

HILDA BERNSTEIN

P.O. Box 410

PRETORIA

Dearest Patrick and Frances,

The days go by so quickly that I can hardly believe I have been here a week. Tony and Jean came to see me yesterday, and last time it was Evelyn, and she told me about you all. I'm beginning to think that when Daddy and I come home, you will find life very different, because you seem to go out such a lot. You go to different people every week-end. When you write to me you must tell me where you go, and what you do, and which places you like best. My visitors tell me quite a lot about Keith and Frances, but not so much about Patrick, so please Pat, do tell me how you occupy your week-ends, who you go to, and so on. Are you continuing with your guitar, and do you play at all? Do you still go to Scouts? And who do you see most? Do you still go to the house sometimes to see how Fluffy and Muffin are getting on? And Frances, tell me about Tin-tin.

I saw Bram and Ilse yesterday, and wished you could have come, too. Perhaps we will have such an opportunity. But I do wish you would write to me, and every week. I have had only one letter in five weeks, while all the mothers here have had several letters from their children. Are you really so busy? If you have written, then do so again, because I very much want to hear from you.

We have just been sitting outside in the sun, and taking our turn at having a bath. I can sing at the top of my voice in the bathroom, and it sounds very nice because there is a sort of echo. And it reminds me of bathing at home, with people walking in and out all the time, lots of company and conversation.

~~base all the time~~ This part may read a bit strange at first, but I had to write the first page over again ²

And Frances, tell me about Tin-tin. Does anybody look after him? I wouldn't mind having him here, with all his yowling at night. I would let him sleep on my bed for company.

I am awfully tired of the clothes I am wearing - the same things day after day. A lot of us women wear slacks, because it is more convenient, but a lot of us haven't really got the figures for them. But we still do exercises nearly every night.



Has Linda gone back to school yet? I suppose when she goes you will re-arrange your sleeping quarters. Tell me the things that Keith says these days. All I remember is the way he always used to say "Your bloody 'opes!" All the mothers here miss their children very much, and some have photos of them. I would like some photos or snaps of all of you - even those photos that we had on the wall near the phone of Pat and Frances. Have you used your cameras lately? One of the ladies here, ~~the lady~~, tells me that her husband is having a party for detainees' children on Sunday. Will you write and tell me about it, who was there, and what you did? It seems such a long time that we have been away, and I do miss you all such a lot. Please remember how much we love you. We are a lucky family, because we always had so much fun together, and so we will have again one of these days.

My dearest love to you all, now and always

PAT

Mummy.

FRANCEY

X X X X X

X X X X X

O O O O O

O O O O O

The Fort

3

Tuesday 12th April 1960

My dearest Patrick and Frances,

I am writing this letter to you, because I believe that Tony will be allowed to come and see me, and I am hoping to see her. And, of course, Keith is too young to understand a letter, but it is for him, too.

I want to tell you that I am with friends, and we are quite happy together. If it were not for the fact that we are all away from our families, we would look at this as a kind of holiday! We share rooms, a lot of us together, and we have a yard with a bit of grass to sit on. We are in the sun most of the day. The food served is perfectly horrible, but we have been able to buy some for ourselves, so we will be all right.

Patrick, have you spoken to Arnold - I expect you have, so you know about him. And Frances, you must speak to David and Johnny.

I think about you all the time. Pat, will you do your homework properly, not just in a scrappy way, but especially well, just because I'm not there. And do practice. Listen to Tony and try not to fight with Frances.

Frances, have you been to music? How do you get there? Fuzzy must be terribly busy with so many things to look after. And Rochelle is also busier than usual - Pat, how about asking Gideon over one weekend?

Frances, you must not be sad because I'm not there.

One of these days we will all be together again, and meanwhile, you must learn to manage without us for a little while

Now I will tell you about myself. We are outside most of the day, but we have supper at about half past three, and we are locked in our rooms at 4 o'clock.

