

Diary October 2015

7th/8th October

So off we set again. The ghastly 2.00am arousal to get to Birmingham for the 6.0am flight is not the best of experiences. Cat-sitter William was asleep in his bed with Lena and Mike and I left the house at 2.45am. I dozed all the way to the airport. The actual flight and connecting flight all went very smoothly. Air travel is almost more reliable than catching a bus. The plane was rammed as usual and I had a very pleasant honeymooning couple sitting next to me. Pleasant but also annoying as they seemed to need to leave their seats at the most awkward of times so a lot of upping and downing. I watched a pretty naff movie, dozed a bit, grumbled to myself a lot and wondered aimlessly up and down the plane but we did eventually arrive at Kilimanjaro after boredom had numbed my brain totally. All our bags arrived with us which was a relief. Mike got directed to the search area but I managed to extract him plus bags before the process got underway which would have involved lengthy argument and general attempts at bribery. Silvester was waiting for us as usual; I didn't recognise him as he was wearing glasses due to unspecified headaches. He had no idea whether he was short or long sighted but said they had helped his headaches.

The drive into Arusha was uneventful apart from a lot of lunatics overtaking on pitch black roads with no visibility coming the other way. Extremely dangerous as many people seem to not use lights, especially when on bicycles or motor bikes. The road up to the lodge was worse than ever – Silvester called it a “natural” road. Personally I felt pretty sick by the time we arrived and am now living in dread of having to walk it for the first time tomorrow. After copious lovely greetings from all the staff we managed to get ourselves unpacked and had the much looked forward to cuppa. We went to bed and slept late.

On our way to breakfast we met Annalies who seemed genuinely pleased to see us. She insisted on having tea with us so we caught up on various bits of gossip about our different recent life events. By the time we made it to breakfast it had all gone but luckily the staff managed to put something together for us. We then spent several hours relaxing and reading until Catherine arrived at about 3.15 pm. The weather – here we go with my moaning again – got colder and colder and rain appeared little by little. I had been told it was very hot as indeed it was for a short while but then back to strong wind and showers. Every time I come here the weather throws something different at me. It is an El Nino year so they are expecting a lot of rain much earlier than usual. I shall look forward to that – NOT! Catherine was the same old friend as ever. She never changes and I swear she is looking younger these days. Living with 11 children obviously suits her. All the children are doing well – there are always individual issues to be addressed but that's par for the course. Mercy and Goodluck are having to watch themselves as Aron is hot on their heels in class position. Poor Johanes is getting some problems from older kids regarding his health issues but we have decided to teach him that sticks and stones etc is the best way for him to deal with these inevitable problems. He will need to deal with it later life so he may as well start now. He is doing well on his drug regimen which is fortunate – just wanting to eat even more than he does already. Pesky Elia managed to totally lock Anna out of her phone so she had to change her number. Only Elia can do these things. Mama Hilary's baby is due in the next couple of weeks and she is getting very tired so I have said she must now stop work. She has found a temporary help for us whilst she is off for three months so we will see how that goes. No developments re: Anna's love life so we can rest easy on that one for now.

The big move will happen in ten days' time. Catherine has already got lorries lined up and they have started to sort through all the possessions in the household in preparation for moving day. David

and Grace will come home from school for the weekend to help. Even Mama Grace has offered to help which is lovely of her. So this is really a momentous visit and the start of a new phase in all our lives. I will be glad when it is over and everyone is installed in Usalama 2. The hot water system is playing up so that will have to be looked at again but I gather that the kids are inclined to fiddle with the various stop taps so they could well have caused a problem somewhere. Family lecture will happen at some point I am sure. We have to go to town tomorrow to get Mike's phone number opened up again. It seems to deregister if it's not used for a certain length of time which is highly annoying. Then he will call the solar people and hopefully they will be able to start moving the solar installation from the old house to the new house early next week. I will also visit Mama Grace and get my order for goodies in early. We have a lot of Xmas fairs and markets booked for November so I need to stock up on new items to sell for the charity. Early night tonight so we should feel more or less normal by tomorrow. Please please do not rain – it is not supposed to be raining now.

9th October

Today we ventured forth onto the "natural" road to meet Catherine at Sanawari. I am nervous these days about twisting yet another ankle so was relieved to make it in one piece. We actually got a lift part of the way which was good news indeed. We meandered slowly into town. Catherine and I had long discussions about how best to manage payment of Mama Hilary who is now off in advance of her impending birth. She has found us a new lady who started yesterday to do the washing for us in Mama Hilary's absence. Catherine was concerned that Hilary would struggle financially as her stupid husband gives her so little money to live on. So we have agreed to pay her 2/3 of her salary and the new lady will get the balance plus a little bit extra. I will meet her tomorrow when hopefully we will discover her name.

First we went to the Airtel offices to sort out Mike's phone. The number had been discontinued and to cut a long story a bit short, they would not reinstate the number so he has a new number now. At least we were not subjected to any corruption for once. I chatted to an ex-pat outside who was smoking in exasperation at some delay or other to do with his phone. He told me that we should avoid the main areas of town from the Election Day onwards for a week. This is consistent with what a lot of people are saying so I think we will heed the warnings and conclude any business we need to do in town before the election on the 25th. We leave on the 28th so will probably not be around when the results are finally declared. Catherine has forbidden me to accompany her to the polling station so I have to stay home and prepare lunch for the children. I think we will have sandwiches and everyone can make their own. Easy for me and fun for them.

Once Mike was up and running with his phone we made contact with the guy who will be moving our solar system to the new house. He seemed to want to meet us at around 2.30 but in the event no such meeting took place so he will come to the house tomorrow to discuss the process and associated costs. Whilst eating lunch Catherine spotted Angel Minja, the wife of our rich neighbour so she came over to talk to us. She has agreed to help us with transport of our stuff to the new house by loaning some vehicles and men. Whether that will really happen we shall see. Angel is very good at promising things but not so good at seeing the promises through. It would help us a lot financially if she does come up with the goods.

After lunch we headed to Maasai market to see Mama Grace and put in the order for new stock. We have a lot of pre-Christmas events in the pipeline so we need to be well stocked up. Mama Grace and her daughter have offered to come and help with the move which is kind of them. She is a lovely woman. We got our orders in and by that time it was nearly 5 pm. Where does the time go in this place? We started back towards home carrying heavy bags. Mike had spent a good amount of time asleep on a little stool whilst we did our purchases so had to wake up enough to get walking.

Catherine pointed out to us a place where three people had been knocked off their bicycles into a deep ditch by a dala dala when she was there. The two young boys were severely injured. The dala dala didn't stop. Not an uncommon occurrence in this neck of the woods. This brought up the subject of hospitals which brought up the subject of corruption yet again. When Catherine accompanied Mama Hilary for a monthly pre-natal check-up there was a woman with two very sick children who urgently needed medication. The doctor gave her a prescription and sent her to the hospital pharmacy. The pharmacy had no drugs whatsoever – not even paracetamol. So the woman returned to the doctor who then sold her the medication at an inflated price. A total disgrace. The doctors steal the medicines from the pharmacy and then sell the medicines to the poor people. In this particular instance the treatment should have been free for the children. Number One for whichever government wins the next election has got to be a serious attack on corruption in all its forms. It cannot continue like this. Even yesterday the town was in gridlock due to an anti-corruption protest but it makes not one blind bit of difference.

