

UNTIL 120 by Solly Kaplinski

Every morning

I normally take the 6.57 Egged bus
to the light rail station in French Hill

The train is usually packed
but invariably, someone stands up for me
a sort of back handed compliment:
respect for the grey hair and
me coming to terms with my ageing self
- and my impending mortality

Until 120, I tell myself

The 70 faces are all present and accounted for
women burying their faces in the Shacharit prayers
lips moving furiously
young soldiers and border police
high spirited and seemingly deep in superficial conversation
eyes darting in all directions
reluctant children going to school glued to their iphones
vatikim with empty agalot off to the shuk
Our cousins are also on board conversing animatedly
and a tower of babel cacophony of tourist and worker languages

Such a normal slice of life – like anywhere else in the world
the rush hour for those who open up the morning.

But my usual paranoid self gets the better of me – as always...

I am a child of Holocaust survivors you know
and I have lived with exploding buses and burnt-out restaurants
and Jew butchers on the loose

And I cast suspicious eyes on my fellow travelers
looking for anything out of the ordinary:
someone in disguise
an over - stuffed duffel bag
a hand in a bulging pocket or
holding a scrunched-up Rami Levi sakit
ready for coiled action

I step out into the sunshine and blue sky
at the Hechalutz station
And there's a spring in my walk
I'm almost at the office

Until 120, I tell myself

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Written by Solly Kaplinski 2021

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