

The Bane Of My Life by Gail Loon Lustig

The New (1970's) Central Bus Station in Tel Aviv is probably one of the biggest architectural design failures in the Middle East. It is a maze of seven floors, with endless staircases and escalators leading to empty spaces with vendors everywhere trying to sell their wares mainly to foreign workers who live in the south of the city. I visited there for the first time a few weeks ago early in the morning, looking for *The Lost and Found* office of the bus company I usually use. It was nowhere to be found.

I was given endless directions to go down or up a floor and look for the man with the beard who would direct me to where it was. Eventually I phoned the National Office of the bus-line, waited on the line for 23 minutes to be told that just today it would be opening at 9 and not 8.

Yehuda came about 10 minutes after 9. He saw me from afar, my sun hat still lazily perched on my head and asked me if I was waiting for him.

'Yes', I said.

'And what have you lost?'

'My card-holder, aluminium, small with a pop-up lever. All my cards were in there...'

'When was that?'

'Seven days ago, on the bus from Tel Aviv to Givatayim'.

'These are what I have. Recognize any of them?'

'Nope..'

None others, possibly? I asked.

'These are they... by the way where are you from? America? Canada? Australia?'

'None of those - Cape Town'.

'Cape Town'!!!??

His face broke out into a smile. 'I know Cape Town and Durban. Was there for a week each time, the *Chazan* at the Synagogue during the High Holidays each time. They paid me really well.

Beautiful place, Cape Town!

So, what can I say, shall we take a last look for the cards'? said Yehuda, opening up a hidden drawer on his right side.

'I'd like that', I said.

But, no cards, no holder.

'Maybe you'd like to take an umbrella? Choose whichever one you want'..

'No thanks, I said. I have plenty umbrellas. In fact, I have everything I need'.

'Not many people like you', said Yehuda

'Except for my cards'...

'Well let me wish you good health and Shana Tova', he said

On the way home by bus, behind my Covid mask, my eyes on the passing trees which seemed dry and humourless, I thought about my endless problem of losing things.

Experts in the field of Attention Deficit Disorder, the trendy twentieth century diagnosis, would probably count me in although I don't have any of the other aspects such as poor concentration, not completing tasks I set out to do, impulsivity or hyperactivity. I have actually never been diagnosed and would certainly not take medication for my problem.

I often remember my sister's comment about me.

'It's amazing the only time you ever need help, is when you lose something'.

Hah! Now is that so?

I think not. They'll still discover one day that my problem is familial, genetic, from a tiny shtetl in Lithuania. I know for a fact that there are others in the family who put my stories in the shade.

A Loon gene gone wild.

Actually, an idiosyncrasy that is both infuriating, frustrating and challenging, at once.

My non-Loon grandmother, called me *tzufleigen* which I quite like. Flying in the sky am I, possibly looking for a Chagall painting of an apple tree.

Plain 'absentminded' seems so dull and flavourless.

As we approach home, I make yet another promise to....

But Granny Yetta had it taped-' *once tzufleigen, always tzufleigen*' -so be it!

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I have always enjoyed writing even though I was never given too much encouragement at school by my English teachers who thought I should stick to Latin and Maths and possibly Music, or so they led me to believe. I loved reading and when I did start to write, it never seemed to interfere with my professional career. On the contrary, I would often write about experiences, sometimes years later.

I studied Medicine at UCT, made Aliyah at the age of 24. Am married, with two children. I live in Tel Aviv. Since retiring, I have taken up learning all sorts of things, including playing the harmonica, a charming instrument and ceramics. So far, my best is making proteas straight off Table Mountain.

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