

MAM, OH, MAMMA..... MAM

Oh, my God, Brenda, my beautiful, independent, strong daughter. I have not heard her cry for help like this since she was little. When she could not see me and thought she was lost. I was standing between all the other mothers at the school gate, could not get to her quickly with the pram in which her brother John was sitting. I explained to her, and made her promise that if she needed me, if she could not see me: shout and I will come. Do not run, stay where you are and I will find you.

So now I run, run, run, in the dark, sweat pouring down my back to where she needs me. It is a very bumpy track, light and sandy, and I can see now it has strange trees or perhaps cacti along the side. They are up straight but with funny arms sticking out. I stumble and stumble, breathless but need to go on and on. I'm nearly there, just a bit further and then I see her fall. Her long hair flying through the air in front of me. I try, but cannot catch her, just not, but I did try, I tried, I did, I did, Brenda I did try..

I wake up on our landing in the dark, covered in perspiration (ladies do not sweat I was told). If this is one of the nightmares and hot flushes that women of a certain age get I'm not too keen. Trembling I try to get my wits back together. Brenda is in Mexico, went there on Thursday for a holiday. This is not one of her long backpacking trips around the world like she is used to doing, but a short vacation. It was agreed on months ago with her boyfriend towards the end of his time there as a tour guide. She did arrive safely; we had been getting her usual updates by mail almost daily.

From: Brennie
To: fam. searle
Subject: Safe in Mechico
Date: Fri, 01 Sep 2000 17:41:59 CEST

Helloooooo

I'd decided to go straight to Isla Mujeres, as it's thirty to 35 degrees here and I didn't feel like sightseeing yet. I'm not bothering with capitals as this compu is a bit irri, not surprising as it is not very modern here. I'm in hotel las palmas on guerrellos street or something, you can reach me here in emergencies but they only speak spanish and it is hands and feet again, quite a laugh.

Was dad back in time? A great big thank you for getting me to the airport, very relaxed this way. The rest of the journey went very well, mainly asleep!!! And i watched a few good films and of course ate a lot. I could get here very easily. Kind of bus to the harbour< puerto juarez> and with the rapido boat for less than 35 pesos to the island. It is very touristy and expensive, that is a blow, lots of americans, but it is soooo beatiful, great big waves, turquoise sea, clear white beaches and i just ate a fresh coconut!! I'm staying here three nights and plan then to go for a couple of days to the ruins of Chichen Itza that is about 200 km from cancen, i'll go on a bus. It is safe here, haven't felt scared at all. I get whistled at a lot, but that is because of my hair, so i'm not worried, you aren't either? I'll try to mail in a couple of days, but don't hold me to it as they are very slow compu's. All is well here, greetings to everyone.

Love from oldest child.

How often did I dream about Brenda? Even before she was born I had this image of her during the day, and dreamed at night of a blond, blue-eyed and laughing baby. About how well I would look after this child. With Geoff and me a baby would be happy and safe and secure.

Well what were our first thoughts when she was born? Geoff had never seen a birth before and wondered whether all babies were such a purple and white colour, and would her little head ever be alright? I thought what nonsense he's talking, this was the most beautiful and perfect little baby in the whole wide world. Just then Brenda opened her big blue eyes and frowned at the two of us: Are these my parents? Yes, sorry, you'll have to make do with us.

The haemangioma on top of her head - we called her our thermos-baby as it looked like a little round red stopper, so on the very top - disappeared over time and beautiful blond curls grew over it. She did have a marvellous smile. Brenda was a great success with all our family and friends, and that always remained so.

I collect my thoughts and go back to bed on this Tuesday 5th day of September 2000, but I dream the same nightmare again and again... every night, for months on end.

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Wednesday morning I feel and look a complete wreck, and confess to not having slept well. Wonder aloud about how Brenda is doing. They do not really believe me: Brenda? She can look after herself. Anyway, she is with her friend now in Mexico. So we check the mail again and find the latest: do not worry if you do not hear from me for a week or so, internet has not reached as far as Cichen Itza where I'm going. So that is all right then...

From: Fam. searle
To: Brennie
Subject: Received your mail
Date: Sun, 03 Sep 2000 11:04:21 CEST

Hallo Oldest Child,
We received your mail and are glad you had a good journey, and are enjoying your holiday in Mechico. It took me 2 ¼ hour to get back home on Thursday morning, so at 7 o'clock I was back in bed. No problem.
Have fun and look after yourself,
Dad and Mum.

From: Brennie
To: Fam. searle
Subject: Re: Received your mail
Date: Sun, 03 Sep 2000 18:28:59 CEST

Dear parents and Vereniepenie,
Pfuh, it is rreally baking hot here, i got a bit too red yesterday, so will stay under the palm trees today!!! I'm staying today (Sunday) on Isla Mujeres as well and will go tomorrow to Chichen, where my boyfriend will be on the 5th also. I can stay in his hotel then, but have to arrange something for the 4th. He is only on Isla on the 6th, I did not know that, I thought the 5th. But this way it will work as well.
Yesterday I went with a group of Israeli's (about 15) to party in Cancun. It felt like I was back in america, so modern and fake, it did not look like Mechico. But really nice people. Well I better get on, good to hear Dad could go to sleep at seven already.

Lots of love
Oldest child in paradise!