



Mr. & Mrs. J. Strasburg,
154 Regent St
Observatory,
Johannesburg,
South Africa

Lobatsi

Friday 6 August 64

Dearest Tom and Joan,

We are still unable to accustom ourselves to the idea that we are out of South Africa, and I suppose I won't really be sure of it until we are out of here as well. At the moment, we don't know when that will be, and may have to stay here a little while before moving on. Yesterday evening we reported our arrival to the authorities, and this morning had the necessary interview, forms filled in, some questions asked, and permission to stay as "political refugees" was granted. We put through a call to you quite early, and were both asleep by the time it came through, after baths, the first meal in 2 days and a state of exhaustion. The journey was unbelievably smelly; I could not face such a thing again, so only hope it will never be necessary!

Either our instructions were not good enough, or else we simply misunderstood; whatever it was, we lost our way. We started walking in the night, and should have reached the border in a couple of hours. We walked all night. It was pitch dark. We were afraid to use a torch, or even to

light a cigarette. We just went on walking through the bushes,
walking into thorn-bushes - it was impossible to see them - falling into
holes (ant-holes, I've been told) - Rusty fell into one nearly as
high as himself - ploughing for hours through sand, over uneven
ground - it was quite indescribable. At one stage we decided to
stop until morning, but when we did so, not only was it freezing
cold, but one of my legs became so stiff that I felt if we didn't
keep on going, I would not be able to start walking again. Three
times we stopped like this, and each time decided we had better
shamble on. Then we thought our only hope was to wait until dawn,
so that we might be able to see where we were, and perhaps to
see that blasted fence - I had hallucinations all night and
thought I could see the fence just ahead of us every ten minutes.
Finally it got light - that was the most hopeless moment of all.
We were nowhere - in the middle of flat, endless country, with
thornbushes and a few scraggy trees, and no sign of anything
anywhere, nothing living. We found a track and began walking
along it until we realised it was probably the track used to
patrol the border (it was). Then we looked for cover, because
you could be seen for miles in either direction. At last we
found a kraal, and someone took us to the fence, which
was actually quite close. So we climbed over in broad

daylight at 7.30 in the morning with no idea of how to get
anywhere except that Lobatai was "far - very far - too far."
I could not walk any further. My leg was so stiff and painful
it simply would not move. I lay down under a thorn tree in
the freezing wind, and Rusty went to see what he could find. In
a little while, as I began to doze, I heard a dog bark, and Rusty
came back with a woman who had once worked in Johannesburg
and so spoke English. She took us to her kraal, and brought us
kavosses and blankets so we could lie down. Then we started to
try and find some way of getting to Lobatai which they all said
was "too far". Hours and miles being meaningless, all they could
tell us was that if we walked all day we would not be there by
evening. The nearest place was a patrol post. There was no
store - it was "far, too far" and owned by a white, therefore
probably no use to us. No school. No telephone. No transport.
However, the woman started to organise the local men to find a
horse, a bicycle or some other means of getting in touch with
somebody or somebody. She sent a messenger to another man
who was said to own horses; the horses had gone away to the
fields and could not be found. She sent another messenger to
try and get a man with a bicycle to go somewhere. The man
was not there. We could do nothing but wait, and began to

learn the slowness and patience of the Countryside. We had nothing to eat. We had to leave the food Rusty had taken behind as it was too much to carry. The kraal was empty - I suppose they eat porridge or something, but they appeared to have nothing Saturday - After speaking to you on the phone.

We were most worried about the anxiety that you would be enduring until you heard from us, but there was nothing to do but wait. This woman, in whose kraal we lay, fetched water the colour of motor oil from some place miles away in a bucket on her head, heated it and put salt in, & bathed and massaged my legs & feet - my legs were punctured all over with thorns.

