

101 REASONS TO LEAVE NEW YORK

HOWARD JORDAN, JR.



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by

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Dedication

This little book about the big city is dedicated to all the people who have made my life better, regardless of when and where we happened to have crossed paths. However, special love is directed squarely at my NYC family. You took me in and never let me go. This means you, Jenna, Shameka, Stacy, Marcel, Musa, Malcolm, Chad, Bin, Tamara, Sabrina, Randall and Erin.

First, let's establish a couple of ground rules. In this book and in this city, *New York* refers to Manhattan and very specific cool-ass parts of Brooklyn. *You* refers to anyone who has willingly come to the Big Apple through hard work, big dreams, or a combination of both.

You stayed up late fantasizing about the city that never sleeps. So, living the dream isn't only having a 212 area code (646, 718, 917 and 347 count, too). It's waking up every day knowing your job, life's ambition, and most closely held desires can't be experienced on this high a level, with this type of intensity, with such potential for reward and recognition, anywhere else on the planet.

Simply put, New York City is the Mecca of dreamers, seers, visionaries, freaks, geeks, cool kids, and sexy valedictorians. And so you've come. You aren't so much welcomed as invited to migrate to New York to find fame, fortune, love, acceptance, and most importantly, yourself. That, in the quickest and broadest of strokes, is the lure, the potential, the reality and beauty of New York.

It's simply amazing. But—and New York City is all about the *but*—what happens when the clock goes around, the calendar

flips, and your lover, New York, reveals itself to be something else? What happens when those cute little idiosyncrasies you once loved become intolerable habits that can absolutely drive you up the wall?

This isn't about just surviving in New York City. This is about indulging, chasing, catching, and enjoying all the facets of the New York City dream, whatever yours may be. But then suddenly, you wake up one morning or early afternoon, only to realize you might not want to be here anymore.

Of course, *might* is the same energy of uncertainty that brought you here in the first place. So *might* may be what keeps you here. But if not New York City, then who? Oops—if not New York City, then where?

No place is, or could ever be, what New York City is. It changes you and changes with you. It's the backdrop of your most innocent remembrances, as well as your most satisfyingly devious endeavors. Yet, more and more often, you entertain the idea of leaving. You know you're spoiled by the New York-ness of your existence, but you don't revel in it as fully as you once did. And worse, you don't care to.

It's not just growing up; it's more like growing out. If you knew where to go, you'd already be gone. Instead, you wrestle with the idea that New York City, your mysterious, fantastical dream companion, has become nothing more than a roommate to whom you're no longer attracted and with whom you aren't even certain you're friends.

So, for all of you who have lived it, to all of those who dream of doing so one day, to everyone in the midst of it at this very moment, and to anyone who may be interested in this very specific struggle: this is a book that recognizes and articulates

the unimaginable notion of willingly leaving New York City, then gives all the reasons you'll ever need to justify doing so— in no particular order, but somewhat categorized for your convenience.

You're welcome.

1. The best part about living here is telling people who don't that you do.

Bling-bling! Bling-bling! When you wear New York City, you shine, you sparkle, you glow, and utterly, you steal the show. It's social jewelry, cultural clout, and it's unmistakable.

It's conversational cache. When you talk about the greatness of New York, the inspiration of New York, and you wax poetic to those who can only wish they lived here, you know their imaginations and attentions are fully captured. And you love it!

After all, membership does have its privileges. But it comes at a price.

Lately, you've noticed the New York City you're selling to the huddled masses is no longer the New York City you've been buying into. For as amazingly satisfying and ridiculously stimulating you tell them New York City is, you've begun to realize it's rarely either of those things to you anymore.

2. You can't enjoy movies set in New York.

Movies are all about escaping daily life and falling away from everything familiar to you. For full enjoyment, you need

to forget where you are and embrace the total suspension of disbelief.

But when streets don't connect, timing is improbable, and the so-called New York City on screen isn't very New York at all, you can't enjoy the experience the way you want to. You may not know the city like the back of your hand. But clearly, you know it better than the second-unit director and his two assistants who worked on the last two action movies you've seen.

3. Someone else does your laundry and you're not rich.

Maybe your building doesn't have washers and dryers, or maybe they don't have enough. It's understandable that you think the laundry room is too dark, crowded, or creepy looking. Plus, you don't want to waste a few hours separating whites, colors, and delicates. However, you know you should be cleaning your own sheets.

The fact that you don't and you don't see a problem with it says something about you. But as long as there is starch in your collars and not too much bleach in your whites, you couldn't care less.

4. You've kind of forgotten how to drive.

At first, it's an unexpected luxury. Mass transit: trains, buses, cabs, and don't forget walking, biking, rollerblading, skateboarding, and the fact that everywhere you're supposed to be is relatively close to where you already are.

Then, on a visit home, an out-of-town business trip, or just a night when you got roped into being the designated driver,

you adjust the seat and the mirrors. You make sure everyone is buckled in. Then you realize something is very wrong.

It's eerily unfamiliar and a bit scarier than you remember. So you position your hands firmly at ten and two and turn the radio down, if not off, so you can concentrate more than you ever did in Driver's Ed.

5. You're afraid of the J and Z trains.

With all the colors in the spectrum and with all the options available to the art directors employed by the MTA, why in the hell would they choose brown as the key color for the express trains to the Twilight Zone?

Maybe those tracks don't lead to an alternate dimension, but they might as well, because you rarely see the J and Z trains.

You refuse to ride them and you have no idea where they actually go. They're mysterious, and thus, their untold power is to be respected. Are they the passageway to the land of poltergeists, or the trains to Beetlejuice's house? You don't know and you're not trying to find out.

6. People don't cover their mouths when they sneeze.

Supposedly worldly, socially experienced, and politically savvy New Yorkers are also a bunch of sicky-poo, cootie-bug, virus spreaders. There's the coughing, nose-blowing, and, of course, the wettest of transgressions: sneezing.

How could they? How dare they? So many shared spaces and objects with so little opportunity to escape. It's just not right. Yet it happens all too regularly.

Nasty stares and spiteful glares do nothing. Only an old-fashioned “Cover your damned mouth!” will suffice. But at what risk?

This is New York City. It could be an invitation to disaster. Whatever it is, it’s disgusting. It’s also the reason you can’t get over your damned cold, assuming it’s just a cold.

7. Subway breezes.

On those hot and humid dog days of New York City summers, you’ve actually taken short-lived refuge in those precious seconds on the subway platform as the approaching train kicks up a wind that pushes down the track and directly into your face.

You bask in the glory.

In your mind, you’re posing like the statue of Jesus Christ that overlooks Rio de Janeiro. You bathe in the airborne filth and debris, fanning out the wet spots in your shirt, all while holding your breath, gritting your teeth, and keeping your mouth firmly sealed.

It’s so dirty, but it’s so good. Just the way you like it.

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