We eventually made it back to the lodge and a group of friends (ex-pats) were sitting around drinking as is their habit, so we joined them for a quick one and a catch up. It is nice to feel a part of both communities and it's great to feel so welcomed here – in some ways I feel more welcomed here than at home, which sounds ridiculous. We went early to dinner and I was spoilt and given seconds of pudding so I am now very full. Tomorrow we will go to Usalama with our bags of stuff and spend the day with the family. Lala Salama. Tutaonana kesho.

October 10th - Saturday

We have had a lovely day today. Silvester took us plus bags to Usalama House and we were welcomed back into the bosom of the family as usual. Elia was at school and Grace and David had not appeared home at that point but everyone else was there and in good spirits. Joshua is as affectionate as ever and my Mercy is so loyal and loving – a real little trouper. Domi hung back as normal but once he had been duly kissed and cuddled he was fine.

First job of the day was to sort out the salary for Mama Hilary (Teddy) and for the new lady Jasintha. Teddy is now very pregnant indeed. She is due around the 22nd – I bet she does the deed on the 25th election day. If she goes into labour whilst I am here she will call Catherine who will call me and I will somehow make my way to the hospital for the birth. If it happens in the night I haven't a clue how I will get there. Fingers crossed on that one. Catherine and I have both been told it will be no joking matter and we are not to laugh, giggle or otherwise misbehave. So we have our orders which of course set us off immediately to the extent that Catherine had tears rolling down her face. What a pair of silly children we are. Teddy has stopped work as of now – she is welcome to come round and peel a few veggies or sit and chat but hard work is now forbidden. She will return to duties in three months' time. I met Jasintha, Teddy's stand in, who seems very pleasant and friendly. We have agreed her salary and will increase it monthly if she works well. She is a widow with three very young children so needs the extra cash. Her husband died a couple of years ago. He returned from Kilimanjaro with chest pain and died suddenly soon after. Sounds like it could have been pulmonary oedema. Very tragic.

Anna was working hard as always in the kitchen preparing chapatti for lunch. Catherine and I decided to put her under close scrutiny as we were becoming increasingly suspicious that there is a man in the background somewhere. She has been buying furniture, cushions etc. but has been very unforthcoming. Catherine has been attempting to listen in on telephone calls but hasn't been able to gather much info. So after lunch when the children had disappeared the spotlight was switched on. It was similar to pulling teeth as Anna was very coy but we have established that she is seeing someone called Festo. He is a security guard and from the same tribe. I think they met at church.

He is currently working in Dar so goodness knows what will happen if they eventually marry which is looking quite likely. Anna told Catherine not to worry. She said she has no intention of giving up her job for a man but if he is in Dar and she is here Maybe he will get a job here and they can live close by to the house so Anna can continue. Anxious times for us all now. I was even reduced to shedding a few private tears at the thought of life at Usalama without Anna which I suppose is very selfish as she deserves to find happiness and marry. So changes all around us at the moment which I find quite unsettling.

Before lunch Solar Alex came with his colleague so we all traipsed up to the new house. I was annoyed to discover that the chicken run and gates had still not been completed and that the hot water is not working properly. There are also one or two other plumbing issues that need sorting out. So Catherine got straight on the phone to Fundi Wilson and told him I was angry and so let's hope that gets him and the plumber down quickly. I don't want all these issues hanging around after we have moved next Saturday. We want to move the chickens up on Wednesday when the kids are off on a National Holiday. I am also extremely concerned about the costs associated with moving the solar system up to the new house. Wiring and fitments are very expensive and they are changing from a 12v to 240v system which means replacing all the lights. We will meet them on Monday to assess the costs and start the work hopefully on Tuesday. This means we will be without light for a few days but in a way that will remind the children of what life was like before solar arrived.

We toddled back for lunch. Various children threw themselves at me and there was all sorts of cheering going on. Then I realised the source of the cheering was the arrival of Grace who had wrapped herself around me without my being aware of who it was. So lovely to see her. She had come straight from school and poor David had been left waiting for her elsewhere as she was too tired to go back and meet him. Anyone else would have been really annoyed but when he appeared some three hours later he was totally unphased by it. I made Grace go on her hands and knees to beg forgiveness which we all found entertaining. They are such good friends – if Grace gets to lunch first at school she always collects David's lunch for him. I am glad they have each other as I think they are not that happy lodging at Catherine's sister-in-law's house for various reasons. David is very fond of Mike so they spent a lot of time chatting away and looking at Maths books.

Mercy is an expert tweezer handler so she spent some time pulling out stray hairs on my chin relatively painlessly. She and Grace also spotted something on my back which appeared to demand major surgery so that was done as well. The others spent time playing marbles as well as designing a weird and wonderful electric fan made from bits of wire and old batteries they collect from around and about. Mike was most impressed with their mini-solar light. The atmosphere is so warm and loving – it's so easy to just be oneself and feel totally relaxed. Elia was in a very jokey frame of mind and talking about when he is a professional person with lots of money and a helicopter. He seriously has a screw loose somewhere but he is hilarious; he frequently reduces Catherine and Anna to tears of exasperation as well as tears of laughter.

We eventually prised ourselves away to head for the dala dala and back to the lodge. It is really hard to leave after such a relaxing and comfortable time but we have to so we do. Tomorrow the kids will come in the afternoon for swimming, weather permitting, and Catherine will come after church as it is her day off.

October 11th – Sunday

We spent the morning quietly at the lodge. I managed to get a good suntan going. Seven of our children arrived for swimming after lunch. Elia is more or less swimming well now and virtually completed a length of the pool. Mercy nearly managed a width. The others are still not really swimming and rely on arm bands which are all broken now so I need to remember to get more.

They were all happy to see Dutch Peter and son Colin again and Peter was very good with Dominic in the water. There are some Dutch film students around at the moment on some sort of internship with a media college near Arusha. They were making a small film about the lodge for Annalies. They had an impressive array of equipment including a remote underwater camera. So they filmed Peter diving into the pool and the camera in the water filmed the dive from below. Quite impressive. When they had finished swimming they went to our room and we put on a movie for them on the laptop. They all sat there as quiet as lambs watching the movie – it wasn't really suitable for them but they enjoyed it nevertheless. I showered whilst movie-watching was going on. We sent them home at about six. They were as good as gold as always and no trouble to have around.

October 12th – Monday

Today we met Catherine at Sanawari and walked into town to meet solar Alex at Fifi's. As usual he was late. The point of the meeting was to discuss the costings in order to move forward with the installation quickly. This proved to be quite challenging and I will draw a veil over what happened but I went to bed later that night with no dinner and a slight marital rift in need of repair. I was seriously unamused and poor Catherine was also not happy. But the final agreement was eventually reached and the work will start tomorrow. Sometimes it takes experience to deal with difficulties with language and it also needs clarity of thinking to make things run smoothly and neither were present on this occasion. Ho hum; least said soonest mended.

