

The Big Apple by John Broadhurst.

We left the car with B.P.C.
All seemed quite secure to me.
The mini-bus, with trailer in tow,
Bounced its way to vast Heathrow.
The distance was further than I thought it would be,
But, eventually we dismounted at Terminal 3.
To the check-in point we made our way.
Mum's bag was opened and searched, needless to say.
And as we waited, Steve and Colette
Came to see us off, so we went to get
Some coffee, tea and a sticky bun.
Their company certainly added to the fun.
At the departure point we said goodbye;
Seeing them had made the time fly.

Row 33, seats D and E,
In the middle, so not much to see.
There was a T.V. in every seat.
Nought else to do except sleep and eat;
But as we were at the front of the Economy Class
There was room for legs, and people to pass.
The seven hour flight seemed to drag,
But we kept nodding off, and from the bag
We took magazines, papers and books
Interspersed with tempting morsels from the cooks.
Salmon for dinner, with rhubarb crumble
Which was the only thing that made mum grumble.
During one of the films there was ice-cream, all free,
Followed, soon after, by a rich cream tea.
We were thankful for a very smooth flight,
Obviously much better at the five mile height.
5 p.m. touchdown at J.F.K.
Losing five hours somewhere on the way.

Baggage claimed with the minimum of fuss
We made our way to the Gray Line bus.
We were first to get in and last out
Which gave plenty of time to look about.
Everywhere stretch limousines
Fit for queens.
I'm sure they give an excellent ride,
But the smoked glass stops you looking inside.

The Wentworth Hotel,
Not all that swell.
At least from the outside it looked quite small
Next to the skyscrapers, all so very tall.
A bellman took us to the sixth floor.
He showed us how to use the credit card door.
The room was spacious, clean and neat,

Quite adequate for us to rest our feet.
The kettle we'd brought seemed to take an age,
But that was because of the different voltage.
110 instead of 240,
Better than the gadget being faulty.
As our time is 5 hours ahead
It was 3 o'clock when we went to bed.
Waking again at just before eleven
Instead of our usual hour of seven.
Breakfast, Macdonalds, an egg and bacon roll,
Then off we went for our morning stroll.
Although we weren't exactly up with the lark
We made our way to Central Park,
Calling, on our way, in a coffee shop
Regretting soon our early stop.
For in asking just for honey tea
Without checking what the cost would be.
We're not really safe to be out at large
We failed to see the words "minimum charge,"
Of \$2.50. So, an apple turnover each
Put the bill within our reach.

Central Park, a rectangular clump of trees,
Green grass and lakes, all there to please.
No greater contrast could there be
Set in the midst of so many a vertical monstrosity.
Buildings reaching far up to the sky.
Why on earth did they want to build them so high?

Although it was a Sunday morning
Instead of people all conforming,
Some were running, some roller-blade skating,
And there is certainly no debating
That all ages were set on keeping fit
In their multi-coloured kit.
Roller blades for some was their transport mode.
They even used them on the road;
Young and old were just the same,
To them 'twas not classed as a game.
A charity run
All for fun;
To raise money for "God's Love, We Deliver,"
Who guarantee to each generous giver
That they will provide
Food for those permanently stuck inside.
\$200,000 was raised,
For which all should be praised.

The Flea Market on 76th Street,
Held to raise more money, this time to treat
Children at all the local schools,
Providing them with the necessary tools

To enable them to do the best they can.
Well that, I'm sure, was the organisers' plan.
Many of the local skills were there
Making it a mix of car boot sale and large craft fair.
Part of it was in and part was out
Mum enjoyed it, there is no doubt.
Buying the inevitable earring set,
So at least she will not forget
Her visit to this giant sale
Set out inside an enormous fence, more like a jail.

Next to see Great Aunt Jeannette,
Only to be met
By the dreadful Lolita in the hall
Resplendent in boots, headscarf, curlers and all.
We were led ceremoniously to a side room
There to be filled with much gloom and doom.
Aunt Jeannette, it seemed, from Sister Joachim
Had committed the unforgiveable sin
Of growing old;
And so we were told
She would no longer be allowed to stay
And would we kindly take her away.
This dear old lady, who knew
No other home, what was she to do?
When asked where she wished to rest her head
"I come to England and live with you," she said.
After much discussion and woe
We said we really had to go
And take Aunt Jeannette for something to eat;
The Bakery Restaurant was to provide the treat.

In the afternoon we went to the shops,
Bloomingdales was one of our many stops.
Later on 5th Avenue
Our curiosity certainly grew
As the crowd barriers caught my eye
So, I asked a nearby policeman why?
"President Clinton," was his reply,
"Will very soon be passing by."
29 motorcyclists, security cars, what a parade
For a President that the Americans seem to degrade.
After that there was no more to be said,
So, we returned to the hotel and went to bed.

For Monday's breakfast we went Italiano,
The bright, clean restaurant owned by Nino.
Three huge blueberry pancakes were the order of the day,
Smothered in maple syrup the American way.

Next to the Empire State on 34th Street,
86 floors in 65 seconds, no mean feat.

Fabulous views for all to see,
Standing near the edge was not for me.
There was an enormous fence,
A strong defence
Against anyone over keen
To take in the magnificent scene.

We mounted a bus; but got off again,
Without the right coins, all is in vain.
To get some change, to the bank we went,
Ten dollars in a tube, only to be spent
On bus fares,
So, no more cares,
No more walking on weary feet
Wearing out our plates of meat.