We have various committees to organise education, physical culture, and so on. We miss Lesley! We try to remember some of her exercises and every evening we do some. We laugh so much, we can hardly do the exercises. We have a "Quartermaster" in charge of our food supplies. Tomorrow we hope to start classes in French, Afrikaans, Maths and Shorthand. I am going to the Shorthand class, and French too if I have time. Tony should be here - for the maths class! One of the women sets our hair when we wash it - and we have a hot bath nearly every day. We have plenty of books to read, jig-saw puzzles, chess and other games, and I have my embroidery

Please try to be happy and don't worry about us both. We love you all very dearly, but could not have lived any other way. Take care of Keith, be particularly good to him as he is too young to understand why we have gone away, carry on a normal life and live as best you can until we return.

All my love,
Mummy



The Fort

Wed 20th April 1960

Dearest Patrick and Frances,

I have just seen Tony - this was visiting ~~the~~ day. We were all excited; waiting for our visitors. Tony probably told you all about it. I am so sorry you are too young to come and see me, but it doesn't matter - I think of you and ask all about you. Tony tells me you have all moved over to the Lewittons. It must be a bit crowded, but I'm sure Frances enjoys having Linda there. Tony told me that Patrick went to Swaziland for Easter. I hope you enjoyed it, Pat, although we couldn't all go camping together as we had planned. But don't worry, we will all go together some time and have a wonderful holiday. Tell Evelyn that she should leave the wool and warm things and parcel some other day - I think they didn't want parcels left on visiting day, but we have to get some warm clothes.

How is school going? I hope you are managing that difficult reading book, both of you. Please Patrick, do ask when you don't understand the words.

Do you know that you can write one letter a week to me, and one to Rusty? We may each get one letter each every week, and so far I haven't had one. If you both write and put it together, I'm sure it will be all right.

There is nothing much to write to you about. The way we live must be something like living in boarding school. We are allowed to buy extra food in addition to the prison food, which

We don't enjoy very much! So if we get an extra little ration with each meal, such as two sardines or half an apple, we think it's delicious. But don't think we are hungry - we have enough to eat.

I am just looking forward to a really delicious meal at home again.

We are doing an enormous jig-saw puzzle with 1,000 pieces - but a lot of us are working on it together. Shall I tell you how we spend the day? A loud bell rings at half-past six, then we must all get up, and make our beds and be tidied up by ~~6.30~~^{7 p.m.}. Our room is unlocked, and we walk around outside. After breakfast we sit outside in the sun. Some of us have "classes" that we have organised ourselves. I am trying to learn shorthand, but it is not easy. Others are learning different languages, and maths. We also do sewing and knitting. We eat lunch very early - usually about 11 o'clock. We are then locked in our cells - they are really rooms - for an hour or a little more. In the afternoons we go on with our classes, our sewing, or reading, and we also take a bath, each in turn, throughout the day, as we must share one bath, and do our own washing. The ironing is done for us. We have supper at A in the afternoon! And over Easter, we sometimes had it at about 3.15! Then we are locked up for the night. We write letters, do puzzles, play games like Scrabble or Chess, read, and so on. At about 5.30 or 6 we start our exercises. We have very little room to do them, so we clear a space on the floor and take it in turns. We are all getting good at them. Then we wash and get ready for bed. We have a cup of coffee made with hot water from the tap. Every night we have a couple of prunes and read in bed. The lights are turned out at 8 o'clock sharp. We lie and talk for a while. We go to sleep early, and we are always awake before the bell goes.

Please do not worry about me or about Daddy. We manage to keep very happy, and only want to know that you children are also happy, learning to do more things for yourselves. When this time has passed and our family is all together

once again, I will tell you all the funny things and you will laugh about it.

Be happy, be proud, you have a great deal to be thankful for, lots of friends and people to help care for you. We will have a great deal of fun together, one day - soon I hope.

All my love to both of you

Mummy.

x x x x x x
for Patrice

x x x x x x
for France

My dearest little Keith

This piece of letter is for you to do what you like with - tear up, or screw into pieces, or anything at all. How do you like living in Andrew's house? Does he play with you? Who reads books to you? I hope you have lots of things to do, and like your new home. Your Daddy and Mummy are not far away.

