

Subj: The Not-So-Weekly-Epistle from Zina and Dean, (meaning that Zina wrote it all an

Date: Wed, Dec 11, 1996 2:30 PM EDT

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HAPPY HAPPY HAPPY HAPPY HAPPY HAPPY HAPPY :) :) :) : ) . . . . .

(You decide whether those are ellipses or whether the last smiley face is spilling something out of its mouth.)

Today I'm on the "manic" end of the "manic depressive" pendulum that I am supposedly riding now that I have "got a little bun in the oven," i.e. I am "expecting," i.e. I am "pregnant" and have lots of extra hormones floating around my system making me "emotional."

Top ten reasons that I am manically happy today:

1. I am pregnant, and have lots of extra hormones floating around my system making me "emotional."
2. Today was my last day of regular classes at "The Modern School" here in "Amman, Jordan," and I only have 10 more half-days before it's, "ta-ta!" for

good!

3. Juliet and Ahmad fed me very yummy soup that didn't give make me nauseated

at all, and it was very good and yummy and did I mention also that it was yummy and good and didn't make me sick?

4. I have a "little bun in the oven" (that is actually about the size of my pinky fingernail.) (So, I have a "little pinky fingernail in the oven?")

5. That soup sure was good.

6. Did I mention today was my last day of regular classes at "The Modern School" in "Amman, Jordan"?

7. Juliet and I are going to go shopping and I am going to show her where to

buy Christmas lights. (Dean and I already have ours. I craftily managed to electrically engineer them from (despicable) flashing lights to (peaceful, harmonious) non-flashing lights by short-circuiting the offending flasher bulb.

(Call me a mechanical genius, thank-you.) We use our Christmas lights like a

bedside lamp -- they're bright enough to read by, and then we don't have to argue about whose turn it is to walk across the cold bedroom to turn off the

light -- we can just unplug our Christmas tree light reading lamp.)

8. Dean and I have a "little bun in the oven," and if it's a girl we're going to name her "Willemina Wheeler." ("W, for Willemina!")

9. "Oh, what is the letter we love? What sound are we awfully fond of? It's

not any trouble, you know it's a double-yew when you hear 'Wuh,' 'Wuh,' 'Wuh,'  
'Wuh!'"

10. Last but definitely not least (drumroll, please . . . I guess I should

have  
done these in ascending order backwards, a la David Letterman) . . . I have  
learned to speak Standard Broken Arabic with taxi drivers, as in: "Min  
fudluk  
la cigarette, because anna pregnant." ("Please no cigarette, because I  
pregnant.")

-----Later-----  
-----

Hi, I'm back from my shopping with Juliet, and she and Ahmed have gone to  
deliver some soup (yeah, the yummy stuff) to the family of a branch  
member who  
had surgery yesterday, and I have the computer all to myself. Having the  
computer to myself is another reason to be blithely blissfully happy,  
although  
my happiness is now tempered by a lethargic  
"I'm-pregnant-and-it's-getting-late-in-the-day-and-I-just-ate-a-double-  
scoop-on-  
waffle-cone-ice-cream-cone" feeling.

Hmmmm, what-all was I meaning to say (before my brain goes completely  
into its  
evening hibernation mode?)

We won't be using the mailing address at the University that we gave  
before  
because Dean's going to try a different Arabic course next term (the  
University's been fine but not spectacular, and he'd like to try a different  
approach.) The new addresses should be fairly reliable. The first is  
actually  
the address of the Torontos's home and the Church's "Center for Cultural  
and  
Educational Affairs":

c/o Jim Toronto (I think this line is optional, but I'm not sure)  
P.O. Box 83407  
Amman 11183, Jordan

Their phone # is (962-6) 654932

The next address is also reliable, especially if you put some sort of official-looking label with "AMIDEAST" typed on it and then our names smaller.

This should be safer because it's the address of Dean's work which receives lots of mail from the United States (and postal workers presumably are used to it and won't try to open or steal packages or letters.)

P.O. Box 1249  
Amman, 11118 Jordan

Or, at the same place but via courier (such as DHL or whatever)

Amideast  
Said Al-Karmi Street  
Jabal Al-Weibdeh  
Amman, Jordan

I still wouldn't suggest trying to send anything of much value, but this should be pretty safe and quick.

Well, what else?

