

154 Regent St,  
Observatory,  
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A4.2.2

My dearest Vera and Mamma, and this must be for Olga too,

Oh, where to begin? It is incredible that I have been home a week already, and every day I've been telling myself that tomorrow I'll be able to get down to things. When I had letters from you today, and from Rae, I really felt mean about not writing to you all immediately, to set your minds at rest and let you know that I am really fine, first-class, best of health, and even a bit trimmer in figure, due largely to the 45 minutes of exercies that we did every single night (except Sundays) (not religious reasons!) in Pretoria. But I've been leading such a retired and ordered life, that I find being out completely chaotic. This has been intensified by the overwhelming kindness of absolutely everybody. It was like coming home after having had twins or triplets - the cakes, the flowers, the visitors, the phone! The first night I came home Tony ordered all the food for supper, cooked it herself, including a sumptuous dessert, served it, attended to the others, put Keith to bed, while I answered the phone and the front door, in a complete dither. This went on until the week-end, coupled with the utmost confusion on my part. My reactions to everything were slow at first. After living for three months my ones total possessions contained in a small cupboard next to a bed (two pairs of trousers, we all wore them whether they suited or not, a couple of winter shirts, a jersey, the minimum of underclothes) I found even getting dressed in the morning confusing, as though I was not in command of things. Added to this, a general state of confusion in the house as a whole; we went away when it was still summer, came back in mid-winter. The rooms, my clothes, the children's things, everything, in the utmost mess; each child with some clothes in a different house, some blankets taken to Fuzzy, some to the Shermbruckers - but if all this sounds as though there was anything unpleasant about my homecoming, that would be a false impression. It has all been just glorious, indéscribable, gorgeous to be out, to be home, to be with the children, to see people, to talk, not to wake in the morning and see the gloomy grey rafters in the cold great barn of a room where we were in Pretoria, and not to lie thinking 'another day - how many more.' I just needed time to settle down, and so far, haven't had it!

I anticipated this. Another co-detainee, Myrtle Berman - four children under ten, also what was called a 'double detainee', that means husband in as well - and myself both said we hoped against hope they would release our husbands at the same time, so they could share the fun and games, but both our husbands are still in. We hoped very much to come out together and immediately go on holiday with the children, regardless of finances. Instead, I am plunged reluctantly back to work, to an office also in a mess (and that's a whole story on its own - the present publishers of the magazine is a firm that publishes magazines on behalf of others, the manager, Mannie Brown, is a detainee; his wife has two little girls of 5 and 6 and twin sons, now 8 months, stepped into his business, which is run very inefficiently, starting from scratch, finding substitute editors for magazines, keeping the whole thing going; note: she is succeeding very well. Naturally she couldn't wait for me to get back.) They can't pay me for the three months I was in, but I ~~will~~ am taking over again.

Then there are so many time-consuming things to see to. My restrictions: 1) that I don't participate in or associate myself in any way with the activities of any organisation whatsoever, or attend any meeting or gathering of any kind without prior approval of the Magistrate, Johannesburg; 2) that I don't visit or in any way communicate with any person who is or has been detained, or who was a member of any organisation that is now unlawful (this is the biggest rubbish of the lot - I've already visited Rusty, where I saw other detainees, and spoke to several ex-detainees quite apart from anything else.) 3) That I don't publish or cause to be published or supply to any person any information relating to my detention or the detention of others (ha, ha!) 4) I am confined to the magisterial district of Johannesburg; 5) I may not change my job or place of residence without prior permission of the Magistrate. 6) I'm confined to the house between the hours of 8 p.m. and 8 a.m. 7) I have to report daily to the local police station. Well, the first thing I had to do on release was to get permission from the Magistrate to leave Johannesburg for Pretoria twice a week to visit Rusty. Then had to go to the police for a permit to see him. That took half a day. The other half of my first day out was spent at the hairdresser, something I'd promised myself for ages. I had become hairdresser to all the other women, cutting hair with a nail scissors, and setting it for them, but most of them had naturally curly hair. My own was a hopeless mess.

The children are all fine. Keith is really marvellous, the most delightful character, and I believe the least effected of all of them. He is sweet, affectionate, talkative, but completely casual. Fuzzy said she would revise Bowlby on his account, but I think that it was due to Tony, on whom he obviously relied tremendously. She says he is a nuisance and a nag, but their relationship is excellent. She is competent and firm and loving, and he goes to her and lets her do things as though she were his mother.

Frances, I gather, cried a lot while we were away, and was often miserable, but this was at least partially due to ill-health, which was only discovered recently. She had tonsillitis and has evidently had sinus trouble a long time. Her tonsils must come out, this is being arranged. But she expresses her feelings very easily, and is very happy now. I personally think Patrick was the most effected. He became morose and shut in. He was perfectly all right with his own friends, but seemed totally unable to communicate with any adults. His headmaster said he lost interest in his work, became untidy and careless. His letters to me were very

brief and taciturn, quite unlike Frances, who expressed herself well. But in this week he has become a different boy, and I am not really worried about him.