For the lunch Aunt was determined to pay;
But as we were about to leave the waitress stood in the way.
"You left no tip," was what she said.
After the service we'd had I saw red;
But Mum paid up, and we left the place.
Their tipping system's a national disgrace.

Next, a sightseeing tour on an old London bus;
The topless variety made it a real plus.
Greenwich Village and old China Town,
Parts of which looked very rundown.
The bus enabled us to see many a great sight.
The Statue of Liberty against the bright sunlight;
The World Trade Centre, reaching to the sky
With its twin towers, 110 storeys high.
Through the streets, instructed by a guide,
Dwarfed by skyscrapers on either side.

At 59th Street we had to disembark,
And we set off walking alongside Central Park
To buy Steve's shoes was the job in hand
Which had to be the American made, Timberland.
We walked and walked, and walked some more,
Where we were heading we weren't too sure.
We passed some children playing hockey on blades.
They were ever so good for such young grades.
82nd Street, the book said, 2nd Avenue.
Such a long way to go for an oversized shoe
Or boot, to be exact.
Army Navy Shop it was, in fact.
We found it, further away than we thought
And two pairs of boots were very soon bought.
It had turned out to be an extremely long mile;
But \$100 saved made it all worthwhile.
We went to the Hony Wok for a Chinese meal
Delicious food which was really ideal.

The Lincoln Centre was our next date
To try to catch sight of some Heads of State
Gathered for a concert put on by the Mayor
To hear the New York Philharmonic, everyone was there.
We'd come in a taxi, owned by Syed Achmed,
I couldn't understand a word he said.
We waited and waited for about an hour
With police looking on from a nearby tower,
Until at last the whole area was cleared,
Before we'd seen anyone, just as I'd feared.
On the way home protests could be seen
Against the occupation of Tibet and Yitzhak Rabin.
Eventually, wearily we reached our hotel
Via Times Square, Broadway where all is just "Swell!"

For Tuesday's breakfast I thought I'd try a bagel
A fruit bun in roll shape to give it a label.

On our holiday in New York we did not expect
To do what we found ourselves doing next.
The problem posed by dear Aunt Jeannette
Was not one we could so lightly forget.
So, to try to put the jigsaw together
We set off in glorious Autumn weather
To the Social Security Office, no less,
To endeavour to sort out this tangled mess;
Of how much, and if, and where, and when
Aunt Jeannette's money could be sent, and then,
If she would a passport require
To come to live in Dorsetshire.
There we sat in an orderly queue,
Waiting to learn what we should do.

More trouble at lunch with the language game,
A Chinaman this time, but the problem was the same.
Trying to make your requests quite clear.
For his part it was as though he couldn't hear;
But we had our meal,
No big deal.

Our sightseeing ticket lasted for a second day
So, to the American Indian Museum we made our way.
It was just as well the entry was free,
'Cause, although very interesting, there's not much to see.
On our way out we made a brief stop
At, to me the best part, the Museum shop.

To catch the next bus, we had to wait
So, we walked through Battery Park, but 'twas too late
To take a boat round the Bay
Which goes around the Statue of Liberty on its way.

So, we sat for a while and watched the sight
Of dozens of squirrels who so well might
Have been way out in some country scene
Instead of in one of New York's rare bits of green.

On the way back, we left the bus briefly
At the bargain area, our purpose chiefly
To buy for Mum a new leather handbag.
We'd been told to pay no heed to the price tag.
So, I enjoyed bartering for the one Mum chose.
It seems, in New York, anything goes
'Cause she found a bag she thought very nice
And I hope we got it for about the right price.

Our evening meal was quite a disgrace,
As we ended up in a take-away place
Where the food was basic, but we each
Were turned off by the strong smell of bleach.
It's nice to know that they clean the floor;
But while you're eating, that was pretty poor.

As Wednesday was our very last day
To the shops again we made our way;
There to purchase a necklace of gold
Of better quality than in England is sold.
Fourteen carats instead of nine,
Cheaper too, so all was fine.

We took Aunt Jeannette out for one last lunch,
Her friend Mary joined our odd little bunch.
Then back to the shops for one final spree
To purchase some hifi equipment for me.
All in all, the goods we had bought
Meant that on our return we really ought
To have declared the lot
Of precious items that we'd got.

As a parting gesture to America we did both tuck in
To the airport cafe's very last blueberry muffin.
Seat 33A and 33B,
In Class Economy.
We had plenty of room to spread our feet
Being once again on the very front seat.

Kennedy Airport, up into the sky
As back over the city we did fly.
Looking down as if from the lid
I was able to see the Street and Avenue grid.
The lights of the city soon faded away
Bringing to an end our last busy day.

So, I'd seen the Big Apple;
But we were left to grapple
With the problem of Aunt Jeannette to solve
I fear, it's going to be hard to resolve.

The plane arrived early, what a surprise
That we were pleased to be back was hard to disguise.
We collected our bags
Just like flying 'old lags'.
Having retrieved the car, we caught a train
Which was to take us to central London again.
The cheap day return starts at half past nine,
And so, overlooking all the dirt and grime,
For despite the surroundings we had to agree
They served up a delicious mug of hot tea.
We met up with Tony at mid-day
And after lunch we were on our way.
Driving home it was hard for us to keep
At the wheel, from falling asleep.
Arriving home, glad to be back,
Tired and weary we hit the sack.

