

New Stanley Hotel,
P.O. Box 75, Nairobi.
January 19, 1963

Dear Nat,

The postmark and above address should be enough explanation of why I did not react earlier to your s.o.s.: I left London for Rome the day you seemingly wrote, and the letter has been following me around. But what's even worse is that with me here in the sun and all my Major Works freezing in London, what can I do in answer to your appeal? I can hear you saying I must write the story here - but I'm through with writing Drum-type potboilers, and anyway you'd probably throw it away. I'll be in East Africa for a few months before returning to London, which makes it impossible for me to have the privilege of being in any of your early editions. But if you can somehow or other get hold of the prize-winning story (which was incidentally third, not fourth as everybody down there alleges), then by all means use it.

Looks like things are moving down there, what with your magazine (what'd you call it and when's it coming out), Casey's book (which one?), ~~Rx~~ & Richard Rive's and several other peoples'. I suppose you've heard by now that Bloke sold his manuscript on the strength of some 60 pages. I've had no such luck yet, but I'm keeping my fingers crossed that my agent will soon earn his ten percent by selling my stuff. Tell Casey I still believe he'd make a hit with On The Beat as a collection.

I was glad to hear that there still are shebeens, after all - now I can consider coming down for a visit: except the thought of all those long knives flashing in the townships scares me to death. This town here allegedly has them, but I'm hoping I won't see any. It's quite a town this, with the hardest drinking journalists I've ever come across: after a week of being introduced by them to the countless bars, I'm taking this weekend off to recuperate.

Well, I have to toddle on now and put on my foreign correspondent act. Hope you'll send me a copy of your magazine when it comes out. Give my regards to everybody.

J. Arthur Rankin

Manman

June 28, 1963

Dear Arthur,

Thank you for writing so promptly in reply to my letter. I have since met Bob Conley of the New York Times who spoke so well of you and your work that I felt like hopping the next plane to go seek my fortune outside this hole. But, of course, that won't be possible for some time. There is still a lot to be done in these parts. Perhaps some time next year I will. I have already been offered some cash and invited to London.

I did write to Ulli Beier, asking him for the story you offered me. Unfortunately, he was not keen to give it. Since then the first issue of *The Classic* has been published. I'm sending you a copy herewith. As you will notice, the thing is horribly printed. We are doing everything possible to avoid making the ~~mistakes~~ same mistakes in the next one. For one thing, we are getting a new printer. Our first printer was not only the most inefficient in creation, he also went down with double pneumonia during press week and had to be replaced by his son, a police detective. So I was a very uneasy man when the paper finally went to bed.

Among the things I hope to have in the second number are:

I

1. An interview or a conversation (tape recorded) between Paton, Can Themba and I. It will be a discussion of his work, in part, echoing some of Mphahlele's criticisms of Paton's work;
2. A review of local sculpture with pictures; three local short stories; Another from Langston Hughes or something from Lorraine Hansberry; Another from Dorris Lessing; a jazz piece etc.

Do you think we could have one from you now? I don't know how you are placed for time, but I shall be delighted to see a story from you.

I phoned Lewis a week ago and I expect to receive something from him on Noni Jabavu whose book I've just started reading. I asked Lewis to visit her for an interview.

Reuters,
85, Fleet Street,
London, e.c.4.
September 25, 1963.

Dear Nat,

What you need is a correspondence course on How To Persuade Authors and Keep Them Contributing. Or maybe just a simple public relations course which I'm sure Nimrod can supply. You don't just ignore potential contributors as rudely as you do, between demands to them for stories. If you'd acknowledged my letter last January explaining why I couldn't send you anything, I wouldn't have felt "to hell with him" when I later received your pleas through channels. But I'm a nice guy, and here's a story for you - I do hope you pay, though you forget to mention the fact in any of your letters.

Okay; I've got that off my chest now. As I've told Nadine, you are not to touch my novel - not just yet, anyway. I might've changed my mind by the time you're screaming for contributions for your issue after the one in which you use my story. I suppose you've heard about Bloke's emergence as a definitive literary figure - at least that's how he looks at it, thinking he now deserves to get a chair as Resident Author at an American university. I guess I'll always be a hack journalist, even though Africa has made it quite clear now that they don't like my kind of non-P.R.O. reporting: I'm a traitor to the race, you see; corrupted by the neo-colonialists and all that jazz, diggez-vous?

