

My Dear Sweet Ladies,

After we'd been here about half a year, I confessed to already having a mismatched sock box. As I am packing away things to go home, I must say that it's truly amazing (in a negative sort of way) how cluttered my closets and drawers have become in just a few years despite trying to live "temporary". Perhaps had I gone through them thoroughly on a regular basis they wouldn't get that way but I tend to look around and see only the tops (which if it has something, I stick it in the drawers) and keep moving along. All potential spiritual metaphors aside, I didn't really intend to write about my questionable housekeeping "skills". My sock box to cluttered drawers saga is just real life, which we've lived here for a number of years now. And now as we prepare to leave I find myself realizing I'll miss the view from the upstairs window, the unusual birds and other wildlife, the ocean, and sure even the people ☺. We all go through that when we move or go somewhere for extended periods of time. I'm just hoping I'll quit with my avoidance behavior already, before I'm cutting it too close.

Kim returns home next week (which means I'll have to return her shoes and purses) and brings with her, cousin Christina, and Delvin and Christy-our church friends. This will liven things up for awhile and provide another welcome distraction from packing. Cousin Christina's extended stay, however offers me extra school help and packing help – 2 things I seem to recall she is especially gifted at. Not to mention I finally get Kimmy back.

Tonight is Library Night at the college library. Because the women's college has an elementary teaching degree program, there is a nice collection of children's books, and some older level books to be found. Library night usually consists of the Librarian reading a story to the children and having some kind of coloring activity involving crayons. Tonight however, Andrew from South Africa will be bringing slides from his home – The African Bush. Our family has enjoyed his storytelling skills in the past, but he has a few new tales to tell and pictures to share since his last trip to South Africa. There is a Costa Coffee in the library this year so that makes it even nicer (costa coffee is like a starbucks).

The weather has been undecided about getting warmer and today is a beautiful slightly breezy day in the 70's. This is the season for mosquitoes so we broke out the "cakes of doom" to keep them from eating us alive at night. These are little pyrethrin mats (that actually have the word "doom" printed on them) that you put on a heating contraption made for them. It beats not getting enough sleep, though I'm certain this is nothing compared to jungle living.

The "Zone" report:

~The dirt road leading in to our neighborhood (about a mile away) has houses going up sort of around it. We think this is the birth of a new neighborhood in the sand but it's hard to tell since there aren't yet roads there. So we weave through until we get to pavement again.

~A year and a half ago, they outlawed motor bikes. Now, everyone drives them around again. I don't know that the law has changed, but they just sort of forget after awhile. Such is the method of rules and regulations of that nature here.

~A certain "tallest building in the world" that has been in the news recently claiming to be opened, caught my attention (for more reason than just the closing of the observation deck). In a building this large, you can imagine there are many floors for office space, and many other floors for apartment space. *Those* aren't what has opened yet. It's *just* the observation deck that was open. Well...and now it's closed. I don't really care, I'm just sayin....

We had a visitor this past month. He lived here briefly and was visiting again. This fellow wanted to know where the best place to hike up the mountains was, so the boys took him camping overnight up in them. They have to pack in everything, including water. I drop them off and pick them up at the base, which has a brand new huge flagpole. It was lucky it began to dawn on me that there should be some guy wires helping hold that thing up because as I slowed down they were suddenly right next to the car. Very hard to see. I keep wondering if I should go spray them orange. I don't want to get arrested for vandalism but I sure would hate to hear about someone 4 wheeling around there and losing a cross section of their head. I'll keep thinking.

We were locked in again yesterday. Apparently another layer of asphalt was needed on the road out front. I don't always have to go out, but there is something about not being able to that causes my subconscious to dream up reasons and places to go. They were all finished refinishing by nightfall, which is an uncommon occurrence but pretty nice.

The Burj Dubai (or Khalifa if you must) has an observation deck that is very expensive to go up on. For unknown reasons (to us here) it has closed with no reopen date. If any of you read of the reason, I'd be interested. Mark Twain once said something to the effect that the Freedom of speech should be accompanied by the prudence not to use it. We've all watched the press lead public thinking (then behavior) enough to agree. However when I see a country without real freedom of the press, and its effects, I really hate to take that freedom for granted either. It sure can be difficult to get at the truth (and maybe in our country, the **real** truth), and perhaps it isn't always necessary. And now I wonder if this paragraph seems to cancel itself out.

Sandstorms are threatening, as usual for this time of year. It's best not to be caught out in one so there are travel advisories. The distance is looking a very sandy colored hazy from my window.

A hatch of tiny geckos has been a fun and welcome occurrence. The silvery trails of giant slugs are visible in the moonlight even if the slug isn't. We occasionally see the 5 inch long slimy things on the outside walls but not frequently. The rare plover screams at night trying to draw cats and other predators elsewhere from its nest. I wonder where its nest is but it has been making regular visits to our yard. The feral cat that Lilly has been feeding tends to make the birds around here a little nervous. It's always hard to keep that balance of everything. We want to feed the birds, but to do it on the ground

anymore, I fear it may just be feeding the cat. So we try to keep the cat fed with cat food and put the bread crumbs up high. Keeping a harmonious biome is so tricky :-D .

Just for fun (for me), I will be enclosing a favorite older photo or two from this side of the world with each monthly letter. So if they seem familiar, good job paying attention.

And that's the news from this end of the earth.

With Much Love and Fond Affection,

~Pam.

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"From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I." (Psalm 61:2)

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5 inch slug



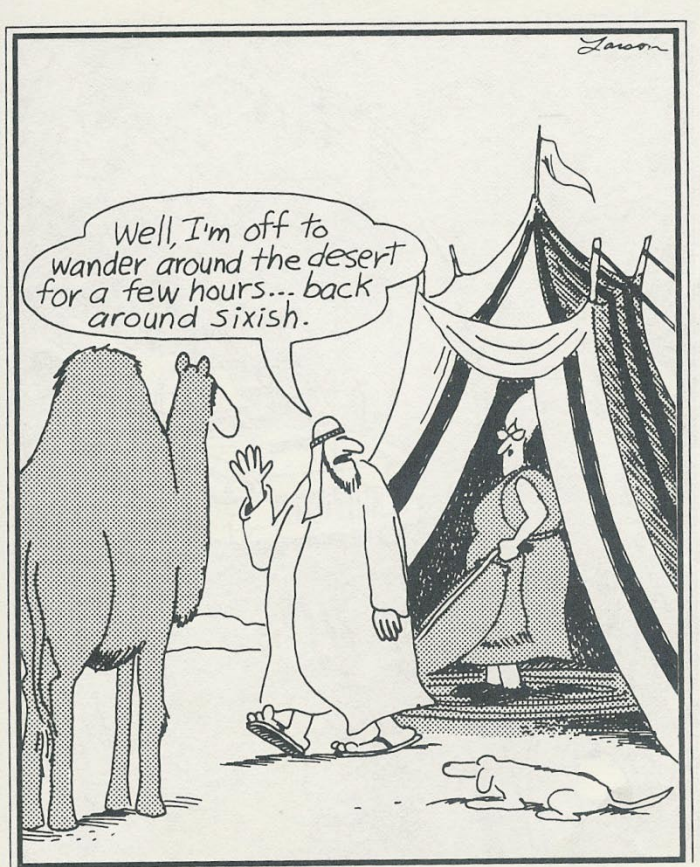
The chicken feed building



View of Fujairah from the mountains (courtesy of the boy's camping trip)



Oops. Far side cartoon (courtesy of Gary Larson)



The restless life of the nomad

window washers in Abu Dhabi (march 2007)



Laurelin tree. For daylight