As we left Fifi's to go to the phone shop, Paradise appeared in his smart vehicle with his usual sidekick so we had a few words and agreed to meet on Thursday possibly. He was his usual affable and smiling self. Whilst waiting for Alex we spotted Angel, rich neighbour's wife, so she came across to say hi. She is very glamorous and I think has struggled with associating with us lesser mortals but she did agree to look into the possibility of providing us with transport for the move on Saturday. We have to contact her later in the week. This would be very helpful and could save us quite a bit of money.

We headed for the Airtel shop to sort out Catherine's and my phones. This as usual proved to be an impossible task because they insisted that neither phone was registered with the company despite my having paperwork to prove it. Their record keeping is deplorable. So I will have to go and re-register with my passport and start all over again. Useless lot they are. By then I had steam coming out of my ears after such a trying morning. Catherine decided to change her political affiliation so she and Mike walked on one side of the road and toddled up the other side in peace and quiet. I was adopted by two young secondary children and we had a good chat about politics and which party their parents would vote for. They all seem much more politically aware than kids of the same age at home. This election is really important; everyone is ready for change and hoping for change and wishing for less corruption and a better way of life.

Back at the lodge I showered, watched movies and went to sleep ready for another day.

October 13th - Tuesday

Today was our first walk to the house. When I am here on my own I don't feel confident to do the walk; I am scared of falling and damaging myself as I did last time I was here. It is quite a challenging walk and the dust makes parts of the route unpleasant. But it was good to do it again and to see how the area is changing very quickly. Buildings are going up everywhere as the population increases. This is putting pressure on water supplies and power supplies so shortages of both are commonplace. It has always amused me that a country that is so short of water chose to generate hydro power which has now failed. So power is now being generated using gas and is being rationed. On the way we called in to a local pharmacy to try and buy the birth pack for Teddy. Mothers have to supply their own little packs consisting of gloves, cotton pads, suturing kits and

syringes. Due to language difficulties I was unable to communicate what we needed so sent Teddy later to get it for herself. It is disgraceful that women have to provide this stuff for themselves and on top of that have to pay for their maternity services. If there are complications this can be expensive. If they don't have the money they are kept in the hospital until friends and relations manage to come up with the cash. Thank god for our National Health Service.

We went up to see the new house where water continues to be a problem. No one can fathom out why there is virtually no water coming out of the taps. It could be that the supply to our property has been turned off so Ismael will locate the person in charge of supply to see what can be done. We had discussions about how the move will take place. We hope that Angel, rich neighbour, will supply free transport for us but won't know for definite until Thursday. We have managed to accumulate so much stuff over five years and it is going to be a mammoth operation. I guess things will happen in one way or another and we will eventually end up at the new house more or less intact and sane but we shall see what transpires on Saturday. Although rain threatens and is desperately needed I really don't want rain on Saturday – that would really make things difficult and complicated.

Ismael was given a little money to level the ground at the front of the house and remove the building rubble so as soon as we are moved in a grassed area can be planted for the children to play on. Catherine is already growing lots of vegetables in the garden so no interruption to supplies there. She is a dab hand at gardening – in fact she is a dab hand at everything she does. As a result of our scrutiny of Anna's love life the other day we ended up with a phone call from Festo, her intended. He sounded OK and spoke quite good English. We have agreed to meet him around the 22nd if he can get time off from his employers so he will be put through the Catherine/Helen interview process. Mike said that it's no wonder that Anna keeps very quiet because she knows what the two of us can be like when we get going. But I think she understands it's because we care and don't want her to end up with someone who is totally unsuitable. But whatever happens, it is clearly quite a serious relationship so we just have to wait and see how things pan out. We would be devastated to lose Anna and we all have everything crossed that she stays with us one way or another.

We got back to the lodge via the dala dala and taxi. I couldn't face the walk home. Once a day is enough for me. Annalies had just returned from her glamorous modelling job with an upmarket safari company that were making a promotional movie. She had a whale of a time and was treated like a princess. She went to a part of the Serengeti close to the Mara River and witnessed the wildebeest migration in full flood. Lions were everywhere pouncing on the poor animals as they amassed at the river to make the crossing back into the Maasai Mara in Kenya. She was staying in top rated hotels. At one point she was asked to don her bikini and get into a bath which overlooked the plains. She was to lie there with a bottle of champagne gazing out at the view. What she discovered was that there was no hot water so she had a cold bath only made less painful with the champagne. But overall he had a fantastic trip and everything was paid for by the company. Nice work if you can get it.

October 14th – Wednesday

Today was a national holiday so all the children were at home. We went to the house and commenced packing. My initial job was to sort the store out and in particular the toys. Needless to say everything was in a right state but eventually I got through it. Every time I tried to throw anything away one child or another retrieved the rejects so that was a bit tiresome. But on the plus side I have never spent a day in a house full of children when the house is in chaos and all the adults are busy without hearing one argument or any bad feeling whatsoever. This is down to Catherine and Anna for sure. As sacks were filled with clothes and shoes and boxes filled with toys, the older children and some friends hauled them onto their heads and carted up the steep road to the new house. The more they did the more they wanted to do. They are just amazing. I certainly would not

have been able to carry the loads they were carrying and not one complaint from anyone. They just love to get stuck in and help.

Having finished the store my next job was to remove all the pictures and posters from the walls. Joshua and Jordan were my little helpers for that task. But Anna then pitched in because as I started to remove the pictures, lurking behind them were masses of horrible insects that looked a bit like baby cockroaches or similar. My yells of horror bought Anna running. What a woose I am. But we got that job done and the boys loved climbing up to get at the tops of the pictures. Then there was a panic because Catherine lost a set of keys to the house which will need to be handed back to the landlord on Saturday. Eventually they turned up thank goodness. We had lunch – they had the dreaded ugali and we had omelettes which were delicious. One hen is busy sitting on her eggs in the store and some more eggs are waiting for someone to become broody. They are all in for a shock on Saturday when we move them up to the new house but they will have a very luxurious house and a nice run. Butu the cat was looking quite worried with all the comings and goings. He will be the last to be moved and we hope he won't run away. He performed the classic cat act whilst we were eating – he threw up right in front of us. He eats the same as everyone else so no wonder he was sick.

The afternoon was spent dismantling four of the five double decker beds. Everything has been carefully numbered so hopefully they will be reassembled correctly on Saturday. The children camped out on the floor on mattresses and will do so again for the next two nights but they didn't mind one bit. Meanwhile Alex (solar) is getting on well at the new house with wiring and the panels will be moved from the old house on Friday so we will be without power for one night. The big worry is the water supply at the new house. No one seems to know whether it is a plumbing problem inside the house or whether the main supply to the house is inadequate due to a massive shortage of water in the area. Certainly women have been sitting for hours at the communal taps trying to fill their buckets. Ismael has been asked to make contact with the local man responsible for monitoring the water supply. Wilson was hard at it completing the new chicken run and the interior fitting of the chicken house – this should have been done ages ago but somehow slipped his mind.

I shall be really glad when Saturday has come and gone. There are bound to be teething problems and there is still plenty to do to finish the house totally but we can do these things slowly as and when we have some spare cash to do them – we will have to continue to work hard at home to bring in the cash. Any donations towards interior finishing readily accepted. Tomorrow we have the delights of a meeting with the landlord to see what moans they have. I intend to deal very firmly with them. They played such a rough game with us at the beginning of our ventures and I don't intend to let them get away with anything at this late stage in our relationship. All good fun and not for the faint hearted. Usiku mwema.