In the afternoon a man arrived with a cart drawn by two horses. It was really a few boards on wheels. I sat in front with him and Rusty cling on behind for dear life, two-thirds of him hanging over the edge. Our driver drove straight across country, sometimes along a sandy track which was generally as bad as the trackless parts. What a ride! We didn't even know where we were going. Some time later we arrived at a cluster of huts - where there was a school, &



by sheer chance a good luck a Bechuanaland government employee (white) with a car who was going to Lobatse in 15 minutes. He gave us a lift, & didn't even ask questions (typical British reticence!)

To give you an idea of how far we were from Lobatse, it was probably another 40 miles from the place where we obtained the lift. I simply could not have managed it (you can't undertake such a walk without training, and at my age it's even more difficult) & I am convinced there must be easier ways of travelling to Lobatse. Looking back on it, however, the most appalling part of all was before we actually started walking. This I don't wish to write about, & will tell you one day, but all I can say is that never in my life have I been so absolutely terrified, for hours on end. I have never before known what it is like to feel your insides turn to water (or quaking jelly) and it was a truly ghastly experience.

But we are here! Our arrangements to leave are just about completed, but we will still remain a few days. General opinion - and it seems correct - is that this is the best place to wait. Rusty seems quite confident and I am still nervous, but not too much. We have a

Very long journey ahead of us.

It was distressing to leave so suddenly without being able to say goodbye to friends. Just to walk out of the house one morning without a backward glance, leaving everything I have lived among for the past 16 years. Please give my dearest love to Lerley, Rose & Bertha, all of whom have been such wonderful friends. I will write to them in due course. I was also very sorry not to have been able to see Jean, Harold, Evelyn & her family. I deeply appreciate their loyalty and the way they always were there in times of trouble. The people with whom I stayed the longest during this latter period were really marvellous to me, & I hope you have somehow managed to inform them where we are, although they probably want you not to call around for a while.

Various things were left here & there, including my coat at the last place. I suppose things will eventually get sorted out. If not, you will write to me.

A pair of leather gloves given to me at the last moment saved my hands from being torn to pieces by them.

I think you should try and sell Keith's train

(perhaps John knows someone who will buy) & I would also like to sell the Bosch if possible - something like "Bosch food mixer - as new - powerful motor - many attachments including liquidizer, mincer, coffee grinder, juicer, etc. £30 (R60)" The big bowls that go with it are in the cupboard to the right of the kitchen table.

I hope things will be easier for you now that we are safe, & once Keith joins us, you should not have too many burdens left. ~~Do not worry about the money~~
~~Do not worry about the money~~

Many thanks for everything, & much love to you both

Hilda

(have to go)

I left a note with some money for you with a friend - did you get it?



Mrs. & Mr. J. Strasburg,
154, Regent Street,
Observatory,
Johannesburg
South Africa

Lobatsi

Wed. 12 August

Dearest Joan and Jim,

It is a week since we left, and at the moment we are no nearer to departure than when we first arrived here. If we have to stay much longer at the Cumberland - the most expensive hotel in BP - we shall soon be penniless, and unable to get anywhere!

Before we go any further, I must mention to you to disregard what you read in the newspapers. We understand the late edition of the Sunday Times carried some fantastic story about planes, guards at the airport, and so on, all of which was sheer fiction, as we had no intention of trying to get the air company here in Lobatsi to fly us out - it is a South African company, and we wouldn't risk even trying. That little swine Dong from the Sunday Times wormed his way in here, and put together a story part fact and part the sheerest fiction from here and there, and then concocted the rest in the local bars getting nice and drunk. What is so infuriating is (apart from all the lies) the way a harmless-sounding question and answer looks when he has dealt with it. Such as a casual "Did you have any pets?" and mention of Nyama that becomes a

could further on) and sketchbook and pencils, which I wanted, so if you hear of anyone coming up this way

We would like you to pack all our clothes in a trunk - the smallest they will go in - and ship them to London. If you do this now, before anything is done about furniture and other things, we have a hope of receiving them in a reasonable time. I had already disposed of most of the clothes I don't need, and you can take what is left & pack them - not wanted: the black & white raincoat; the dark grey suit with the velvet collar. Please do get my red coat back, and include that. Stick in sketch books, pencils & so on

Later. We have the case opened - thanks for sending the things. They do help. We've spent the usual frustrating and infuriating morning getting nowhere. After a week we're still in the same position. I think unless someone outside can assist we won't get far

Regarding the clothes - my overcoat, which I shall need, the new shoes & sketch book & pencils, keep back and send them with Keith when he goes (and anything else you think we will need urgently.) Pack up all the rest and ship it as soon as you possibly can - if in any difficulties, ask Harold about it - as we then have a chance of getting the clothes within a reasonable time.