Jenny and Rus, we so much relate to (and enjoy) your tales of life in Egypt --

although (sorry to say it) it sounds like things are the same there as here, only more so. I wasn't surprised at all that you missed a week on your email when you had to move -- I only thought, oh, poor things! (We wouldn't have been able to receive your email, anyway, since the Qureshi's phone was down for almost a week.) Ahmed and Juliet had a really similar experience when

they came  
here, in which they had moved into one place and spent a lot on deposits  
and  
such and on getting help getting their place to a standard of cleanliness  
such  
that they could even stand to walk on the floors in bare feet and so forth,  
and  
then their beds and furniture started to all break, and after they'd  
committed to  
move there the landlord upped the rent by 30 dinars (about \$55.00,) and he  
never  
brought them the furnishings he'd promised, and there wasn't a single  
vacuum  
cleaner in the whole building that worked, and in the end it was so  
unliveable  
they wound up moving anyway and lost their deposit. (Luckily, they found  
a  
really nice new big basement apartment, for quite a bit less.) I'm  
probably  
getting the details wrong and should let them tell their own story, but I  
guess  
I felt like we lived through it with them -- the frustration, the  
exhaustion,  
the total discomfort of never having a clean place to sit down and of  
eating  
fast food or strange food all the time because you're too tired to cook and  
you  
can't face your filthy kitchen anyway. So, when I heard you were moving, I  
said, "Oh, poor things." (It was like that for us when we first moved in to  
our  
apartment, although (luckily) it was never too horribly dirty, we just had  
to  
vanquish some spiders and mice.)

I totally related to what you said about food becoming the highlight and  
focal  
point of your life, too. When we first got here an American family invited  
us

for dinner after church and served us Commissary American cookies (Oreos and the like) and ice cream for dessert, and told us to take as many cookies as we liked. I felt absolutely no shame taking cookie after cookie, and even put some in my bag to take home. It's totally embarrassing to remember how greedy I was, but at the time all I cared about was that I craved those cookies and there was nothing half so good in our cupboards at home.

Some more of the eccentricities and minor inconveniences of our Jordan experience:

We have, thankfully, central heating (a diesel fuel system) (yes, it gets quite cold here, and even snows, although so far it's only rained) and hot water when the central heating's turned on, BUT our landlords only turn it on from about 6:30-9:00 in the evening, so IF we're not home during that time, we either have to forgo a shower or boil water. The same goes for washing dishes and doing warm loads of laundry. We've actually stayed home from social activities so that we wouldn't miss our showers.

Believe it or not, this is still a better arrangement than in the summertime, when our water was solar-heated and only got hot around early afternoon (and on a chillier day it never really got hot,) so we had to take your showers in the middle of the day and get dressed twice.

We also have no phone in our apartment, so for us to receive phone calls our

landlords call down to us or knock on our door, and if a) they're not home,  
or  
b) we're not home, we don't get the call, and they never take messages,  
although  
they do (bless their hearts) keep tabs on everyone who calls us ("Who was  
that  
girl who called for Dean the other day?" and I have to explain that it's  
someone  
he's tutoring, or "Who's Lynette?" and I explain it's a friend from church.)  
(I  
know I could just say it's none of their business, but, oh well. They seem  
to  
think it is. But they also make it their business to inquire about our  
health  
and comfort and to occasionally give us food, and they've been really fair  
and  
good to us about rent and the apartment, and the mom calls us her children  
and  
loves me because they have a grand-daughter named Zaina, and the dad  
told me I  
should learn Arabic because someday Dean will be a "great man," like a  
diplomat  
or something -- so their interest in us has its good points, too.) The other  
day when someone called for Dean they thought he wasn't home because I  
had just  
been upstairs and then just as I went downstairs Dean got home and they  
didn't  
see him come in, so they called me to the phone instead, and by the time  
I'd  
found out it was for Dean and gone back down to get him, he was about to  
get  
into the shower and had to get dressed again to go get the phone.

Whenever I go up to use the phone they also tell me to sit down and chat,  
which  
is usually nice but which makes it hard to make a quick phone call  
(although I  
think I'm starting to get them conditioned to my just running in quick to

use  
the phone sometimes) and I also never feel like having very personal  
conversations since they're always just in the next room (no wall between  
the  
two rooms) and most of them understand English quite well. One time my  
Mom  
called for a library patron who wanted to ask someone living in the Middle  
East  
what they thought about the politics here and even though I gave a  
balanced  
reply I was nervous knowing that my Palestinian landlady was in the other  
room  
overhearing what I said and wondering, "why is this American girl talking  
on the  
phone to America about Palestine and Israel?"

Then there are our beds and bedding. We have twin beds, which is what's  
most  
commonly available around the University (Dean complained about it when  
we first  
got here, so our landlords showed us that their beds were just the same.)  
(Another side note: when we were looking for apartments and would ask  
for a  
double bed, they would look at us suspiciously and say, "are you married?"  
When  
we explained that we were (Dean soon learned to always refer to me as  
his wife,  
and I kept my wedding ring in full view), they would say, still with some  
reluctance, "well, I guess I can do that for you, then.") Our mattresses are  
very thin and took getting used to, but are probably good for our backs. We  
also have comforters which are happily very very warm but also very very  
heavy,  
sort of like those lead aprons they put over you when they x-ray you at the  
dentist, and which hold you very firmly down when you get under them.  
Being  
pregnant and weak and all, I sort of choose a position I think I can stand  
all  
night, since I know I won't have the strength to move once I'm under the

covers.