October 15th – Thursday

Today was a day of waiting and yet more waiting. We had a meeting scheduled for 10.00am with our landlord and his son Daudi. We were 20 minutes late getting to the house but no problem. We sat around waiting and waiting some more. Finally at about 11.45 Daudi appeared but no sign of his father. I was getting more and more annoyed and in no mood for any slithery nonsense from the Sanaek family. As I told Catherine, elephants have long memories and I am an elephant and haven't forgotten all the trouble they caused us when we took on the house. They cheated us over building materials; they lied about the water supply which cost us a lot of money and have continued to make life unpleasant for Catherine. To be fair this was mainly the doing of Mama Daudi who is the closest thing to a witch that I have met – she is ill-educated, entirely stupid and thoroughly unpleasant to boot. Anyway, eventually the old man turned up – we discovered that he had done a vanishing act after having had his ears assaulted by his dear wife for hours early in the morning.

Anyway, long story short, we finally managed to negotiate a deal with them. They have agreed that if we leave the wiring, LED lights and all the switches we can just leave the house as it is without doing any minor repairs or redecorating. The house is in very good condition but their main complaint was that we have painted pictures on the walls which Mama Daudi had taken exception to and expected us to redecorate the entire house. She will be really angry with her poor drunkard of a husband when she finds out that we are not going to do anything of the sort. So having wasted two hours waiting for the meeting it was done and dusted in 30 minutes. I agreed with Wilson a price for concreting the back yard tomorrow so that will go ahead and hopefully we set before Saturday. He had removed some shelving from the store to be used for making boxes for the hen house so poor old Ismael set off up to the house carrying the shelves on his trusty shoulders. Mike hitched a lift on the back of Wilson's bike up to the house to check how the solar installation was progressing and Catherine and I had a quiet few minutes together on our own which was nice.

The bulk of the maize crop in our area has failed due to adverse weather conditions so subsistence farmers like Ismael are really struggling financially. Ismael told Mike and then me that he is struggling to find enough cash to send his kids to school so I negotiated a price for him to arrange clearing our small plot of land ready for planting. He is a good man and I wish we could do more to help him. We have all had some quite heated political discussions prior to the approaching election on the 25th – Ismael will probably vote for the incumbent party CCM, which is out of step with most people we know. Mike came back having reported that water seemed to be present in the house at the moment but that hot water was still not available. We have decided to leave the issue until we are moved in and can put everything through its paces but I am worried that this water issue(s) is going to be ongoing and inconvenient.

We headed for the dala dala and then the walk into town to collect the rest of our goodies from Mama Grace. There was a possibility of meeting Paradise at some point but he was busy so that didn't happen. We arrived at Maasai Market after 3.00pm and Mama Grace was there and ready with my order more or less. Then Silvester turned up with a guest from the lodge who runs an NGO based in America. We agreed that we would return to the lodge together. But what we hadn't counted on was how long it would take for the other lady to do her shopping and we were there until nearly 6.00pm waiting around. Jackie, a staff member from the lodge, also turned up to see the shop so we were quite a little gathering and it was fun. Mike dozed on his little stool, Silvester told jokes and I tidied the shop. Mama Grace is certainly doing good business from the contacts we have developed for her. She must be the envy of other stall holders all of whom beg us to visit their shops also. But I am so happy she is recovering from the devastating fire of last year. She is a lovely woman. She is coming to help with the move on Saturday.

Eventually we got back to the lodge laden down with our purchases. I then had to wait another 20 minutes while Silvester disappeared somewhere. I needed him to take a look at the four large mats that Annalies has given us for the house. He eventually reappeared and pronounced that they plus us would fit in his car on Saturday early morning so that was sorted. Mike was in the shower when I got back to our room. I had been accosted on the way by Ahmed, also known as nusu nusu. Nusu Nusu means half and half and refers to his stock response to the question how are you? His reply is always 50/50. He has the annoying habit of calling me Ethel as he reckons I have a cockney accent. He is a big tour operator here in Arusha and was busy doing the sales patter with one of his clients. I think the poor man overdid the alcohol because at dinner he appeared to be extremely unwell and kept vanishing to the loo. His young wife appeared unamused by his antics which included falling asleep at the table, staggering wildly around the dining room and throwing water all over himself. Amusing for us to watch but not great from his perspective.

Tomorrow we are staying put at the lodge to catch up on computer stuff and prepare ourselves for the Saturday moving ordeal. We are staying the first night in the new house with the family so will return on Sunday in a right state of disrepair I guess.

October 16th – Friday

We had a peaceful day at the lodge today. I topped up the old sun tan and caught up on work. It was nice to just relax and prepare ourselves for the upcoming move tomorrow which promises to be chaotic and exhausting as well as a momentous occasion in the life of Faraja Support. We had a late lunch so decided to skip our evening meal. The cook here has some very strange ways of preparing the meals and everything tastes the same and at times can be fairly unpleasant so it was no hardship to miss a meal. We read and dozed and ended up going to sleep really early. Lala Salama.

October 17th – Saturday

We left early for the house together with four woven mats that Annalies had very kindly given us for the new house. We arrived to find everything sitting in the garden waiting for the lorries to arrive. Teddy was there continuing to lift heavy weights despite being asked not to several times. Anna was preparing food for lunch and various children were rushing around in a high state of excitement. David and Elia had stayed last night up at the new house cleaning until about 11pm bless them. So we sat around waiting for transport to appear. Catherine rung Angel who said the pick up was on its way but nothing materialised. In the end Ismael and Jeremiah, who had come to help, went off in search of a lorry and eventually appeared with a very large lorry that managed to shift everything in two trips. Everyone mucked in loading up the first load. We sent the beds up first and Ismael and Mike went ahead to be there to unload and reassemble the beds. Apparently the truck got totally truck when it tried to leave the new house for the return trip to collect the second load. The copious amounts of dust made it skid so it took a lot of pushing and pulling to eventually get it out and on its way. Various kids went up on the back of the truck whooping and hollering and the rest of us sat around a bit more until the lorry returned to reload. The hens had been taken up by the children earlier in the morning but the Mama hen with 6 chicks had to be boxed up and carried up by Johanes. He got a good pecking by the protective hen and the chicks were taken up by Mercy and Aron. The sitting hen was taken up in her box and the fertile eggs were carefully transported on the lorry on Anna's lap along with lunch. And so the first stage came to completion. It actually all went very smoothly and remarkably quickly given the late start. Us 5 women said our farewells to the old house and handed the keys to old Sanaek. Butu was wrapped up in my Maasai shuka and carried up by Catherine purring all the way. He tried to make one break for freedom but we tucked him up again and we arrived at the new house without incident. He was deposited in one of the bedrooms and fed and watered. He slept there all afternoon and by the evening was showing no signs of wanting to leg it so was allowed out and has since settled down totally without any problem. Catherine adores this little animal. He is like a baby with her.