Lots and lots of love and
Kisses

MUMMY.

x x x x x x

Hilda Bernstein

HILDA BERNSTEIN

The Fort

8

Box 1133

Johannesburg

Wed 27. April 1960



My dearest Patrick & Frances,

We have been cold and shivering in this miserable weather, and every day we look out for the sun. I hope you keep jerseys on when it is cold, and don't catch cold. We have enough blankets, but, oh, I would love to sit in a nice comfortable chair in front of a big fire.

I saw Bram today, and he told me that all the family except Patrick went to his house on Sunday, and that Keith enjoyed climbing up and down the stairs. I wonder where Patrick went? Sundays here are just like any other day, except that we have our meals even earlier than usual and get locked in earlier.

A lot of the women received letters today - why haven't you written? - or perhaps you did, but I didn't get them yet. Sometimes they take quite a time, as they have to be censored first.

On Monday I saw Daddy! That was exciting for me. Each of the women who have husbands in jail were allowed to go and see them for half an hour. Three went last week, and three of us were taken on Monday. I can't tell you how exciting it was to see the street, with cars and buses and people in it, after being inside this place so long, and I saw Daddy in one of the offices and could hug and kiss him.

I'm glad to tell you that he hasn't grown a beard - some of the men inside are growing beards. He looked fine.

I wish I had some interesting news to tell you - but there is nothing at all to write about. We don't get any news in here, and every day is just the same. We spend quite a lot of time on classes, but I'm not progressing very well with my shorthand. We spend a lot of time talking about food, and deciding what we will eat when we get out.

Frances, I hope you are taking your tonic if you need it. How do you practise? Do you manage by yourself, and are you

Still having lessons with Rochelle?

Patrick, I hope you still go to guitar lessons, and do remember to practise sometimes. I want to hear you play very much. I keep the other women here amused by writing rhymes and limericks. I will remember them and tell you them when we get out.

We spent 3 days doing an enormous jig-saw puzzle. We enjoyed it so much, we couldn't leave it alone.



EXERCISE TIME

I'm not getting any fatter, but I can't lose weight because we eat a lot of bread and jam to fill up.

Rica sets our hair for us - she is our beauty expert. We have "O'C's" for all sorts of things - that is what we call them "Officer Commanding." Rica is O.C. hair and beauty, someone else in charge of food, and so on.

Who looks after Tin-tin? How is Muffin, how is Fluffy? I had to stop writing to see Tony and Evelyn.

Frances and Patrick, you must write to me. Put the letter in one envelope, and then I can get another one as well.

I miss you all very much, but I know I will see you all soon. Then we will all have lots to say to each other. Why not keep a diary, and write down anything interesting that happens - so that you can tell me all about it? I love you all very much.

Lots and lots of love to you all, and love to Fuzzy.

FRANCES
X X X X X X - kisses
O O O O O O - hugs

Mummy
PAT
X X X X X X - kisses
O O O O O O - hugs

HILDA BERNSTEIN

Adew

The Fort,
Johannesburg
WEDNESDAY 4th MAY
1960

My dearest Patrick and Frances,

This is my weekly letter to you, and I'm writing it sitting on the grass in the sun. I had one letter from you - a short note from Patrick and a bit longer one from Frances. I have now written to you three times - I mean this is the third letter, and I hope you have received them all. I forgot to thank Patrick for the perfume he sent for my birthday last month. It was lovely to receive it, and it made me very happy.

I saw Tony this afternoon, and she told me how she was getting on, and that she shares a room with Frances.

We are now allowed to have lights on in the evenings until 10 p.m. - we are pleased about this. It is like being in a boarding-school. Tony read both reports to me, and I was delighted with them both. Frances, you are a good girl for working so hard and coming first; and Patrick I was so pleased that you are doing your work satisfactorily.

I saw Daddy on Monday - six of us were taken over to see our husbands. He looked O.K., and is still clean-shaven.