(I hope it wasn't too risqué for me to talk about our BEDS, and if it was I apologize.)

A "furnished" apartment here means that it has basic furniture and whatever else you get your landlord to provide BEFORE you move in (once you're in, you'll probably never see it.) We were sort of promised an ironing board and drying rack, but were later assured that we could iron very well on a towel on our table, and could hang our clothes on the lines on the roof. (We figured it wasn't worth a dispute over those small things, since our landlords really are far and away much better in general than some landlords we've heard of here.)

Oh, and laundry by the way is a total pain now because (I think I've described how our machine works before) it takes a long time in the first place, and then I DON'T like to hang it on the roof because a) it's a long way up when you're pregnant, b) the lines get really dusty and unless we clean them each time they leave brown marks on our clothes, and c) it's really cold up there now, especially when you're handling wet clothes. We do have two makeshift lines strung up between a window and a door, and we use those, but it's getting kind of humid in our apartment lately and it takes an average knit shirt about, oh, 72 hours to dry -- UNLESS I lay them on the radiator during the brief time that the heat's on. That works very well, but requires a high degree of vigilance so as not to cook our clothes or set our apartment on fire; and once again it's during that time of day when (as a pregnant lady) I start to tire.

I think that's about it for my litany of inconveniences -- oh, except for the Taxi Smell, so named by (absolutely guileless, absolutely good-hearted and loving, absolutely no brain-to-mouth filter) eleven-year-old Jenna Toronto, in this context: "Oooh, you guys have the Taxi Smell." This is a smell mainly of stale cigarette smoke, and it's constantly in your clothes and on your body if you go ANYWHERE (our only other form of transportation is the mini-bus-style taxi-like bus-like form of transportation called a "service" here, but those are even worse for cigarette smoke,) and now that I'm pregnant my nose (and nose-triggered nausea) is especially sensitive, so that when Dean comes home with the Taxi Smell (he also calls it "third-hand-smoke") I cannot stand to get anywhere near him and have to settle for simply looking at him lovingly from across the room. (Luckily, I'm a little more immune to my own "Taxi Smell.") Our two makeshift clotheslines are usually cluttered up with the day's clothing, airing out the taxi smell so as not to violate our closets by hanging it up alongside more pristine clothing.

Well, none of these inconveniences alone is really too inconvenient, but sometimes when compounded they do get annoying. Still, I do have to say that we have a good life here, and I AM exceedingly glad we came (if nothing else, it gives me something new to talk about) . . . I merely detail the inconveniences of our life for your Reading Enjoyment. (I hope it's been at least slightly entertaining -- but never forget that as an email reader you are Empowered to

Scroll.) Some time I'll go off for a few hours about Jordanian culture as experienced in a Private School . . . (or maybe I'll assign Dean the task, since he should now be the expert, having listened to about two hours of it every time I come home from work.)

I think it's high time I surrendered the email back to the Qureshis (they're home now, and are feeding me more Delicious Soup.)

We are happy and well and are playing our BYU Choirs Christmas CD often and basking in the soft glow of our Christmas tree lights and waxing sentimental thinking about friends and family at home whom we love. Life is good. We love you all (and wish you an early Merry Christmas) (possibly an expediency, in case of future phone troubles.)

Love and cheer and holiday greetings and wassail and all the actions to The Twelve Days of Christmas (by the way, Lili, could you write and tell me the action for the Partridge in the Pear Tree? We need to know it for a branch Christmas party and I can remember all the actions but that (all-important) one.)

Love again, Dean and Zina and Future Offspring Wheeler

----- Headers -----  
From qureshi@go.com.jo Wed Dec 11 13:29:30 1996  
Return-Path: qureshi@go.com.jo  
Received: from go.com.jo (amman-server2.go.com.jo [196.27.0.3]) by emin30.mail.aol.com (8.6.12/8.6.12) with ESMTTP id NAA28884; Wed, 11 Dec 1996 13:29:21 -0500

From: qureshi@go.com.jo  
Received: from 196.27.0.67 (acsrv3\_a4.go.com.jo [196.27.0.67]) by go.com.jo (8.6.12/8.6.12) with SMTP id UAA12215; Wed, 11 Dec 1996 20:28:39 -0200  
Date: Wed, 11 Dec 1996 20:28:39 -0200  
Message-Id: <199612112228.UAA12215@go.com.jo>  
MIME-Version: 1.0

Content-Type: text/plain

Content-Transfer-Encoding: 7bit

Subject: The Not-So-Weekly-Epistle from Zina and Dean, (meaning that Zina

wrote it all and Dean is actually at work right now and completely unaware

that I'm on the email but will surely not disapprove of anything I have to say and won't mind that I put his name on it) -- highlights of our life recently in the Middle East -- cc-d all over the place -- with my apologies for talking about some people that some other people don't know,

but with the defense that, hey, at least we sent you (ALL) email!

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