

Existential Weather Report

by stephen hastings-king

1. Last night I got birthday sushi from the very excellent Kame on Cabot St. in Beverly. They are still take-out only.

It was a lovely evening and most of the other restaurants along Cabot Street were open, with outdoor seating spaces separated from the street by concrete highway barriers in the style most towns around here have adopted.

I still can't get my head around eating in a restaurant and probably won't until the tourist season ends with Labor Day. I still can't figure out how the rules that people adhere to make sense, like the one that has people not wearing masks when they're seated at a table but which obliges them to wear one if they stand up or move around as if the virus is very light and drifts upward.

I had picked up the sushi, and pulled out from where I was parked, still going slowly, looking over the seated people, some of whom looked back. We each looked quizzically, not quite understanding what the other was doing or why.

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2. Earlier this afternoon I was in Gloucester and realized that I had forgotten to eat. I got a breakfast sandwich for the first time since the plague came and parked by Good Harbor Beach to eat it, just before the beach club. I put my windows down to catch the air. The tide was high and the beach was mobbed. After saying "Nope" to myself a few times I started eating the sandwich.

A seagull landed on the wall a couple feet from my open window, one of those big Gloucester IDGAF gulls. I could see it in his eyes.

In the eyes that were looking at my sandwich.

I looked at him looking at my sandwich.

I had a moment of clear inter-species ideation that allowed me to peer into his seagull brain and see him plotting. All his scenarios seemed to end with him inside my car.

I had to ask myself: Do I want to deal with having a seagull inside my car.

The answer was: Clearly no. No, I do not want to have to figure out how to deal with a seagull that is inside my car.

That is why I started my car and pulled away.

I felt like I had fled a junior high school bully who was after my lunch money.

But that bully would have been easier to deal with than a seagull inside my car, all the feathers and flapping and squawking.

So I didn't feel too badly about it.

But still.

