraphs detailing how you met on Tinder and found him to be a "kind human being" (Baby, would you settle for anything less?). Or that 250 people attended your overpriced, unnecessarily stressful wedding, decorated with weird family dynamics, average-at-best food, and Pinterest-perfect table cacti, fitted with sage green bows paint swatched perfectly to match your bridesmaid's polyester table cloth dresses.

I don't believe in all that.

If I'm lucky enough to find a man to save me from being alone in my electric chair. And tell me dirty jokes until I smile...

Billy, Baby, play that tune.

*It all started with a crude joke and a smile.
How all the best love stories do.
On a starry Manhattan night.
Midnight tequila.
Morning breakfast.
A modern-day fairy tale.*

Sample 2.

The laughter. It never stopped.
So neither did they.
That feeling you just can't shake.
They didn't have a real wedding.
No one heard their vows. Because, Baby, those are sacred.
Instead, they rented a big, beautiful house. And hosted a
banger three-day party.
With the people they loved the most.
And instead of one dress, the "bride" had three.
None of them white.
All of them a deep grey. Symbolizing a softening of her
classic New York black.
A symbol of hope. Of letting someone in.
But of never losing herself.
Because, Baby, it takes two.
Love is pretty fuckin' great.
One day, Pretty Baby, it'll happen to you.

Isn't the dream to be so in love that it makes you feel
compelled to create a corny rhyme, despite how truly
terrible it may be?

A love powerful enough to somehow get *The New York Times*
to print "fuck"?

Too bad that tasteful request can't go on a wedding
registry.

But it can go on *The List*!

A couple's *List*? I feel a sequel comin' on!

But first, making a home in my reality.

On a park bench in the middle of Manhattan.

Alone.

Sample 2.

The future is so uncertain.
Which seems to be the running theme lately.
No one ever tells you this. But this is 32.

Or so it is for me.
Hopefully it won't be for you.

Back to the Bench.

The birds are chirping. The sun is shining. The city is in full spring bloom.
New York is showin' off.
I am lovin' every minute of it.

I am drunk on Levain, strong coffee, and sunshine.
So, I offer a stranger part of the paper.
We are sharing a bench, after all.

Peter. Soft-spoken. Swimmer. Lover of parks. And good coffee shops.
Late 60s. He had just written a book.

Throughout our hour and a half conversation, I learned that Peter is a believer in intermittent fasting. Vegan. Helped Bikram open his first yoga studio in South Beach. An avid New York Post reader who had since mostly abandoned *The Times*.

Peter asked me what I do. I stumble on my words. Explaining to him that for the first time in my life, I'm not sure what I do or what I want to do. I am working on a writing project. But it's new. Qualifications are important. A flimsy shield of armor.

Sample 2.

He responds "oh, you're a writer", so effortlessly... a label I feel like an imposter claiming.

Peter is kind. And likes to talk. The kind of conversation where I don't have to say much. The kind of conversation with a stranger that I prefer. I ask him if he was happy he had kids. Something that has been on my mind a lot lately. He smiled and says "they make you care about something greater than yourself." I figure that's a reason as good as any. From the little he said, I could tell his relationship with his children was a bit strained, partially due to politics.

A crime of our times.

Our conversation is lovely. About an hour in, we hit a sharp right, straight into critical race theory and Peter's views of Biden being corrupt. I disagree with most of what he is saying about politics. But I listen. Because it's important to do.

My personal little rebellion against the current state of our union.

Would it have been more responsible to engage in a friendly debate? Eh, maybe. Is Biden corrupt? Eh, probably. Who am I to know. The system doesn't make a whole lotta sense to me, but this is comin' from a gal whose fundamental understanding of our country's history is, well, pathetic at best. The remedy of Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States* remains next to my bed. Still waiting to be opened.

Sample 2.

All I know is that finding out Biden won by hearing cheering outside my window in Spanish Harlem... that was something unforgettable. The beauty of New York City on full display.

A collective sigh of relief that was felt in the marrow.

But politics aren't the point here.

Strangers with very different opinions, sharing space and ideas on a park bench in the middle of Manhattan.

