

Courage - A Heart Connection
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"The root of the word courage is cor - the Latin word for heart. In one of its earliest forms, the word courage meant "To speak one's mind by telling all one's heart" Brené Brown

I took my first breath in this city that embraces me upon reentrance like a mother wrapping her arms around her beloved child, matching her heart beat to its rhythm. Familiar with its sameness, changes, predictability, and surprises - New York seduces me.

A beacon of reinvention, The City nudges the newcomer and the settled inhabitant. "Renew yourself with every cell death and regeneration", The Big Apple counsels.

The air is laden with infinite aromas: odorous rivers, wind crispness, taxi fumes, hidden gardens, humanity mingling, dog droppings, fetid urine whiffed, floral perfume wafted, all overpowered by dizzying cuisines.

Defined by exotic edibles, foods- the most emotional connection - are brought by foreigners aching for the taste of home. Bagels, lox, babka, black and whites, barreled pickles, pickled herring, onion bialys, bread, bread, bread, olives, garlic, chilies, pretzels, spaghetti sauces, salamis, gyros, pastrami, tacos, kimchi, stinky cheeses, curries, chai, coffee, coffee, coffee, chocolate, candy, pizza, hotdogs, roasted chestnuts, grocery stores proposing, food trucks enticing, bakeries beckoning, restaurants summoning.

Add your own scented memory.

Serene silence is pierced by her sounds. The FDR Drive swooshing, drivers' horns protesting, subways screeching, innumerable nations' noise percussing, mothers cajoling, street vendors hawking, restaurant dishes banging, dirty glasses clinking, doors slamming, kitchen staffs collapsing, jack hammers reverberating, garbage cans clanging, runners navigating, bicycle wheels twirling, apartment buzzers alerting, mobile phones distracting, deliverymen dispensing, sirens distressing, umpteen languages expressing, pigeons cooing, manhole covers coughing, school children rhyming, street artists performing, subway artists serenading, neighbors arguing, old men bantering, old ladies kvetching, friends gossiping, lovers canoodling, yogis chanting.

Sumptuous sights bombard hungry eyes. Scaffolding screams upward to the sky - Make it new. Keep the old. The High Line invigorates. Central Park calms. Chinatown spills over. The Strand Bookstore beckons. Museums civilize. Grand Central Station facilitates. Neighborhoods compartmentalize. Concert halls harmonize. Broadway theatres entertain. Off-Broadway theatres enlighten. Subways emancipate. Fashions bemuse. Galleries arouse. Union Square convenes. Times Square disorients. Washington Square mesmerizes. The Lower East Side sentimentalizes. Harlem hums. Wall Street hustles. Buses crawl. City walkers absorb. Graffiti gets it. Department stores replenish. Crowds congregate. Protesters converge. Counterfeit-schlock peddlers deceive. Tourists gawk. City-folk purpose. Bodegas nourish.

Black, Black, Black. The city's mandated uniform. A New Yorker's mantra - "I'll wear black until they make a darker color."

Who comes here to start anew? Only the fool-hearted, quixotic, courageous self-starters can navigate this managed chaos. What representative of their clan do families send? Certainly not the faint-of-heart, the lazy, or shiftless ones. Relations send their audacious visionaries. Dreamers, disheartened, disenfranchised, displaced, destroyed, demonic, destined-deliberates descend on this metropolis, determined to prevail.

“And, I’m gonna make a brand new start of it in old New York. If I can make it there I’m gonna make it anywhere. It’s up to you, New York, New York.” Sinatra romanticizes.

Who stays? Perceptive, adoring, adventurers adjust themselves despite change’s constant assault. Old ladies navigate the steps of Lincoln Center, The Metropolitan Museum of Art and MOMA, determined to capture another cultural moment before their final curtain. Retirees relish the hard-earned freedom to embrace the city’s bounty. New parents refuse the suburban propaganda that kids need more space, less urban, more stuff, fewer distractions.

If you leave you take The City with you wherever you go. The caldron of memories keeps one’s flame inspired.

Like the mettle of those who love this city, my courage derives from what this mecca reveals, embodies, and proposes. No other place quickens the heart or stirs the soul like New York.