Well, here's wishing you good editing, even if it includes rejecting my story. You mustn't ever put yourself in a position where you're so short of contributions that you have to use whatever junk you're presented with.

Yours truly,

J. Arthur Kinnane

October 3, 1963.

Dear Arthur,

Thank you very much for your nice story which will appear in our second issue, due out in a matter of weeks, two at the most.

From your letter I gathered that you were dissatisfied with my dealings with you. You were unhappy that I did not acknowledge receipt of your very friendly letter from Nairobi early this year. That's simply puzzling to me because, in that letter, you yourself were replying to an earlier one from me and you referred me to Mr. Beir of Black Orpheus. In the same letter you made it clear that you would not be anywhere near your "storage" for stories for some time. Having written to Mr. Beir, I presumed that I had done what was required of me. I apologise if this has proved inadequate.

Yes, I will always do my best to avoid having to scream at the last moment for copy. As you may know, however, putting together a paper like ours is not really uncomplicated in these parts.

I have passed on your novel to Nadine and I will not touch it until you allow me to do so. Needless to say, I shall be most grateful if you allow me to look at it with a view to publishing something from it. You may be interested to know that your story will appear together with contributions from Athol Fugard, Doris Lessing, President Senghor and several others.

If this point is not ~~clearly~~ made adequately yet, please accept my assurance that The Classic is still operating at minimum efficiency because this is entirely new ground for me and, believe you me, the difficulties involved are immense.

Your Butelezi reminded me of a Zulu labourer in blue overalls. I met this fellow on my way from The Classic (The original). He accosted me on the pavement ~~next~~ between the Mail's building and Drum's Samkay. "Tell me," he said, "Where does Ndlovu work?"

"Which Ndlovu?"

"Nangu lo waseMsinga. The one from Umsinga (some reserve in Natal).

"I don't know. Where did he say he worked?"

"He just said he works somewhere here in Johannesburg."

I felt rather sorry for this chap as I obviously could not help him. I suppose his friend must be one of these chaps who sing with ama-Evening Birds at the social centre and consider themselves world famous.

11th October, 1963.

Mr. Arthur Maimane,
Reuters,
85, Fleet Street,
LONDON E.C.4.
England.

Dear Arthur,

I discovered with untold horror the other day that I had not told you what we pay for contributions. Our rates are 3 guineas per 1000 words for short stories and a minimum of 3 guineas per poem. As your story is a fairly long one I expect to pay you more than 15 guineas.

Needless to say we shall try to pay more in future if we manage to improve our financial resources.

Yours truly,

Reuters,
October 17, 1963

Dear Nat,

Thanks for your letters - especially the last with its promise of money: which i hope may be forthcoming soon since i'm sure your organisation is too progressive to insist on waiting till after publication before coughing up the loot @ - acceptance should be good enough, shouldn't it? and now an important point, though it might sound silly coming from a publicity hound like me: don't use my name under the story, just the initials "j.a.m.". i'm seemingly always stuck with employers who do not want their staff connected with anything politically controversial except perhaps with "works of art" such as the novel. now please remember this, unless you want me to go on the dole. you haven't said anything about what you think of the story, but i suppose you're just too glad to get something publishable, so you don't care whether it's particularly good or not, hey? i hope it doesn't get you banned or anything like that.

Thanks for passing on the mss to nadine, whose verdict i'm waiting for with great interest - i've just had publisher's minds explained to me, and it seems that any novel that they aren't sure of getting into the public libraries doesn't stand much of a chance. and since mine opens with rape on page one....
anyway, my regards to everybody.

JAM

22nd October, 1963.

Mr. Arthur Maimane,
Reuters,
85, Fleet Street,
LONDON E.C.4.

Dear Arthur,

Your letter asking me not to publish your full name has reached me and I will comply.

We have, since I last wrote to you, run into censorship problems concerning your story. Our lawyer feels that as the story is clearly "strong meat" it would be advisable for us to hold it possibly for the third issue. A censorship board is due to begin its unholy work in November. As we are anxious to remain in circulation it seems necessary to be cautious if only for a while.

I am sorry to disappoint you in this matter, but this was completely outside my expectations.

I personally think your story is worth publishing even though undistinguished in quality.

Finally I must explain that our policy is to pay after publication, but I am certain that where exceptional circumstances arise the general rule could be waived. Incidentally what are the chances of getting another story from you in place of "The Mad Nest" for our third number. If I am able to publish the story I should try to pay in advance.

Yours truly,

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