The real modern-day fairy tale in our year 2022.

Manhattan at its best.

As God and the great Jane Jacobs had intended.

If you aren't familiar with Jane Jacobs, she was a writer and civic activist who helped save Washington Square Park and is a big reason we don't have a massive freeway cutting straight through our beloved island.

Our city would look completely different if it wasn't for her. She is a badass who is definitely worth a Google. We have so much to thank her for.

Peter finally stands.

He gives me a hug. And leaves me with a parting gift.

"If there's anything, remember this. Life is beautiful."

A smile finds its way to my face.

It's the most New York I've felt in years.

Sample 2.

"The serendipity of proximity." A wise woman recently told me the importance of this. I realize that this is the beauty of New York. She had summed it up in one phrase so casually. What makes this city magic.

The serendipity of proximity. Baby, I've now found a new Sunday tradition.

Somewhere on a park bench, between the lines of the obits and the stories of a stranger, fucked up memories of last days with loved ones and meditations on a pervy death wish, you may just learn how to live.

New York is funny that way.



Pull Pull
Sample 3.

abc carpet & home



Sample 3.

Today's Mission: Go to ABC Carpet & Home. Pretend you have an unlimited budget to outfit a Tribeca loft. And try not to spill your coffee on a \$25k silk chair.

Neighborhood: Union Square

\$-\$\$\$\$: Free to look, but to buy... ya better be a Rockefeller.

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. 
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ABC Carpet & Home. Aspirational furniture Mecca. One of my favorite places to get lost.

And play pretend.

Baby, at ABC, you were the best version of yourself. The kind that could afford a rug that costs as much as an entire year's worth of rent.

Not that money makes you the best version of yourself. Hardly. But a \$30k oriental rug *is* nice to look at when you're feeling blue...

ABC had seven floors! I repeat, *seven entire floors*. You could get lost for hours. My interior designer aunt was the first person to introduce me to ABC. And I fell in love. Every floor had its own (dare I even say it) "vibe". Now keep in mind that pre-pandemic, circa 2016... when a "vibe" actually meant something. It wasn't just a hair clip. It was an *actual* vibe. Each floor was completely different. Color scheme. Mood. With every ding of the elevator, the doors opened to a new story, full of treasures to discover and vignettes of a life that you could only imagine. Straight out of a magazine. One full of rich people with really good taste.

Sample 3.

Baby, you don't have to tell me how good you would look if you had more dough to spend. I already know.

Each floor transformed you into a new character. One whose fingers excitedly grazed each and every surface. Soaking in textures. And outrageous price tags. But that's not the point. Money doesn't matter here. At least for those who don't buy.

The point of this place was to dream. To imagine your different future New York lives.

The 3rd floor transformed me into a former hippie, crystal healing, mantra-slangin' chick with wavy hair past my tits. One who met a guy one year at Burning Man and never looked back. A guy who happened to have founded a successful start-up. Now we live in our Williamsburg loft and spend winters in Palo Alto with our toddler, Quest. Todd (aren't they all?), my multi-hyphenate whiz kid-start-up founder-baby daddy, and the love of my life (when I drink enough wine from our "cellar"), is too busy to care and has given me the responsibility to decorate. So I do. In whimsical pastels and elevated Anthropologie-esque decor.

When our nanny is home, it affords me the opportunity to get really stoned. And dance around the loft like I'm 25 again, worshipping the dope beats that I can feel from the soles of my moccasins, all the way up to my stick-on gemstone third eye. Which is how I find inspiration for my special brand of palo santo (that I've personally blessed with my lonely loft tears), decorated with bespoke crystals that are magnetized by the slow hum of Todd's cryo frozen first MacBook. The one he used to birth his start-up. The only crystals tuned to make all your Silicon Valley dreams come true.

Sample 3.