Tony has been wonderful. Everyone is full of praise for her. And this was confirmed when I went to interview her headmistress, Miss Lubbe, who said they all admired her very much. She said that too many of the girls simply went to pieces when they had any trouble at home, wept, were sorry for themselves, and used it as an excuse for their failures; whilst Tony was always cheerful and uncomplaining, and never made any excuses for work not done. But she failed in three subjects, which hardly seems surprising. She came to Pretoria twice a week, missing some ~~extra~~ schooling each time. She spent most afternoons, except for the last three weeks, attending to the others, who made all their demands on her. I am tremendously proud of her, and will never forget how much I looked forward to seeing her each visiting day, and how pretty and happy she always appeared, regardless of the strains on her. One letter she wrote to me was quite delightful. She mentioned a friend of hers, Jeff, very ~~keen~~ keen on politics, "but he seems more interested in you than me," she wrote, "he is always talking about you, and seems to admire you a lot. In fact a lot of people do. I think I would admire you myself if you weren't my mother, if you see what I mean." This morning she left for two weeks holiday in Cape Town with Sonia Bunting, who was released a couple of days after I was. Sonia was arrested in Johannesburg, on her way to Swaziland from Cape Town. It turned out to have been the best possible thing that could have happened to her, although it did not seem so at the time, of course. But if she had been arrested in Cape Town, she would have been with a smaller group of women whose morale, for some reason, was not high, and who did not seem to face up to it very well; many of them broke down and seem to have suffered quite a lot. If she had got to Swaziland, she would have been right away from her children, and in the impossible position that now exists for others there, of not being able to return with any safety - we just don't know what is going to happen to those people. Instead, she found herself among what I can only describe as the most wonderful, splendid women I have ever known. We were well organised, ~~remained~~ remained cheerful nearly all the time, were militant and really made the best we possibly could of whatever circumstances we found ourselves in. Sonia's children came to Johannesburg ten days ago, and now they are all going home together, though Brian is still in, at Worcester, with other Cape Town detainees. Tony should have stayed home and ~~studied~~ studied like mad, but she wanted to go, and I thought she had earned a holiday away from her home and family.

More people to praise - Rusty's brother, his wife, and his sister have been marvellous to us. They just did everything they possibly could, much more than I would ever have expected. When I saw how some of the women's relatives behaved, I appreciated it all the more. You must remember that many people were petrified, didn't want to go to the police to get permits to visit detainees, and so on. They were just beyond praise in every possible way. You can't imagine what people have been like - I suppose their own consciences were touched. Tradesmen, casual acquaintances, parents of the children's friends, and so on. My emotions get all stirred up.

At the moment of writing, Rusty and about 11 other European men and 6 European women are still in. How many non-Europeans, I do not know (this is for Johannesburg-Pretoria, I mean. There are more in other centres.) I saw Rusty the day I was released, demanded to see him, in fact, and you can imagine how delighted he was. I then visited him again two days later, last Thursday, and on Monday of this week (yesterday.) He looks awfully fit and well, much younger than when he was arrested! The men who have come out are full of praise for him. Three or four of them have already told me that they regard him as the finest of them all, which makes me most proud and happy. I refuse to be too expectant, and know how useless it is listening to rumours - we maintained towards the end that half the rumours were started in gaol by ourselves, passed out via our visitors, and came back to us in a distorted form after having gone through a dozen different people. This keeps me from jumping in an agony of expectation - as I see some other wives do - every time the phone rings (they phone for you to come and fetch them home.) Even the manner of releases has been exactly the same as everything else - inexplicable, without any pattern or thread of reason, and in the clumsiest possible manner as far as the relatives are concerned. I simply cannot bear to think of the women still left, a sadly reduced group. I know what they are doing every minute of the day. Now they are living under prolonged tension in conditions that had already become deadly. I wept like anything when I was told I was going home - not with joy, I didn't feel a thing about coming home and seeing the children - but because I could not bear to leave them behind.

I have so many things to thank you for. I know you, Vera, have been doing everything you could. Tony has received all the PO's you sent, I received Frances and mine £3 - I shall buy myself some earrings, I long for sparkling adornments - and Frances received the money from Granny today. The children showed me all the postcards you and Olga sent; they loved them, and kept them all. Frances had a monster birthday party, so many children and adults and presents of all kinds. If only I could take wings and fly to you immediately, and tell you everything, I would. But I haven't had a decent night's sleep since I returned, so much to see to, so many visitors. So I will write some more soon, I hope. My dearest love to you all.

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