

Arabah el Madfunah.  
March 16<sup>th</sup> 1937.

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Dear Mother

My hasty note to tell you of my safe return has just departed & now I am starting another letter to tell you all about our adventures.

First of all, thanks very much for the coronation hanky. I am afraid I cannot get any more locally stamps, we could only get the 5·10· & 15 P.T./<M.M.> ones at our local office all of which are on my letters to you, when we asked for some more the post master said the issue had been withdrawn & he had had to return his remainders to Cairo. if I can get any on local letters I will save them.

As soon as D' Junker had finished the collating & had departed we started our preparations for our holiday. Joey's hood has long departed this life having rotted in the sun, so we rigged a new one with a sheet stretched across palm branches, it was a great success, every available space was filled with the requirements for the desert journey & we were on the road a little before noon. we arrived

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I had manufactured a rough sketching book & had bought a few odd paints that I had found among the camp drawing materials, intending to try & make quick impressions of the desert colouring, Amice

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had regarded my sketching activities with a sort of mild tolerance for a distinctly childish pursuit but condescended to keep me company & daub away too. after two attempts that enraged her, she caught the sketching fever & was as enthusiastic over it as I was. I am afraid after that our progress was slow, we were constantly seeing views that we had to try to paint. out we hopped, squatted down on the desert, if we couldn't get in Joey's shade & the sun was very hot Sardic would stand with a sun shade in each hand while we made frantic efforts to get an impression of the scene, of course we found we had none of the colours we really wanted, & the paper wasn't right & the bushes the wrong size etc but we made valiant efforts with what we had & really we have something to show far better than photographs what the Eastern desert really looks like. of course they are crude & rough, but I hope to be able to work up better pictures from them.

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Hurgada we found the authorities getting anxious about us, if we had been much later they were going to send the government lorry out to search for us. we explained the reason for our tardiness & they asked us to let them know our plans for the return journey as they are very anxious about people delaying on the way. When they saw how we were equipped & prepared for emergency they realized we were experienced in desert travel & said it would be quite all right if we wished to explore tracks off the regular route on our return so long as we advised them of our intentions & reported our arrival at Kena. they were all very nice & very impressed with the prowess of Joey they flatly refused to believe he had crossed the E. Desert until they compared his number plate with the E number given in the telegram from Kena Outpost. Our friends the Crosslands at the Marine Research station were delighted to see us & insisted on our staying with them. We had a most amusing experience our first evening there, Dr Crossland asked us if we would like to see the corals fed.!!! we thought it was a joke

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at first, we went along to the lab at the end of the little pier & saw the corals in the sea water tanks & Crossland pointed out curious swellings on some of them & said those were ready to take nourishment but they only feed at night. so after dinner we went out again with electric torches & saw that the hungry corals had put out millions of tiny tendrils like sea anaemomies<sup>sic</sup> (spelling hopeless) & Crossland cut up tiny fragments of fish & dropped them in, as they sank the tendrils got very agitated & siezed<sup>sic</sup> the scrap & closed over it. they all had their bit of fish, we could not watch them for more than a minute or so at a time, for fear the light might disturb them. We looked at some books & maps that evening & decided we would like to visit some Roman ruins among the mountains & also climb the great porphory<sup>sic</sup> mountain & as Mrs Crossland had never had a days outing from the station owing to having no one to accompany her, we suggested she should join us in their car which she drives herself, she was thrilled at the idea she had longed to go but had not had the initiative

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sporting offer. he said it was a really dangerous road & he wouldn't trust any of his men to take us but if we really wanted to go he would go with us. you can imagine we did not refuse that offer. he is a brilliant geologist & seemed delighted with our interest in the matter so we said we would be only too pleased to have his company.

When we left the Markaz we went along to the Shell Company's oil wells. filled up with petrol & bought supplies in the company's store & ran back to the marine station in time for lunch. the afternoon we spent preparing for the next days trip to Mons Claudianus & went to bed early to get a good night's rest. We started at 7.30 the next morning. Sardik in the back of Joey & the native driver & the Bedouin guide in the back of the Crosslands Dodge, we had to cross a great sandy plain for 50 kilometres, it was very soft & heavy going in places but we both got over it without actually sticking, then we got among the mountains & it was glorious but the going

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the return journey was not so difficult as we were descending from the mountains to sea level. we arrived at Hurgada a little before sun set & as Mrs Crossland was very tired ~~we~~ she returned straight to the Marine station while brave little Joey went a long to the Markaz to report our safe return. we found Hanefey outside his bungalow on the look out for us & he certainly looked quite surprised when he heard Joey's cheery toot toot. We told him the tale of the tyres & he had a look at the inner tubes & in a few minutes solved the problem that had puzzled us all day. The agent in Cairo had sent us motor bike tyres by mistake, the wheel measurement being the same, only motor bike wheels have their valve holes in the centre of the rim & motor car wheels have them on the side. of course the valves were torn out at the first bit of strain. However Hanefey said we need not worry about that as he had a set of government tyres that had belonged to a Jowett he used to use & ~~we~~ could have the use

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I must leave the next days adventures for another letter, there certainly will not be room for them in this. We got back to the Marine Station in time to clean up for supper. Mrs Crossland had thoroughly enjoyed her adventure but felt rather shaken by the exertions of rough desert driving. She really had done wonderfully, she had been used to driving for some years, but only on firm tracks round the oil fields & of course in England & Denmark.

Lots of love to you both.

Your affectionate daughter  
Myrtle.

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