What greeted us at the new house was a scene of total chaos. Bed assembling was well under way but everything was upside down and back to front. All the children were helping to unload and I have to say I have never seen a group of 11 young people work as hard as they did. No one complained grumbled or moaned. At one point during the proceedings the entire floor of the house resembled a swimming pool as Aron took it upon himself to wash the whole floor. He then proceeded to wash all the shoes. David and Elia and several of the younger ones were unloading and carrying extremely heavy pieces of furniture without any complaint. Physically our children are very strong. Somehow Anna managed to serve up lunch that had been carefully transported up in a bucket and then she and Johanes set too clearing up the mess that was the kitchen and store room. Poor Teddy looked utterly done in so I sat her down and made her eat lunch and drink some water. She is literally about to give birth and should not be doing as much as she has been doing. Even

Joshua, aged 5 ish, was running around sweeping floors in a vain attempt to remove dust from the place. Grace and I sorted out the shelving in the sitting area and unpacked the books and games which Grace arranged beautifully library style.

I got quite ratty about the state of the front garden area. I had paid Ismael to clear it which he had done. But then the builder left a huge pile of sand and rubble there after having concreted the back area on Friday. I had expected that the builder would clear up after himself but that was apparently a totally unreasonable expectation – you live and learn. Wilson and Ismael looked suitably admonished but did nothing to move anything so after they had gone, Grace, David, Elia and Goodluck shifted the whole lot to the side. They were just amazing and it must have taken a couple of hours to move it. Uk kids, get your fingers out and stop being so soft and so totally spoilt. You could all learn a lot from our Usalama family. By late afternoon I was on my knees with tiredness. We had planned on staying the night at the house but because Catherine's bed was broken we were short of sleeping space and everything felt so disordered and dusty that we decided to retreat to the relative calm of the lodge. I think we are getting to old to cope with some of the hardships that life here can throw up. The water is still an issue which I worrying me so I hope we can find some solutions otherwise problems will be ongoing. I suspect that the main problem is the ever-increasing population making demands on the supply coupled with a decreasing amount of rainfall over the years. Women sitting at the communal taps for 5 hours just to fill a few buckets seems to be quite usual.

Sunday October 18th

After the trials of yesterday today was a day of calm and relaxation, relatively speaking. We got up to the house quite early and still everyone was busy doing chores and generally milling around. Catherine has quite a sore left hand after her trip yesterday which is limiting what she is able to do. I was designated the task of filling up buckets from the tap for drinking water. This was similar to watching paint dry as the water supply is really very poor. The tap spluttered and stopped and started at random and I sat there watching it. At one point I gave up altogether after half an hour of no water whatsoever. Then I realised that I had been waiting for water not knowing that Anna had turned the tap off. Catherine had picked all our greens left at the old house, so I helped her to pick her way through these before they died off completely. Talking of the old house – gossip tells us that poor Mama Daudi's plans to move in to the house from her mud hut have been thwarted by Baba Daudi. He has decided to rent the place out again but for a lot of money so poor Mama Daudi is absolutely furious and I guess Baba Daudi's life won't be worth living if past form is anything to go by. They are a match made in hell those two. What goes around comes around and I am not wasting my pity on that woman – she is a nasty piece of work and recently when some of her hens died of an infection, instead of burying the dead hens properly she threw them around the neighbourhood including into our garden, thereby risking the spread of infection to our hens and everyone else's.

Mike spent a lot of time with David helping him with Form One physics. David does struggle with some subjects, mainly because everything is taught in English and he still doesn't have an adequate grasp of the language, so how he is supposed to understand complicated concepts of density, mass etc. is questionable. So our Sunday passed along in peace and serenity most of the time. Because Mike was absorbed in his tuition and I was absorbed in water duty neither of us noticed that naughty Mercy had got hold of my smartphone and somehow managed to lock me out of it. I was not amused but luckily it sorted itself out. She had been asking Mike for the password, which he doesn't know, but he hadn't twigged and let her continue until it locked. So a general ticking off ensued and they were told that they must not touch my phones when I am there. They know this of course, but kids will be kids.

We left around five with Grace and David who were returning to school. David carried my two large travelling bags all the way to the dala dala stand. The dust around the new house is horrible so walking in it is unpleasant and difficult. What it will be like when the rains comes is not a nice thing to contemplate. When we arrived at the bus stand three young men were engaged in a very nasty fight. One guy was bleeding from a head wound inflicted by a rock being thrown at him. He was retaliating and was being menaced by get more rock throwing. I wanted to intervene but was told very firmly by David to sit on the bus and not interfere. He was probably correct and I appreciate his care for me. Another guy on the bus did get off and attempted to diffuse the situation and succeeded at least temporarily but as soon as he got back on the threatening behaviours started again. Alcohol was driving the aggression I suspect. Grace told me not to have another quarrel with the dala dala boy after what happened on a previous visit so I behaved myself and we got to Ilboru without incident. These two delightful young people are growing into wonderful adults and I am so proud of both of them. They are good friends with each other and it is great that they have each other when they are away from home at school. I know they both miss Usalama House and their young siblings and certainly they are missed by the others. Joshua in particular really misses David.

Monday 19th October

Today was a really grumpy day all in all. One thing after another happened which affected my mood negatively. All was well at the start. Silvester brought us up to the house which was nice. He wanted to see the more or less finished project. He started having bright ideas for resolving the water issues and then took Mike off somewhere to look at a friend's place. This friend has sunk a well. The well in itself isn't that expensive but then pumps and power are involved which does give rise to a lot of cost. And a well does not solve the problem of clean drinking water and adequate water pressure to be able to use the hot water system properly. No one can give us an adequate explanation as to why the supply is so poor in the new house as compared to the supply in the old house just five minutes' walk away down the hill. More research is needed before we embark on yet more expensive ideas which then don't work. Silvester dropped Mike at the school to pick up the three little ones and he was fortunate to be given a lift back by the school director which saved them a very hot, long and dusty walk. He brought back a wonderful essay written by Elia – Emma – I will send you a copy. It was moving to read that he still thinks about his dead parents that he can barely remember and wishes god to be with them wherever they are.

While Mike was away I realised that the drainage installation to take water away from the roof was actually a right old mess. All the down pipes will just send water from the roof straight into the ground right by the walls and I worry that this will undermine the foundations. There is no mains drainage but I would have thought that the down pipes could have been done in such a way as to lead the water away from the house. Mike and I managed to cobble together a bit of a channel for one of the down pipes as a temporary measure but the builder will have to come back and sort this out when he can be contacted again. I got grumpier and grumpier and more and more dissatisfied with various things as did Mike. Poor Catherine got more and more worried and Anna got more worried in turn because she thought I was cross with Catherine as if I ever would be.

Then Jordan and Joshua blotted their copy books big time. All the children have been told not to use the loo in the guest room. It is purely for the use of the adults. It is a Western style loo and with the current water problems takes a lot more water to flush. During the day the children have always used the outside loo and that rule continues. However, Jordan and Joshua took it upon themselves to creep to the guest loo and shut themselves in. They then proceeded to fill the loo with lots of unmentionables. Joram discovered this misdemeanour and they were caught red-handed. We were really angry with them. Catherine has her own particular style of punishment administration. On this occasion they had to frog hop up and down the very long corridor until she told them to stop.

