



THE  
COVID  
DIARIES

# The Day I Have Planned

by Billy Richling

*I was April 7, only a few weeks into a lockdown that would stretch on for months, when I started dreaming about what I would do when the city reopened.*

Here's the day I have planned for myself when this thing finally ends:

I wake up and head to Brooklyn Natural Deli for the Monterrey sausage wrap and a coffee. Then I walk over to the Parade Grounds and eat on a bench while watching a group play something—baseball or soccer. I fall asleep for twenty minutes and someone picks my pocket but after rifling through my wallet they decide I actually seem like a decent guy and they put it back and slip an extra twenty dollars and a Keano flier in my pocket.

I'm woken up by a soccer ball to the face but my glasses are fine. I cartwheel and somersault six blocks east to my friend Filipe's place. We listen to records and hug and high-five and I unthinkingly touch my face without inducing a panic attack.

There's a midday hearing about a Department of Transportation proposal to turn all of Flatbush Avenue into a busway and my fellow community board members are there and a lot of them hate it but I think it's a great idea. We spit blood at each other for two hours but then we hug and high-five 'cause we're all on the same team—even though I'm right.

Lunch is a surrealist masterpiece: doubles from Hot Pot, pizza from Family and also Lo Duca, chunks from Scoops, paneer makhani from Ashoka, ramen from Koko, torta from El Dorado. Under normal circumstances this would be disgusting and make no geographic sense, stretching from Empire to Newkirk Plaza, but I don't care, I'm eating as I'm walking and it's beautiful out. Midway I stop by Parkside Plaza, which is decked out with new furniture and plants and a programming budget of \$500K because after being locked in their apartments for months, every-

one has a newfound appreciation for beautiful public spaces. I see my friend Mitch, and we and the thirty other people sitting there hug and high-five.

I take a dollar van to Prospect Heights for rehearsal at Complete Music Studios. Hugs, high-fives, righteous jams. On the way back I bump into Chabadniks leaving Grand Army Plaza. They ask me if I'm Jewish and I say yes and they give me a lift on the mitzvah tank and on the way we do eight l'chaims and have a brief but substantive discussion about the role of halacha in contemporary life.

They drop me at Westbury Inn to watch the Yankee game. It's interleague play against the Phillies and everyone cheers when Didi goes yard because we miss him but in the end the Yanks win. Meanwhile, various assorted neighbors and friends walk in and out and we hug and high-five and they humor me by pretending to care about baseball even if they don't.

I'm pretty buzzed now, so I step outside and walk to Errol's to get two beef-and-cheese patties for the road but I accidentally order twelve and eat them all plus a peanut and carrot smoothie. On my way out I bump into my friend Cheryl who tells me she makes sorrel way better than Errol's and I say I'd like to try it.

I cartwheel home and spend forty-five minutes on my roof looking at the sky and then go to bed. In the morning I walk to George's on Coney Island Avenue for pie and afterwards I'm so hung over and full and happy that I can't even stand, so I spend four hours on the seat at the end of the counter reading the paper.

**Billy Richling** is a Flatbush resident who loves cheap food. He most recently worked as Constituent & Communications Manager for the Times Square Alliance. He serves on Brooklyn Community Board 14 and has feelings about public transit and public spaces. Talk to him about baseball, buses, or the blackout of '77. ■