The 4th floor. I'm a statuesque architect who indulges in her obsession with harsh angles and cold-to-the-touch cement surfaces decorated with subtle accents of marble and silver. The kind of gal who schedules a tight 15 into her lunch hour for a daily quickie, always prepared with a drawer of fresh, folded black lace La Perla g-strings, neatly tucked away at her office desk. Steve Jobs never had to deal with panty lines. A lover of a world utilitarian, but modern. Sleek. Each piece of furniture with angles as sharp as my gaze and the cheekbones I've always aspired to have. Unique pieces of sculpture, perfect in both form and function. Minimal. With maximum impact.

The 5th floor. I morph into a globe-trotting, free spirit who loves to collect beautiful things from around the world. The kind of woman who always wears her long, flowing hair down, even when she's eating (but... how?! Please tell me how you don't accidentally eat your hair!). Who's had affairs in every country. And writes hand-written love letters in cursive, then sprays them with a spicy, decadent perfume. Who surrounds herself with textures and colors and just always *feels* things on a deeper level than you. A woman with the kind of passion that only Rumi could understand. Who wears too many rings. And that we modern people just don't have the time for. Especially in a city like New York.

Ding! Next floor.

Baby, I'm a rich man! When I wanted to feel like I created the Dow Jones (or like a woman trying to seduce a man worth over 9-figures), I would get off on the 6th floor. A very feminist statement, I know. But, like, how many women do you know that aspire to have a mahogany-filled study, fit for a murder mystery movie? Yeah, that's what I thought.

Sample 3.

The 6th floor was the best escape. Moody and mysterious. Cavernous, in a "Mrs. Peacock, with the candlestick, in the library" kinda way.

I once sought refuge on this floor, sitting on the extra-long, rich brown, tufted leather chesterfield couch, perfectly placed as a front seat to a projection of the Beatles movie. The kind of couch just pleading to be bathed in cigar smoke and soaked in scotch. A seat I made my temporary home for an hour in my early 20s to help get over the fact that a cute guy didn't text back. Catatonic, seeking solace in the moving images of a classic. A guy who I ended up having a three-year thang with. Who courted me with a mixtape (remember those?) and good licorice. The smooth serenade and oh-so-cool sounds of Raphael Saadiq will really do somethin' to a gal.

It all started when I (very purposefully) bent over in front of him in yoga pants at work. Resting my elbows on a table. A cheap, yet effective invitation.

Yes, this lil' 22-year-old PA knew exactly what she was doing. And did it work? Oh, yes! Of course.

Baby, sometimes it is just as easy as the "bend and snap". Dear Gawd, please tell me you know who Elle Woods is!?

Ok, so yes back to the furniture and today's mission! I haven't been to the glorious ABC since the pandemic. And I am so excited to shamelessly prance about each floor, living these luxurious little fantasy lives. And to of course furnish my Tribeca loft! The one I've taken up residency in, in my mind.

Sample 3.

It's a Saturday and I decide to take a stroll through the Union Square Market on my way to Aspirational Furniture Mecca. Coffee in hand... and now Saturday market moonshine. From somewhere upstate? Eh, thought it might make furniture shopping a bit more interesting. I now have that fuzzy feeling.

And *Just Like That* (jk!), we're here! Feast your eyes. On ABC Carpet & Home.

Where the rich go to shop. And the just gettin' by go to dream. Let's go dream, shall we?

The first thing you see when you walk in is the dishware. Everything you need to set an impressive table. Their style has always been a bit too "*Alice In Wonderland*" for me when it comes to matters of plating. I decide to come back to this part of the store last to see if there are some choices I could bare to make and still keep my personal design integrity intact.

That "I could bare". Who the fuck do I think I am?! Well, money can't buy taste. And taste? Well, alas, it can't buy much.

I walked here in chunky leather boots and the couches look far too welcoming. Baby, the city is fabulous when you actually slow down and look around. Which, if you're buzzing about like the NYC-dwelling busy little bee you are, then you never actually do. Ahhh, the irony. Slow down and enjoy it sometimes, will ya?

If you don't, you'll have a higher percentage of becoming one of the elderly who talks to themselves while walking down the street. You've been warned...

Sample 3.