They were both wailing and crying by this time. Anna was watching this spectacle with horror as Joshua got more and more upset. Then they were both told to lay on the mat and go to sleep for the afternoon, which they did. They were also told that when they woke up they would not be allowed outside for the rest of the day. Of course Jordan immediately disobeyed that instruction so got into even more trouble. All very stressful and by the end of the day grumpiness ruled. It's funny how these days happen from time to time. It will all come out in the wash – water permitting – I am sure.

Tuesday 20th October

Yesterday was grumpy day. Today turned out to be a highly charged day emotionally. We had a leisurely morning and then set off to meet Catherine and we all went to visit Julieth at Ebeneser. We discovered that Teddy had produced her baby overnight without Catherine and I's tender administrations. She has had a third boy. I know she really hoped for a little girl so I hope she won't be too disappointed. She had the baby quickly and easily and was returning home later in the day. Catherine will visit her tomorrow. We arrived at Ebeneser to be greeted enthusiastically by Janita who is now rising four. She is still as bright as ever and a little monster to boot. We met Jovin for the first time. He was born at the end of July and is a beautiful little boy. He is as alert as Janita was and very smiley and observant. Julieth seems to love motherhood as reckons she wants seven children. I hope she was joking. We spent the afternoon chatting and laughing as always with Janita demanding attention as always and Jovin alternately feeding and gurgling. The only time he screamed was when he had his bath. Julieth has 14 children at Ebeneser and is still struggling with living some way from the centre as are the children. Again it was noticeable how differently her children behave as compared to ours when they return from school. Ours romp in in a happy, boisterous and carefree manner. Julieth's come in very quietly and all line up to greet Julieth with the traditional Maasai bowing of heads. Yet again, when the older ones arrived back Julieth proceeded to list to me their recent misdemeanours and seems to want me to give them a good telling off. This time she went a little too far by announcing that three of them would be leaving Ebeneser soon if they did not mend their ways. I am not sure what they had been doing but clearly their behaviour was worrying and upsetting Julieth and she is at a loss as to what to do. She is in a permanently torn state – on the one hand wanting to be there with them all the time but on the other hand needing to lead a normal married life with her husband and family.

I had to take issue with her about threatening them with leaving Ebeneser. I tried to explain to her that these children are already fundamentally damaged and insecure due to being orphaned and from challenging backgrounds and that these sort of threats will only serve to make them less secure and naughtier. Of course she understands that in her head but she is struggling to control the children and feels very responsible for them naturally. I also reminded her as to the reasons why she started Ebeneser in the first place. She came from a very difficult childhood and didn't want to see other children go through what she went through. Catherine gave the children a nice chat – I don't know what was said. Both Catherine and I managed to get upset at various times and poor Mike was standing around looking worried and distressed also. Then Lucas appeared in front of me begging me to forgive him – I told him that I had no need to forgive as far as I was concerned and tried to reinforce that everyone was just worried and concerned for them and loved them. Julieth got a great big cuddle from Mike as she was also upset. It really was a tough scenario and hard to describe in a few words. I think Julieth just needs more support on a daily basis and that support is not there for her. I have asked to come to the lodge next Monday and we can talk some more in peace and quiet so I hope she will come.

By the time all this drama was done we were totally spent emotionally and it was getting dusky. We headed for the bus and got off at Sanawari with Catherine. Catherine told me that about a year ago

Joram's grandmother died and she decided to take Joram to the funeral. I am not sure this was the correct decision but trust Catherine to make the right decisions generally. Joram looked at his grandmother laying there and seemed suitably unimpressed as he would have had very few memories of her. But he stuck to Catherine like a shadow and even wanted to follow her to the toilet. All he wanted to do was go home again, and I can't say I blame him. The dala dala driver was completely mad. How he didn't have at least one crash when competing with other traffic, equally mad, was a miracle. This meant we had to walk along the main road to Ilboru in total darkness which is something we swore we would never do and will try not to ever do again. The walk is dusty, uneven and one is blinded by oncoming traffic. We were glad to get back to the lodge in one piece and grateful for a day here tomorrow.

October 21st – Wednesday

We spent a quiet day at the lodge today. All the physical and emotional stresses and strains take their toll in this neck of the woods and it's important to take the odd day off in surroundings of relative normality to recharge the old batteries. I finished my second book and managed to upload pictures onto the internet as it was behaving well for a change. We took an early dinner and watched a movie so now nice and relaxed ready for the next challenges tomorrow.

October 22nd – Thursday

We went up to the house today. The dust is now almost unbearable and clogs up all orifices- most unpleasant. When we arrived there was a young man sitting in the sitting room – this turned out to be Festo, Anna's intended. He seems like a very pleasant chap and brought a sack of oranges for the children which gave him immediate brownie points. Catherine gave him his "interview" poor man and it seems that they hope to marry around August 2016. Anna is so reticent as regards giving anyone information so it was good to be able to find out more of what is going on. He is 29 and from the same tribe as Anna so that's good. He works as a security guard in Dar but hopes to transfer up to this region. They both seem to think that Anna will be able to continue her job with us somehow so we will continue to await what transpires with everything crossed. The thought of losing Anna is not a nice one for any of us. I gave him a finger wagging and warned him that something very bad would happen to him if he mistreats our Anna – he took it on the chin. We managed to persuade Anna to come and sit with him so we could take pictures and congratulate them together. She is so funny – she sat at one end of the settee so Festo moved up and even put his arm around her for the photo whilst she giggled coyly. Soooo sweet. After lunch we left them alone to talk until he left to return back to Dar.

During all this we were also trying to deal with the builder, the plumber and Ismael. We have got a bit further in fathoming out the water issue. It would appear that there are two separate water supplies. We are connected to the local supply, originally installed by OXFAM many years ago. This supply is inadequate for the demands of the local population and decreasing rainfall. But there is another supply funded by the World Bank which could be a better supply. Catherine and Ismael will approach the village committee after the wretched election is done and dusted and find out what the procedure is for changing to this alternative and to check that the supply is more reliable. For now we are doing nothing involving any great expense as Catherine has assured us that they will be able to manage. We could start elaborate works like sinking a well or building an underground storage tank but I think for now we have to live with it and wait and see. The plumber remedied one or two small problems which seem to now be OK so that's done. The builder assures me that he will finish off various small jobs that should have been completed for no extra charge so that's good too.

We will buy a tin of paint to seal the outside toilet door and we will get the hooks and attachments for the mosquito nets when we go to town tomorrow. Wilson will help Catherine get the nets up as there are definitely mosquitoes around. Ismael will repair our spare water tank so we can collect

grey water as and when it starts to rain, which it surely must soon. Shortages of water and lack of power are really big concerns now and are causing many problems for everyone. The maize crop failed which has affected subsistence farmers very badly. We take water so much for granted in the UK but I am now really getting a handle on the reality of life without ready supplies of water and other commodities and it makes even the simplest of tasks hard work.

