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A month, an eternity

BY LISA STEIN
PHOTOGRAPHY BY KENNETH JARECKE
CONTACT FOR *USN&WR*

"It used to be," E. B. White once wrote, "that the Statue of Liberty was the signpost that proclaimed New York and translated it for all the world. Today Liberty shares the role with Death."

Mighty skyscrapers have been reduced to rubble. Rescue workers are still sifting through tons of dust. The futile search for survivors has given way to a search for answers. The city mourns its dead, thousands still buried in the ashes. And for the first time it realizes, as White warned in his hauntingly prescient 1949 essay "Here Is New York," that "a single flight of planes no bigger than a wedge of geese can quickly end this island fantasy, burn the towers, crumble the bridges, turn the underground passages into lethal chambers, cremate the millions."

Tourism is off by 40 percent. Business at restaurants and hotels is picking up, but it's iffy. Ditto Broadway. Still, life goes on: Throngs lined Fifth Avenue on a crisp fall day last week for the Columbus Day parade. Midtown is packed again. Tickets are as tough as ever to come by for *The Producers* and *The Lion King*. And the city's working overtime to lure visitors: This week it hosts its first-ever autumn Restaurant Week, during which diners can get *prix fixe* lunches for $20.01 and dinners for $30.01 at some of the Big Apple's priciest eateries; on November 5, it will begin offering hot package deals. And the tourists are returning: Last week, 1,000 Oregonians came, and Irvine, Calif., has promised to deliver 10,000 more. "We're going to rebuild our great city," vows Gov. George Pataki, "and make it even better."

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