It's nice to sit and just watch all the different kinds of overpriced furniture lovers. "Someday I'm gonna be buying these." I lift my gaze to see a younger gal, about 23, giving her parents a tour. I smile. And feel a kind of solidarity with her as I eye an old oriental rug that gives me the same optimism for the future. Even though my "someday" feels a bit closer than hers and regrettably more out of reach.

To my left, there's an extremely-straight lookin' dude, confused as hell, as he angrily paces back and forth. Turning over a glass. Looking at the price tag. Repeat. Turning over a glass. Looking at the price tag. Repeat. He's got some serious Tasmanian Devil energy that makes me nervous. And slightly turned on.

To my right, a couple with a dog on a leash shopping for plates. Like, seriously shopping. With intent to buy. You have to have some serious financial stability to bring something in here with four legs and a tail. A tail that's on eye-level with the bespoke ceramic plates?!

I struggle with the audacity of these people as I wonder if maybe one shot of moonshine wasn't enough.

Saved by a date. A middle-aged man and woman. Yes, this *had* to be a date. It was just too good. Their relationship seems new, fresh. They can't stop laughing. He's touching her arm. One of those dates where everyone else around them were just background actors in the illustration of their love story. He innocently goes "how much is a plate?" As they both look at the price tag in shock. She pretends to drop it. He laughs. Perfectly on cue. Not forced. It looks like he just adores her every word. Like he would get hard just from listening to her read out of a phonebook. Yes, a (now) retro reference.

Sample 3.

Would they welcome a third? Even though I would never intervene in such a sweet scene. The writing seems like it's just too good.

Behind me, a trio of 20-something gal pals admires how the exposed light bulbs aren't "evenly blown". (Insert tasteful dick joke here)

Ok ok, too much people watching, not enough shopping! I am outfitting a Tribeca loft, after all. And I'm even pickier shopping for a loft than I am for my rent-stabilized studio. Could you imagine? This is about to be a project. Where are the damn swatches?!

I finally find the elevators and they seem closed. Huh? I ask an employee. There are... uhhhh... come again??

No. More. Floors.
They must be kidding.

This very nice woman tells me that the top level is rented out office space. And that the others are now closed. Will one or two more floors eventually re-open? Only the future knows. Yes, this isn't some sort of cruel joke.

Another pandemic victim? How can she not be affected by such news?!

I'm still unsure as I try to pick my jaw up from the sparkling tile floor. I struggle to find the words to express my grief. I exclaim "what a shame!" with the most dramatic flair. Knowing full-well how obnoxious this must be for her. Why would she care? She probably hates all the privileged annoying-ass people who come in here. And now I've become one of them.

Sample 3.

I want to tell her that they've taken one of the best hideouts. From heartbreak. Boredom. Reality.

Where else can a gal go to cry in the luxury of an Italian leather sofa, uninterrupted?

Like many New York greats that have come before it, time has eroded this once beautiful establishment. Another era, creeping to a close. ABC was on life-support and part of me wanted them to just pull the plug already. Is that legal in this state?

But I wouldn't dare. My hope for a post-pandemic comeback holds strong. Baby, you deserve to see this classic NYC establishment in all its glory. Keep an eye on her. If they resuscitated Century 21, anything is possible!

ABC Carpet & Home, you will be forever in my heart. You gave me the thrill of an amusement park. A paradise that let my imagination run wild. You showed me what could be. Seven *entire* floors that unlocked the possibility of many New York lives. Of all the different people I could become in this great city.

A place filled with promise. A refuge from what is. And an indulgence in the magic of what has yet to be.

As time goes on, those lives feel more and more out of reach. At 32, was the harsh reality of time and overpriced rent taking over the floors of my fantasies? Had it robbed me of the first place I've chosen to help guide me in my current quest for self-reinvention?

Sample 3.

Oh, the drama! But part of me feels the reality in this.
The dreamer in me. And the parallels can't help but make
me a bit sad.

So, I pour a little coffee out. For the hope of what used
to be.

But I don't dare get it on the \$25k silk chair.
Which would surely bankrupt my dreams for good.

New York is funny that way.

abc carpet & home



New York Is Funny That Way.

Allie Demopoulos

425.387.5926

allie@ademopoulos.com

ademopoulos.com