+ Rusty's charcoal suit

"tearful" leaving - Phew - I could vomit over the whole story. I hope people realised that we were not really responsible for it. We have been pestered with the press, who phone from all over the place (including TV in Salisbury, who want to fly to Francetown to interview us there when we arrive). We hoped that having once had the story they would leave us alone, but they don't.

The first thing we had to learn here is to re-adjust the pace of life. Time is of no concern to anyone at all, and we have to find some way of sitting around and waiting and being patient. Things which you would do in five minutes in Johannesburg take days to do here. There is no way of hurrying anything up. We are naturally not happy about sitting around here, and we do seem to attract undesirable attention, but we just can't make anything move faster.

We received the case yesterday, but have not been able to open it yet. We thought perhaps you sent the keys by post, and we are waiting to see if they will arrive - we will get the case itself returned to you before we leave. It's infuriating to sit here in the same clothes and not be able to open the damn thing. I forgot to ask you to send me a night dress (I sleep bare - but it may be too

Write to Frances and tell her you've heard from us & send
our love.

Well - that's all. The distinguishing features of BP are
dignity, dust and boredom. I'm just hoping that by the
time you get this we'll be on our way - but can't see how.

Give my dearest love to Lesley. We saw the Sunday
Times, and I think of her constantly and wish I could be
near her during this time of anxiety and ordeal for her.

Love to you both

Hilda

The coat a Rusty's aunt to go with Keith

BY AIR MAIL
PAR AVION
AIR LETTER
AEROGRAMME



Fishing
Eastern Highlands



RHODESIA & NYASALAND

Mrs. & Mr. J. Strasburg
154 Regent Street
Observatory
Johannesburg
South Africa

← Second fold here →

Sender's name and address:

.....

.....

AN AIR LETTER SHOULD NOT CONTAIN ANY
ENCLOSURE ; IF IT DOES IT WILL BE SURCHARGED
OR SENT BY ORDINARY MAIL.

Lusaka. Wed 19th Aug 64

Dearest Toni and Ivan,

The situation here is becoming indescribably complicated, and I hope that all our abortive plans to get Keith here are not upsetting him and making life difficult for you.

Difficult as it is to get into Bechuanaland, it's even more difficult to get out. We made various plans, which kept falling through - the details are interesting, but I don't want to write them to you now - and eventually abandoned attempts to leave by road through Francetown, ~~Kixxa~~ Kosane, into NR. We then made fruitless efforts to charter a plane, and finally I had booked a phone call to friends in London to try and help, when friends in NR managed to get one for us. We had new difficulties in getting to the plane, which was to pick us up at Palapye, and the most terrifying experience of all when we attempted to (and abandoned) go by train. Eventually we left in a truck for Palapye at 11 one evening, accompanied by a couple of bodyguards, and waited in Palapye for the plane, a tiny little red and white bird, seating the pilot and three passengers. I had actually lost all faith in the plane arriving by the time it came. Rusty was sick most of the way, and we arrived in Lusaka after having been in our clothes for three days and two nights, not sleeping for two nights, and feeling like hell. Here we found hospitable friends, and relaxation - it does seem unbelievable that we made it, we are safe, after so many enormous difficulties and narrow escapes. I've never had such truly frightening experiences, of the type you might find in a third-rate cloak-and-dagger film.

