

NEW YORK, NEW ME

Antonella Gambotto-Burke enjoys the ultimate post-divorce blowout with a hedonistic charge round the Big Apple

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HIGH-END DINING Bar SixtyFive, at 30 Rockefeller

There are those who react to divorce with smiling equanimity, but my response – and my teeth – were significantly less Instaworthy. The death of my decade-long marriage had left me feeling like a tragic old barnacle clinging to the hull of duty. Like a Led Zeppelin album, I was in desperate need of remastering.

My friend of 25 years, the photographer Quentin Bacon, came to the rescue. “Fly to New York and stay with me, Cinderella.” His vision: I would drift about Manhattan in a cloud of Diptyque fragrance, a gigantic black hat, Breakfast at Tiffany’s shades and heels, and, just like Lady Gaga after she met Bradley Cooper, feel as if I’d been rebranded.

I booked a pre-flight stay at the **Heathrow Sofitel** (accorhotels.com), which is connected to Terminal 5 by a shimmering private walkway and will check in your luggage at reception – useful, as I boarded at an ungodly hour.

Q lives in a graceful fourth-floor apartment close to Central Park (artfully battered leather sofa, drifty white voile drapes). He poked his head into my room the evening of my arrival: “Frock up. We’re going out.” An hour later, dressed in my bespoke Baylis & Knight dress and towering heels, I took Q’s arm and tottered into **30 Rockefeller Plaza**, in Midtown. (If Ayn Rand had been a building, she would have been 30 Rock.) We caught the gilded elevator to the 65th floor and stepped into the glittering Rainbow Room, the model for the club featured in the Fred Astaire/Ginger Rogers 1936 classic *Swing Time*. (Aspiring opera singers, take note: if you stand directly beneath the 40ft dome and its chandelier, the acoustics are majestic.)

Escorted by the maitre d’ to **Bar SixtyFive** (£70pp minimum for outdoor seating; drinks from £8; rainbowroom.com), we were seated at a table overlooking the Empire State Building, which, somewhat churlishly, was entombed by fog. Then the man at the next table fell to one knee and proposed to his lady, who burst into tears. I nearly fainted at the mad romance of it all.

The next day, we strolled to **Washington Square Park**, in hipper-than-hip Greenwich Village, where the happiest of annual events, International Pillow Fight Day – aka “the

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fluffiest fight in all the world” – was in full swing. I was in my element, diving with a rebel yell past the TV cameras into the screaming fray of the flash mob. That sad spectre who once haunted Asda’s aisles – that is to say, *moi* – was now pillow-fighting a giggling rapper with grills.

Marion Hedger, the celebrated medium, met me in her violet room near Grand Central station the following evening. “Norman Plaskett’s spirit is guiding me today,” she said. I gasped. I had been fruitlessly searching for Norman, the extraordinary English clairvoyant I consulted in my youth, for decades; I even wrote about him in *The Eclipse*, my book about my brother’s suicide. Marion’s