There are nine cats in this jail, Siamese, black ones, striped ones and a white one. In spite of that we have a few mice in our room at night, but not many. Molly left a prune out last night and this morning it was nibbled. The night before they nibbled some chocolate.

We have started rehearsing a play, and I have the

part of a young man in love! Don't forget we are all women here. The play is called "The Miser", by Molière.

Sonia is producing it, but she is more interested in doing jig-saw puzzles. We have lots and lots. We did a beautiful one - a round one, Aladdin - but some pieces were missing.

I'm pleased to hear you all have some new winter clothes. Frances, you can write and tell me what you do when you go to stay with Erica.

I have to finish this ~~task~~^{letter} quickly, because we must give all our letters in together. Give my love to Fuzzy.

And write to me, please!

Dearest kids, I send you all my love, as always, think about you constantly, and look forward to the day when we come home. I miss you, of course, but I know we will all be together, and it won't be too long to wait.

Lots and lots of love and kisses

FRANCES

Mummy

PATRICIA

XXXXXX

XXXXXX

OOOOOO

OOOOOO

Censored.
Pa.

12

Pretoria Central Prison

Box 410

Pretoria 22/5/60

My dearest Patrick,

I hear you have been a busy boy lately, and going to stay with different people. I was very proud to hear of what you and Tony did. I'm sure you were proud of yourself, too.

I saw Daddy only yesterday. He looked quite brown and well. We talked about you all, and wondered how you were getting on. Tony told me you went to David for a few days. I hope you didn't get too bored with it.

Tony also told me that she can't get you to write to me.

Please, Patrick, you must spare the time to write every week. I know you are always out. You must come home, and do your homework every day, before you rush out again. I suppose this sounds like a lecture to you, but unfortunately I have no real news to tell you, my life is very dull. I often think of what home will be like after this place, and, do you know, it will seem very strange at first. Are the chickens still alive? You can tell Claud that he can kill and eat one for himself and Betty. Do you ever go to the house? Are my sweetpeas growing big in front? Tell Fuzzy we are allowed to have flowers here, so if you go and pick me a big bunch of them before visiting day, Tony or someone can bring them out to me. I would really love that - some of the anemones and other bulbs I planted in the front bed if they are flowering as well.

All my thoughts and love to you, my dearest boy

from Mummy

o o o o o o
x x x x x x

HILDA BERNSTEIN

No. 410/60

[Handwritten signature]

Pretoria Central Prison

Box 410,

Pretoria.

22/5/60

My dearest little Frances,

I had such a lovely long letter from you during the week, and was so happy to have it. I loved to hear all your news, what you had been doing, where you have been going, and so on. Tony says she finds it difficult to get you to write, but you can write a little bit at a time for a few days, then let her send it to me. Tony told me you were going to Jean Carlisle for the week-end, as she was leaving for Durban, so I hope you now have some more good friends at school. Who do you play with most? Did Jean's Mummy know where ~~where~~ Daddy and I had gone? And did she say anything to you? Sonia gets lovely letters from Peter, Stephen and Margaret, and she lets me read them.

You know we have not been eating, but today we started again. I lost 10 lbs, and have a beautiful figure - I hope it lasts, and I don't put on too much weight before I come out. People here have been extremely kind to us, and sent up milk, oranges and so on. We have been as lazy as possible, doing almost nothing. ~~Some~~ of the women here have gone to Nylstroom, and now our place seems a bit empty. We miss them very much, and hope it won't be too long before we meet again.

Well, my little sweetheart, do know that I am always thinking of you. I remember everything about you, and long for you a great deal. Each night I pretend I am giving you a hug and a kiss. Dearest love, Mummy

o o o o o
x x x x x

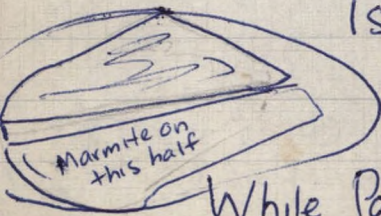
A PAGE FOR KEITH

14 22/5/66

What does Keith like best -
Ice-queuchy, red or yellow?
Or a penny bar of chocolate
To put inside a fellow?