Troubles now are these: friends want us to go to Dar before London to see various people who are there. We may only stay here until Friday (transit permits which expire; we have to leave). All planes to Nairobi are full for two weeks. Only one plane available on Friday that goes to London via Entebbe. Airline won't take us unless they have clearance from England that we will be allowed to land, otherwise at Entebbe they will put us on plane back to Lusaka (at Lusaka a revolt^{ing} little official wanted to put us on the plane back to BP) and we visualise spending the rest of our lives flying between Entebbe and Lusaka, neither place being prepared to take us. I don't mind, but Rusty loathes flying. Now under discussion is the possibility of going overland to Dar, where there will, at last, be no difficulties about permits, etc and thence to London. Alternative is to skip Dar, which is a great pity, and fly straight to London without getting off at Entebbe - so frustrating to be so near interesting African countries and simply to fly away. Meanwhile, last night we spoke to Pat. We had written to him suggesting that we would sponsor an air visit to us - wherever we were - at Christmas time, or even during these holidays if he preferred it, as he hasn't seen Rusty for more than a year. This would mean not visiting again for about another 12 months. He likes the idea of coming now (much nicer to spend December in SA than in England) and we think that he and Keith should travel together, probably direct to London, as soon as we notify you that we are there, or arriving there. This would make it much easier for Keith. If we do get to Dar and stay there a week they could join us there first - that won't cost any more in air fare. Rusty has written to Harold about it all, and this is just to put you in the picture. You can buy air cases for both Keith and Pat - those others are too heavy. You must chuck out any clothes of Keith's that are too old or too small, and pack up everything else including a couple of toys, Elly, etc. Let him take what he wants. If there is still room in Pat's case (weight-room, I mean) you can fill up with any of our clothes, apart from the coat and Dad's suit, which they must bring. Include my

goggles if possible, that bracelet, etc, my diary that should have reached you with my red coat - did you get the money and note I left for you? - black shoes. The diary has a blue cover, and photos of you kids in it.

As you are moving into a flat, Dad says you should take any equipment you need - washing machine, freezer, frig, or whatever - and those you don't need will go into storage until Harold arranges to sell them. Please write to me at Vera's address and tell me everything about your flat, and what furniture you are taking and so on. Please give my dearest love to Lesley; I long to hear about her and the thought of Ivan presses on us all the time. Ask Vera to write to us, and Max, and other friends. Readdress my art magazine when it comes. I will write to Bertha and others from London. Be nice to Frances - we will decide about her when we arrive, and see how she feels about staying on longer or coming to join us. I hope her holiday was enjoyable. Friends here think we should return to settle and we are certainly considering it. This is an attractive place, and it's Africa, and I now find I am an African, in spite of anything you children think, and no longer a Londoner. Love to Eli and Violet also if you see them. Would you or Ivan have enough time to take some clippings from the RDM on detainees and similar things and air-mail them to us second-class air mail? I'll send cash for it, if you can do it. From my own clippings - don't throw them all out yet - I'd like to keep and get sent over those about 90 days and arrests (File no. 1, 20, 21, 15 etc) as I believe I will need this material for future writings. Much love to you. (I see I still have a couple of lines of room) Send us Pat's report, and any other letters or odd things can be readdressed to London.

If you can get a couple of copies of Sunday Times with that picture of you & Frances & Keith, please clip article & picture & send - I want it for some people

Mildred

Don't forget my art things!



Mr. & Mrs. Strasburg & Frances
3rd Floor, Noverna Court
Paul Mel Street,
Hillbrow.
Johannesburg

SOUTH AFRICA

Dar-es-Salaam
28th August 64

Dearest Frances, Toni and Ivan,

Can't remember when, or what I last wrote to you, whether I wrote from Lusaka, or if we just indulged in those expensive and confused telephone calls. This may be repetition. However!

You gather we had difficulties in getting out of BP. Getting in is one problem, getting out these days is equally involved. We had quite a terrifying experience one night, and eventually left Lobatsi by truck (with bodyguards!) for Palapye, where friends in Northern Rhodesia had chartered a plane to come - our own efforts to get a plane were fruitless. We travelled all night, stopping only to light a fire to warm ourselves on that dry and desolate road, and reached Palapye early in the morning. We waited hours, without food or anything, for the plane - this was our second night without sleep and without getting undressed, so we were really tired. I had quite lost faith in the arrival of the plane when it eventually came, a little red and white three-seater, which made Rusty as sick as anything.

