

## Love Letter to New York City.

I read something today, New York, that made me sad. *'New York City is dead forever'*, said one long-time resident.

No way, I thought. Not New York. Between March and May, 420,000 people left you, in an almost biblical big-city exodus. Do they not realize the short lifespan of the small-town luster? Which, every other place outside you feels like.

They say you, dear New York, taints people for life. That we can't live anywhere else. The wide, quiet streets feel stifling. Life becomes a little less, well, everything. Less noisy, less smelly, less expensive, less crazy, less fun, less energetic, less serendipitous.

All that can be too much at times. We dream of 365 days warm weather, driving in nature with the windows down, and spending \$1,000 on rent. We flirt with the idea of a house in the woods but who are we kidding.

New York, you're not just a pretty skyline, made famous in pop culture. You are the collective energy of eight million of the most inspiring, interesting and intoxicating people in the world.

The Egyptian taxi driver who immigrated with his family and makes tuxes in his spare time...

The gay dancer from the south who moved here with little money but big Broadway dreams...

The Bodaga owner who sends money home to his family in Vietnam...

The millionaire in the suit...

You can't be defined or categorized, New York. And that's what makes you unforgettable. You're stubborn and not always easy, but you welcome anyone and everyone who shares that fire.

Then, you make us work for it. But it's that very work, we *need*, that sets us alight. You teach us about humility and empathy for all. You give us thick skin and that 'New York' confidence. These are traits that we'll carry, whether we settle in the Upper West Side or relocate to a city on one of those 'most livable' lists.

Even when we leave you, you're always there. 'But in New York...' – we say to just about everything. Yeah, we'll become *that* friend.

You can make absolutely no sense but one thing's for sure: there's nowhere quite like you.

I will never forget the feeling I had when I first saw you. I get it every time I wander a new street, bagel in one hand, coffee in the other. When I'm sitting on a rooftop in Brooklyn, gazing at your orange-hued statue as the sun sets.

When someone comes to visit and I experience you over and over again. When that serendipitous meeting happens and reminds me, I'm exactly where I'm supposed to be.

I never get over you. I never will. So no, New York isn't dead. A hiatus, tops. Yes, even you, New York, needs to sleep (contrary to urban myth).

The best way I know how to repay you is to stay. To stand with you, to celebrate you, and embrace you. It's not like I have a choice anyway.

Once a New Yorker, *always...*