

Lyle & I had a wonderful time of R&R in Mombasa lazing by the pool, snorkelling, visiting a local village and just catching up with one another. He is now back in Australia, I am at Nakuru and only have just over a week before I am also home in Oz. So much to do, so little time!



This evening I sat at dusk on my veranda with wine and cheese and listened to the stillness, broken only by the beautiful singing wafting up from the orphanage evening devotions. I reflected on my day and, although still slightly panicked by all that needs to be



done before I leave, I felt at peace with the world (or was that just bone tired!).

Let me introduce you to my day. It commenced with my bleary eyes opening at 6.30 and promptly shutting again 'for just a minute' only to open again at 7.30, legacy of a midnight plus night the day before typing up library rules and teachers pledges etc. However, I need to be at school by 8am to meet with the teachers. Raced outside in my pyjamas to turn on the hot water, hoping it would heat sufficiently while I ate breakfast. A gobbled breakfast, a hurried shower and off to open up the library for the 'fundis' (carpenters), talking to the teachers before class about the lessons I would be sitting in on, over to the storeroom to gather more teaching resources for the teacher's cupboard, back to continue working out how to fit everything into the cupboard I had had built for the teachers and then it was time for classes. Somewhere in the middle of this I ran into May, one of the orphanage founders who wanted to discuss the stealing problem and express her concerns about me letting the teachers have jig saw puzzles etc in their classrooms – a very valid concern when the puzzle pieces walk out the door in kid's pockets on a regular basis.

I sat in on 5 classes today on which I need to give feedback to teachers – it was their first ever Lifeskills or Creative Arts classes taught. When will I fit in giving the feedback? I decided it will be written - at least I can write it after hours so note taking in class became important. At lunchtime, I raced home for a very quick sandwich, over to the storeroom for more resources, (where did I leave my cardi yesterday and will it still be there when I eventually remember and attempt to retrieve it!) and back to the staffroom to stack more into the cupboard (why didn't I have it made larger ☹!). Now time for afternoon classes, then the teacher's painting lesson.

The teachers have never played dominoes or the game of concentration, never seen powdered paint or used paint and brushes, didn't know you could make your own glue and playdough (what's playdough they ask?), never made a collage and their eyes boggled when they saw some of the craft resources made available but didn't have clue what to do with them. Hence they have requested classes after school to learn to use paint, make glue etc.

Last week classes were cancelled in the afternoons and the teachers and I sorted resources into class appropriateness, I set up registers for the resources so they don't all walk out the door at the earliest opportunity and we talked about what they would need to do to commence teaching Lifeskills and Creative Arts. This was all hard work for me. These are a new group of teachers who did not know or trust me. I come from the other side of the world and tell them they now will fit 3 new classes into their teaching week. It wasn't that they weren't already timetabled, but as they are not examinable, they used the time to mark books and prepare classes. Gaining their trust has been hard work but making pipe cleaner glasses (they'd never seen pipe cleaners) and playing a game of concentration together seemed to start the ball rolling in the right direction.

But back to today and the teacher training classes - today we tried 3 types of painting and they had a ball. They screeched and squealed like school children at the results they achieved! Tomorrow, we learn glue and playdough and they are hanging out for the french knitting and hand knitting class on Wednesday!! (Hmm reminder to myself - somewhere I need to find time to sort out the instructions, have them printed off, laminated and attach them to the inside of the resources cupboard).

I walked out of the teacher's class at 4.45pm to find my faithful band of kids patiently waiting outside



the library for me to open up and assign them jobs in preparation for beginning classes there this week. I put on my brightest smile (I am very thankful for their stick-a-bility) and head into the library, asking them to pick up



large boxes of rubbish and books past repair and we head off to the storeroom. I then tell them to head back to the library and read until I have washed the paint off my hands and come to join them. They are excited to have the opportunity to read for a few minutes so they race off to make the most of this reading interlude. I run into my flat, wash my hands and oh @&,\$#&*!, I remember I had promised the girls I'd take games to their dorm at 5pm tonight (I went to the boy's dorm last night) and it was already 5pm. Back to the library with many apologies to the kids, arrange for them to come at lunchtime tomorrow to rid the library of the final clutter and set up for the first library class tomorrow afternoon.



With my bag of Rummykub, Connect 4, Chinese Chequers, UNO, Twister, dominoes, barrel of monkeys etc I head to the dorm. As I pass the windows I hear the yells 'Valerie is here!' echoing through the building & I am met by an enthusiastic and energetic bunch of 30-40 girls aged between 5 and 15, all showered, in their pyjamas and just waiting for games. As I lift each game out of my bag there seems to be a 100 hands reaching in my direction and a 100 voices calling 'Me! Me! Me!'. Eventually all are settled and I give an older girl a game of Connect 4 and then leave them to it while I go to try to teach a younger group dominoes. I'm sitting on the floor for this and can hardly pull myself up when finished, I am so stiff and sore (I then remember I forgot to take my painkillers/joint lubricants this morning- so necessary at my age!). The twister board is then pushed into my hand by the littlies – they want my attention too. 6pm tea time can't come soon enough for me and late enough for them.

I head back to the library, gather my thoughts about what I need to do tonight and what needs to be done tomorrow. I dust the carpenter's dust off the window ledges and window security bars, make a mental note that the lights are not yet in, one pane of glass is missing, the putty marks are still all over the multi-paned windows and wonder when the vinyl will be laid on the floor – must chase these things up tomorrow. Then I head back to my little flat at 6.45pm and this brings me back to the wine

& cheese on the veranda in the gathering dusk as I mentally prepare for the things yet to be completed tonight. I think I deserve the wine!

As you can see from what I have written, my role here this year is twofold – to set up and prepare the library for use and prepare the teachers to take over the subjects I have previously taught. I think I have bitten off a bit more than is possible in 5 weeks but we'll see 😊.

With much love and thanks for your support, Valerie.