In Lusaka we stayed with friends, former South Africans, who tried very hard to persuade us to return and settle in Zambia after independence in October. Lusaka is a pretty little place, and we met several of the UNIP people - government ministers, including the PM, Kenneth Kaunda. We found them cordial and they also said we should return after independence - the Minister of Home Affairs said "Our country is open to you." Lusaka is an attractive little town. It's worth considering.

We drove around Lusaka one day to have a proper look at it. We thought the locations compared unfavourably with Soweto, and the rents are shocking. For tiny, slummy houses on minute plots of ground - much smaller than in Jhbg locations - they pay anything between £3 and £7 a month. White civil servants, living in beautiful homes in tree- and flower-lined streets, paid nominal rents of £4 to £8 a month, when they were earning £120 to £150 a ~~year~~ month. Oh, how fixed themselves up! There is no public transport to speak of, but White children had special school buses (free). The men were issued with white shirts and trousers free; and so on. They took and took and took, and never gave anything at all back to this country, and now are resentful and bitter if they must leave it all. Zambia has literally no industries apart from the copper mines, not even the most basic things, such as enough brick kilns, a clothing factory, anything. For ten years everything was developed in Southern Rhodesia, the roads, railways, factories, industries of all kinds, while at the same time they siphoned out huge sums of money. There is a great deal to be done, but there is an air of confidence about the UNIP chaps; they have - financially - one of the best countries in Africa; they need and welcome people with all kinds of skills. Friends told us that the rail strike and the Lumpa disturbances were not simply co-incidental, but instigated to embarrass the government.

We met all sorts of characters in Lusaka, representatives of other governments, Neville Rubin, John Lang, and the ubiquitous Americans (so-called students, writers, or vaguely attached to some embassy or other) forever asking questions about refugees and related matters.

We met Keith and Patrick on Saturday night, Keith full of beans, (Patrick said he asked questions all the way without stopping: what are clouds made of? Water - rain. Then if you jumped into them, would you get wet? No. Why not? Because they're like steam. Then if you jumped into them would you get burned? No. Why not?...And so on) Patrick looking very handsome, and in spite of what you say, he talks much better than before - says loook, not lewk; and also he talked more freely than for years.

We left on Sunday morning, ourselves and five others, in a large but over-crowded and dreadfully uncomfortable jeep. We wanted to send you a wire, but everything was closed - can't even send a phonogram on Sundays. Then we were truly out in the bush, travelling for hundreds of miles without even seeing a hut; the emptiest country

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I have ever seen. It is fairly heavily wooded, the trees were interesting, there was water in the small rivers we crossed - all quite lush - but so uninhabited!

The petrol pump where we were supposed to fill up in the afternoon was out of order, and we ran out of petrol about 30 miles from our first overnight stop, a place called Mpika. Tennyson found a man with a broken down bicycle which he commandeered, and armed with a torch (no light on the bike) and a penknife (because we were near the Len-shina district) he went to try and find petrol. We lit a fire, and listened to drums beating in the bush, and stopped trucks, about one an hour, when they passed on the road. All were big diesel-burning affairs carrying fish from the lakes and none with petrol. When we did eventually get petrol we arrived at Mpika in the middle of the night, the hotel was full and no food available. I shared a room with other women, the men slept in the jeep.