We left with Catherine quite early to pay a visit to Teddy and her new baby. She lives in a very humble two roomed mud house. She was lying on her bed when we arrived and there was a tiny baby wrapped up as if we were in deepest winter despite the very warm weather. Poor Teddy was not in a good way. She is desperately disappointed that she didn't have a little girl, which is sad for her. We encouraged her to name the baby to try and get her to bond a bit more. She said I should name him so we went through several names and came up with Andrew – my youngest – or Andrea in Swahili. She is suffering from nasty after pains and the baby is not feeding well yet so she is very sore and congested and generally out of sorts. I hope we cheered her up a bit but she was clearly very tired and not a happy bunny. Let's hope things settle down for her soon. Catherine will check on her tomorrow. We then waded our way down the road through mounds of dust to the dala dala. We stopped on the way at the polling station to check that Catherine's name was on the list of voters and it was so she will vote on Sunday. This election is a really big deal – probably the most important in 50 years. If the opposition party fails to gain power despite seemingly having massive support from the population, I think there will be riots and protests. A friend said tonight that he hopes that the airport isn't closed just when we are due to leave next Tuesday. I think he was joking but I am not entirely sure.

Friday October 23rd

We met Catherine at 10 at Sanawari and headed into town. We needed to get a few bits for the house and Catherine wanted to stock up on veg and fruit in order to avoid going into town next week after the election. We exchanged money for Julieth at a good rate of exchange. The rates varied a lot between the various exchange places and we got a rate that gave an extra £10 so it was worth scouting about for the best place. We stopped for a drink at Fifi and Catherine had breakfast as she had missed it at home. We searched out some hooks for the mosquito nets so those can now be fixed up. We then headed into the Central Market for the fruit and veg. We got the bread, jam and peanut butter for Sunday lunch and some honey for Johanes as it is supposed to help boost his immune system. We then went in search of loo brushes, mops and brooms and managed to get everything without too much expense. Then Catherine went to find a piki piki (motor bike) and she plus all her purchases managed to be loaded onto the bike. It was an alarming sight with broom handles sticking out at the sides and various bags and buckets strapped to the bike in all sorts of odd places. The driver was in good humour and took it all in his stride. We waved them off and were pleased to hear that she got home in one piece with everything intact. We headed back to the lodge in the early afternoon after having a piece of cake on the way and spent the rest of the afternoon reading and preparing for our 6.00 am start tomorrow morning.

Saturday October 24th

Today we spent a happy day in Tarangire National Park. A friend of mine offered to let us join a pair of women who were booked to go without any charge to us apart from park entry fees. This was very kind of him. We had a brilliant guide who really knew his stuff. He even prepared a picnic for us by a dried river and we had tea, wine, beer etc whilst being watched by giraffes on the other bank. Tarangire has many elephants and we saw a lot of herds including a tiny baby no more than a couple of weeks old. It was so cute and appeared to have no control over its' little trunk which wavered about randomly as he copied the other elephants who were having mud baths and scratching sessions on nearby trees. We saw a lot of wild life including a large lioness who had just made a kill.

She was busy cooling off in the river whilst keeping a close eye on her kill. She would amble up to the kill and have a bit of a munch on it and then amble back to the river to cool down a bit more. Fascinating to watch. I could stay in Tarangire for days on end just watching and taking in the magnificent African landscapes. We saw a lot of antelope including eland, the largest antelope in Africa. The record weight for one of these animals is 900lbs apparently. The birds are lovely and so many species can be seen and identified. We were lucky to see a Verreaux Eagle Owl high in a tree. This is the largest owl in Africa. We saw vultures and several species of raptor as well as many pretty birds of various sorts.

The heat was intense in the park; even with the roof up and the wind blowing through it was at times almost unbearable. The wind was hot and did nothing to cool us all down. The Irish ladies seemed to really suffer and between us all we consumed a lot of water. Because it was a couple of hours to drive back to Arusha we had to leave at about 4.30 before the evening coolness which is when the animals become more active but we still had a satisfying and relaxing day. Thank you Rob for letting us come. We eventually got back at about 7.15 and we skipped dinner in favour of long showers to remove the congealed dust and sweat from ourselves before taking an early night ready for an early start tomorrow.

Sunday October 25th

Today was a lovely day, a sad day and a worrying day. It was our last day at the house and we had to get there early so that Anna and Catherine could get to the voting station to cast their votes in this critical general election. Yet again, much to my annoyance, I managed to twist my ankle slightly and gave my knee a right bashing so that is now very sore and bruised. When we got to the house we found that Catherine had already been to vote and had just got back; I needn't have got up so early and rushed but there we go. We hustled Anna out of the house so she could get to vote and the queues were already very long. Catherine was pinned to the radio listening to updates on the election and the news was not very good. Polling stations were running out of polling papers and people registered to vote were being turned away because they did not have the necessary paperwork. A total disgrace and I guess corruption continues. I fear for this country if it cannot stop with all the ridiculous beaurocracy and corrupt behaviours. We now await the outcome over the next few days. Catherine has said that if CCM get in again she will not ever vote again. I have said she and millions of others must not give in to these bullying tactics and continue to fight the good fight for as long as it takes.

Anyway, politics aside, life in our beautiful family continued as normal. Everyone was in good form and getting on with various little jobs. Elia was armed with yet more Swahili homework for Mike and others joined in with the lessons. Mike has developed an excellent relationship with the older boys and enjoys their company as much as they enjoy his. Grace and I prepared lunch together having sent Catherine and Anna out of the kitchen because they constantly interfered with what we were doing. Butu also was banished as he thought it was OK to walk all over the food and taste it. Too many cooks makes for a bad soup I am told. Actually all we were doing was making piles of peanut butter sandwiches and piles of jam sandwiches as a treat for everyone. We added banana crisps, biscuits and lots of fruit. When Anna had finished doing her pile of personal washing and we could peel Catherine away from the radio as she got more and more angry and upset, we all sat down together for lunch. 15 people eating their meal in peace and harmony and laughter is a lovely feeling and I shall miss these interludes. There are no tensions whatsoever and everyone behaves well – apart from Jordan licking his plate – and it really is a lovely place to be. We are treated with love and respect and care by everyone. I have rarely felt so valued as I feel when I am there. David managed to put up all the mosquito nets with the special hooks we bought the other day. He is such a hard worker and can turn his hand to most things. Yesterday he had dug a deep pit for rubbish in

the garden and had terraced part of the garden for Catherine's vegetable patch. And this is all done willingly and graciously. This boy displays rare qualities.

After lunch everyone disappeared to their various rooms and Mercy did her beautician act on my face. She is very gentle and has good eyesight. We played a game of guessing what word we were writing on each other's backs – she was good and I was as usual useless. I acted as guard for the baby chicks as the notorious kuku birds – black kites I think – were hovering overhead. The Mama hen is excellent – as soon as she sees these birds she gathers her chicks underneath her and sits with them until the danger is past. We lost one poor unfortunate chick yesterday; it got shut in a door by Joram accidentally and died instantly. He was very upset apparently. He is very good at caring for the hens so I bet he felt awful. The afternoon meandered along happily. We took lots of photographs of the children, Catherine and Anna. They are growing up so quickly now. We realised that four or five of them will be eligible to vote at the next election in five years' time. Suddenly it was nearly time to leave with David and Grace who were returning to school. We all gathered together for our final house meeting and everyone promised to work hard, not cause undue damage to the new house and generally be good people. We are so proud of them all – I can't say enough times what a fantastic bunch of human beings we are lucky to associate with.

