

My Dear Sweet Ladies,

I don't tend to make toast when we have company, for the simple reason that there are enough mistakes made in a day without compounding it with my burnt toast routine. If I watch it closely, I can sometimes avoid it if I pay close attention, but it is a good thing bread is cheap here. Just as when a child that occasionally gets away with something will continue to try, I do the same with my toast.

So I was battling a thousand (on the toast issue) this morning, when it occurred to me that I wanted to write this letter. I have actually been thinking on it occasionally but have had more to take me away from the computer this month so far. Schooling and the everyday running of a household, neighbors (a few of whom have discovered we happily give tours of our home and for some reason they want to come in to have a look around), language classes, the ubiquitous laundry, and then there are the "expats". Expats is the term for folks like us, who are "patriots" of a different country than this one. Some people want to get to know us just to ask a bunch of questions (other countries haven't necessarily ever seen or known Mennonites), some, to talk spiritual things, some want other western children for their children to play with (so we try to keep it over here), and then there are the ones we are simply friends with.

So all burnt toast aside, things are going along fine. Christmas activities around here are not exactly like at home, but then..... At any rate it's all getting back to normal, and normal is after all, my goal in all things. Normal for here is as normal as it's going to get for awhile. But Stephen did want me to make a check off chart so he can count the days until we are back in Minnesota. Phew.

The weather seems to be a fairly consistent 10 degrees cooler here than in Abu Dhabi. And more than that, it is unseasonably cold in both places. This is not good news to one such as I - always cold. And we're much closer here, to the sand storms that pelt everything and cause a fairly decent distribution of trash to all the yards, and unmoor the bougainvillea from the wall (they have very long spikes btw). There was even a wet rainstorm one day last week. A typical rainstorm here usually means it evaporates before it gets to the ground so it's sort of a sandy rain on your windshield and just blows off. But this was real water, and things stayed wet for a bit. Kind of refreshing. But the wind lately has made boy's haircuts in the backyard, a miserable event for me. I wouldn't dream of letting them know that though ;-). All in all, it's every bit as interesting here as it was there. Just for sometimes very different reasons.

Since Mark was certain you ladies would appreciate the fishing report, I said I'd include it :-). The neighbor (a local fellow), Adel, goes fishing every Friday from Khor Fakkan. Mark and the boys (or whomever here wants to go) has a standing invitation to go along. I can't

remember all the names of the fish around here (I'm not altogether sure of all the fish in Minnesota), but I do recall the distinct texture of a Baracuda, the way too many tiny bendy bones of an eel, and the Remoras that have such a bad reputation they don't even get cleaned, much less eaten. Groupers (more commonly known around here as "Hamour") and lots and lots of pink "Sultans", and they are as good as any bluegill.

I don't go along unless Adel's wife goes and we have the promise of a coral reef to snorkel over. An infrequent event.

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The "Zone" report:

-The trash guys will search thoroughly through the dumpster for cans and other useful items to save before dumping one of the many dumpsters along the road, but anything on the ground gets left for who knows who/when. There have been 8 – 50 Kg. cement bags sitting out near the one in front of our gate for about 2 weeks now. Yes they were there during the rain so they are even heavier now.

- There are tantalizing signs for a "Mc Arabia" sandwich at McDonalds, all over the city here. ...only there isn't a McDonalds for at least an hour to the North, farther to the west or south. Come to think of it, there are signs for a "Dunkin' Donuts" too...and no dunkin' donuts for probably the same distance.

- An "exhibition" here is a building full of things for sale (in booths) from presumably the country it is titled after. Last month was the Syrian exhibition, the one before was the Thai exhibition, I forget what this month's is. It didn't escape my notice, however, that there are the exact same things for sale at each of them, but different flags all around each time. So if I missed something I really wanted at the Syrian exhibition, I can get it at the Lebanese exhibition next month. No problem.

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We are currently (excrutiatingly) missing Robyn and Jonathan. Robyn is back in College and will graduate this May. Jon is at Maranatha Bible School and enjoying it very much except when I call him too often :-). He's a good sport about it since he realizes it is because I'm unable to send him a daily "Spam Museum" postcard. At any rate, I hate to let them think they can go without a fight.

It's storytime here again so I'll close this. Thanks once again for listening to my ramblings which help me continue on. Till next month,

Much Love and Fond Affection,

~Pam.