Our next overnight stop was Mbye, in Tanganyika. We had to leave the main road (which is pretty poor) to get petrol at a place called Chinsali, in the heart of Lenshina's district. It was buzzing with armoured cars, military trucks, soldiers, all rushing around madly in the heat, dust and bush. Here, surprisingly, there was a post office, so I sent you a wire. We saw women and children in a barbed wire enclosure. To rejoin the road we travelled about 36 miles along a bush track over which I doubt if any four-wheeled vehicle has ever passed before; partly it was thick sand, for which we had to engage the 4-wheel drive of the jeep, and partly it was a double track overgrown with grass and bush and full of pot-holes. This took us hours. So we arrived at the frontier late. Then had a long delay filling in forms and overcoming various difficulties. Even with assistance from our friends there's a helluva lot of red tape everywhere you go, endless forms, questions and so on. Keith and Patrick present their own difficulty because an SA passport makes you non persona grata in Africa. In addition, as someone explained to us later, any clerk of any efficiency or ability or training whatsoever has been shot up to the top positions, leaving completely untrained people in jobs formerly filled exclusively by Whites or Asians.

Anyway, by the time we had finished it was dark, and we had 70 miles to go to Mbye, which has a hotel. The road was bad, winding, difficult, and we arrived so exhausted, that we decided I would take a plane from Mbye the next day to Dar with K and P. It was just too much for them, particularly Keith. It's a very, very tough trip by road. Rusty had to go on with the truck because he was doing most of the driving. So I had a liesurely day at Mbye, very beautiful, surrounded by mountains, while the others left in the morning on the jeep. We three caught a DC-3 in the afternoon and arrived in Dar four hours later, after stops at Njombe and Iringa (I trust you are reading this with a map in front of you); we were met at the airport by Hadebe and Nzo, who had booked a hotel for us. Rusty arrived 3 a.m. - the accelerator pedal broke, and they travelled the last 200 miles with one man driving and the other operating the accelerator with a piece of string.

There are many friends here, some we have not seen for years, and it's fine for Rusty and me, but boring for Pat. However, we could not speed up our departure. We are awaiting a travel document for Rusty, and the pace here is typical. Every morning we are at immigration filling in a different set of forms and answering new questions ("can you ride a bicycle?" "What are your hobbies?" "What parts of the town do you frequent?"). We are hoping to get the document today and are provisionally booked to leave here Monday evening, arriving in Nairobi the same night, staying there until Wed. morning, and arriving in London Wed. evening. Travelling in this way is very complicated and without the backing of friends, virtually impossible. We have seen what happens to others who come out without our associations. Eleanor, who is here, asked for your address and will write to you. Mosie and Jassat send their love. Jassat developed epilepsy as the direct result of assaults on him. Mosie is back at the same old job - supervising the duplicator. There is a large and busy ANC office here which appears to run with more discipline and efficiency than any other places here, and as I remember, than it did at home in the old days. It's a pretty town (very small) with an attractive harbour; Pat and Keith enjoy the swimming, and there are lovely shells and pools along the beaches, filled with crabs, lizards, star-fish and all kinds of sea life.

Yesterday we had a talk to Father Huddleston who happened to be here on one of his infrequent visits from his diocese, which is far to the south. He told us about it, and urged us to visit it, which I would love to do some time if we have the opportunity of coming back here one day. It was marvellous to see him again.

All our friends, from Lobatsi onwards, have expressed genuine pleasure that we have left SA. They have said such things as "This is my wish come true" and "I had been dying to hear this news." None of them have expressed even a shadow of doubt about this decision. However, this does not make one feel any easier about those left behind, and I carry the thought of them constantly and unceasingly. We've had no real news for a couple of weeks; I suppose we will get it in London, but I positively ache to know what is happening and how my friends are.

Toni, I am so glad that you will be coming. I am convinced this is the best decision. If Ivan wants to further his studies I can investigate the possibility. Please let me know when you are booked to come. Perhaps someone would care for Nyama until then and you can bring him with you? What has happened to Pepe? And Claud? Keith wants to know if you will bring over the VW.

Frances, when I am in London I will write a separate letter to you. I hope you have written to tell us about your holiday. We miss you very much, and wonder whether you will come to us soon, or stay on for a while. We will look around for a nice school for you as soon as we have the chance. I am looking forward to seeing your report.

Please remember me and give my love to all our friends,

With love

Mum

Clive enclosed note to healing

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