We all said our goodbyes and walked, or in my case, tottered, slowly down to the dala dala field. The bus was rammed but we squeezed on. It was making the most alarming noises all the way down to the main road and by the time we arrived at our stop the bus was completely beyond help. So everyone got off, including Grace and David and we then had to wait quite a long time before the bus they needed came along. But eventually it did and they squeezed on. We crossed the main road and located a car to take us up to the lodge. The car was only in a marginally better state than the bus and we both suspected that it was not in fact a taxi but didn't care by that time so long as we arrived back in one piece.

Tomorrow and Tuesday we are staying put at the lodge as we are wary of venturing out in case there is post-election trouble. Catherine and Anna are coming over tomorrow and I think Julieth is also coming if she feels up to it. We have plenty to do here to keep ourselves busy until we leave on Tuesday evening and I am quite glad not to have to worry about the hardships of moving around for a couple of days.

Monday October 26th

Well, so much for democracy. We were awake for two hours last night listening to the sounds of explosions coming from nearby. We sat with three young Dutch guys discussing what might be going on. It transpired that the police/military were dealing with several lots of disorder at polling stations around and about. The people were angry because having queued for hours in the hot sun they were still unable to vote because the polling stations were shut down. Needless to say they were angry, I would have been angry, and were dispersed eventually by a show of strength from the military who were firing tear gas shells and possibly grenades into the crowds. I dread to think what will happen when the results come out finally on Thursday. We leave tomorrow evening so hopefully will miss the worst still to come. I am sad for this country that has so much to offer and is continuing to be crippled by endemic corruption.

We had a very sociable day today with all sorts dropping in to see us. First Paradise rolled up unexpectedly to say hi. I think he wanted to reassure us that all was peaceful in town and that we shouldn't worry unduly after the events of last night. He was his usual ebullient self and it was good to see him albeit briefly. Whilst he was here Julieth arrived with baby Jovin – she was very hot and tired having walked up from the main road carrying the lump of a baby. Once Paradise had gone we moved to a sheltered spot as Julieth was worried that the breeze would upset the baby. She is a

very protective Mum. Jovin is a lovely baby and seems happy to be passed around from pillar to post without protest. Sometime later Anna and Catherine appeared and heated debates took place about the news on the elections. Catherine was tired and depressed having spent half the night listening to updates on everything that had gone wrong. Julieth was more upbeat and positive and the two of them spent a lot of time in heated discussions. Anna was her usual quiet self and just chipped in occasionally. She immediately took to the baby who fell asleep contentedly on her lap. I suspect she will have babies pretty soon after she is married as she clearly loves them and is good with them. Anna left at about 1 to collect Joshua and Jordan from school. I said she should take the dala dala home as it was extremely hot today.

We then ordered lunch for the girls – they were not pleased to find that their chicken was undercooked so it was sent back to be cooked more. Food standards here have definitely dropped in the last few months. Mike and I were left in charge of Jovin and worked hard to keep him content and not crying in case Julieth came back and thought we had done something dire to him. Apparently the two girls were spying on us as we did the grandparent thing and found it quite entertaining. So the afternoon rolled along in a haze of heat and a lot of chat. We called a car to take Julieth and Jovin back to Ebeneser at about 4. Catherine was about to leave at 5 when Ismael, his daughter and Jeremiah all showed up so more soda was ordered and more chat continued. Poor Ismael has had a hard time over the elections. His entire family support Chadema as does Usalama House so he was getting it from all sides bless him. He brought with him the results of one of the six counts in our village and Chadema was well ahead of the ruling party. If that is reflected throughout the country then the new government and the new president will be from Chadema and there will be celebrations all round. News of various dirty tricks have been trickling through unsurprisingly but it is certain at this point that all local governments in our region have fallen to Chadema. The final results won't come out until after we have left so Catherine will try to keep us informed via email or Facebook. Change is definitely in progress and that can only be a good thing.

At 6.15 finally everyone left after we had said our goodbyes. Catherine said she wasn't coming tomorrow to see us off but I think she probably will come. So a lovely day but I got no work done and no packing either. I had a quick pack of one bag before dinner and will try and get up earlier tomorrow to get on with stuff I need to do. Hopefully it will be a quieter night tonight. I have some itchy bites on my feet so will away to apply After Bite before I go to bed.

Tuesday October 27th

I forgot to mention yesterday that the two Dutch students who are here for six months teaching students at the local film school have now met with Mama Catherine and will be going to Usalama House on 8th November to film a day in the life of the family. This will be an exercise for their students in filming and editing and hopefully they will produce something nice for the charity to go on you tube and our website. Catherine has to keep this secret from the children so that they don't get over-prepared. I am sure everyone will enjoy this exercise and I am sorry not to be there. The night was quiet except for one explosion at about 11pm so long may it last.

We spent today trying to pack and relax prior to the long and boring flight. Although Catherine had said to me that she wouldn't be coming today she had actually told Mike she would come. In the event she didn't come because she had heard that there was potential trouble in the area post-election so decided to stay put. It was disappointing but on the whole probably the right decision and it avoided yet another painful and tearful parting. The Dutch students returned to the lodge having spent a night at Colin's place. One of the guys was feeling really poorly – probably caused by the Lariam (anti-malarial) so spent the entire day sleeping it off. This is not a nice drug and it's unusual for people to take it these days as there is a much better alternative. I have not bothered for years as I would be permanently on something and so far I have not contracted malaria. None of

the locals take anything and no one in the ex-pat community that I know has ever contracted malaria. The solution is to avoid getting bitten and most of the biting insects are not mosquitoes – no see ‘ums are the main culprits for itchy ankles.

We had a late light lunch and Silvester was at the lodge to take us to the airport at 5.30pm. In the event we got to the airport an hour early – I think I got confused about timings due to the hour change in the UK. At least we were early not late. It meant that we checked in quickly so whiled away the time in the outdoor café feeling and looking utterly miserable at the thought of the long winter ahead of us in the UK. The flight was the usual tedious and uncomfortable event and we arrived back in Birmingham in the pouring rain. So much rain here and so little in Tanzania – ironic.

We got home about 10 am and spent the day trying to stay awake and washing and shopping. I find it really hard to get back to any sense of normality and miss my wonderful African family badly. I am not sure when I will go again as I have got a wedding to attend in April 2016 in Tanzania and probably won't be able to afford the time or the money for another trip before then. It will be a long time without seeing them all. But Catherine, Grace and David are now on Facebook and so we can keep in touch that way. I have also heard that the filming went ahead as scheduled so I look forward to seeing the outcome. I will put the finished product on You Tube, Facebook and the website when I see the results.

A few requests from you lovely people. I have a list of things needed for the household so if anyone can help with any of the wanted items please get in touch.

We need:

Wellington boots – sizes from 2 -8

Pants and socks – boys from age 5 to age 16 – most of the boys are 9 - 13

Lightweight curtains/net curtains

Toothpaste/toothbrushes/handwash and soap

More sponsors for their education – each child will cost around £400 per annum

Tea towels and cleaning cloths

Please try and source these items for us – it makes a big difference to our running costs if we can get things here.

Thank you all for your continuing support and help. Our family really appreciate all the help they get from so many people in the UK – without you all we could not continue to support them all into adulthood and a brighter future.

Kwa Heri for now.