

Rochelle Mass

Rockaway Parkway and Rosh Ha'ayin

I live in a place where we are building fences
to determine who lives where.
I'm ordinary: just want to go to the store
the market
the movies and
pick up cosmetics now and then in the nearby
pharmacy
without being afraid a suicide bomber will
suddenly pull the switch.

Two years ago an army camp
was set up where I live because
the Intifada turned into a war.
Young soldier boys have come to our village.
I think of Brooklyn sometimes
when I'm at my kitchen window soaping up dinner
plates
takes my mind away from the bulk of Jenin
spreading over the hills
visible from where I stand

my hands protected by gloves
but my life open to harm.
Even with the horror of 9/11—
I always feel that Brooklyn is a peaceful place
with the great bridge
the library

the brewery
and the Dodgers playing ball.

This morning I heard about a wild shooting spree
near Rockaway Parkway. A cyclist returning from a
basketball game
shot at a group because somebody made a remark
about a girl.
Six wounded. Then I heard about six wounded
in Rosh Ha'ayin near Tel Aviv
like Brooklyn is to New York City;
a suicide bomber suddenly pulled the switch
in a shopping mall.

Standing by the kitchen sink, looking over
my neighbor's roof to the hills of Jenin
I'd never have imagined that
Brooklyn and Rosh Ha'ayin
on different sides of the world
on a summer's day in August
would be rushing six ordinary people
into ambulances
with sirens blaring.

Canadian born, **ROCHELLE MASS** has lived in Israel since 1973, many years on a kibbutz in the Jezreel Valley, now in a small community on the Gilboa mountains overlooking that valley. She has published three volumes of poetry. *The Belmont Collection* (prose) will appear this year with Wind River Press. She works as a translator and editor.