Tomato sauce on toast
Is what Frances likes the most



While Patrick says
he's pretty
Keen on dishes of spaghetti



Then Tony says, "And I
Like roast beef and apple pie."

But Keith says:
"Oh by golly -
I like the ting-ting
lolly!"



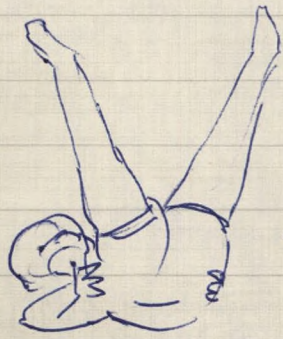
Love AND kisses
from

MUMMY

cut off here
removed
B

Dearest Keith,

Did you get my drawings?
Did you like them?



This is me doing exercises



Do you like school? Do you
do puzzles - or play with cars - or
ride bicycles - or sing songs - or paint?
Tell Tony to write a piece to me.

Your Daddy and Mummy are coming home from
Jail one day - soon, I hope.

Love and kisses,
Mummy.

x x x x x x
o o o o o o



HILDA BERNSTEIN

No. 410/60

16

Censored

Pretoria Central Prison

Box 410,

PRETORIA. Sunday 29th
May 60

My dearest Patrick,

This morning I received a little letter from you - just the beginnings of a letter - in the most terrible writing! But I keep thinking how wonderful it was to see you last Thursday, even though it was just for a little while. You have grown so tall, and looked much bigger than I remembered you. I didn't even ask where you got the smart ~~orange~~ shirt you were wearing! I hope you enjoyed the picnic at Fountains - did Arnold and Martin both go along as well? I wonder what you will do with so much time over the holidays. Do you sleep out with Jill and Peter, or is it too cold now? One of these days - this is a real promise - we will all go on a holiday together, the whole family. As soon as Daddy and I can be with you again.

Tell me, Patrick, do you still write to any of your pen-friends in America? Or to Nicky and Johnny? I hope you are still interested in stamps, and perhaps you have been sending some stamps to them.

Perhaps you and I will have arguments when I come home - about homework, and comics, and such things; but even if we do, it will be so wonderful to be with you all, I shall even enjoy the fights!

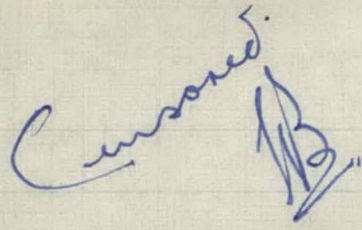
Now be a good boy, and as soon as you get this letter, sit down and write to me. Just take time off from your friends, and write a whole letter (Arnold writes long letters to his Mummy). Try not to quarrel with Tony, it's difficult for her, being the eldest, while we are away.

I hope to see you soon. Until then, lots and lots of

love,

Mummy

o o o o o o
x x x x x x



Pretoria Central Prison
Box 410,
PRETORIA.

Sunday, May 24, 1960

My dearest Frances,

I was pleased to receive a letter from you. Best of all is seeing you, and next best is getting a letter. I think of the way you looked all the time, and how bright and cheertful you were. You have a lot of people to help look after you until I can come home to you.

I was pleased to hear that you are playing in the netball team. Who were you writing letters to - do you write to your American friend, Judy, or have you forgotten about her? And does your cousin Linda write to you?

Now that your friend Jeanne has gone to Durban, you must tell me who you play with at school. I hope you will enjoy this long holiday in the middle of the term.

I am writing some little rhymes for you in an exercise book, one about a black cat here called Horace, and about other little things. I hope you will enjoy them, and that I will be able to give them to you for your birthday. I hope to see Tony tomorrow, and Daddy as well.

I don't know when they will let you come here again, but hope it will be soon. I do miss you all a great deal, and find being away from you is the worst thing of all. So when we are together again, I will enjoy being with you all so much! Lots and lots of love to you, my

little girl
from Mummy.

o o o o o o
x x x x x x

Write soon!

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