

MY NEW ZEALAND STORY

RAINBOW WARRIOR



The Diary of Rowan Webb,
Auckland, 1985

Written by **Sharon Holt**

SCHOLASTIC
AUCKLAND SYDNEY NEW YORK LONDON TORONTO
MEXICO CITY NEW DELHI HONG KONG



January

Tuesday, 1 January – I found this old ship's logbook of Dad's this morning. Mum finally let me open the suitcase full of his stuff. She said 1985 would be a good year for us and it was time to stop hiding from the past. I reminded her that it wasn't me who'd spent the last 10 months and 25 days since Dad died acting as if he was away on a big construction job. Mum said there was no need to be rude and everyone dealt with grief differently.

The suitcase was full of amazing things I'd never seen before – postcards, concert tickets, photos and some medals that belonged to Grandad. There was even an old jersey from Dad's rugby league days. Mum picked it up and buried her face in it, sobbing like anything. The letters he'd sent when he was a sailor made her cry too. He'd never really wanted to give up his life at sea, but he did it to make her

happy. That's when he started working as a builder. I suppose she feels guilty about that now. He would never have been working on a construction site that day last year if he hadn't changed jobs.

I hugged Mum close for the first time in ages. It felt good to hear her talking about Dad at last. She said he was her first love and the age difference between them never mattered to her at all. Then I made her a cup of tea and we had a giggle about some of the funny things he used to do. Mum said he was so predictable. Every morning he did the same things in the same order before he went to work. She couldn't get him to try anything else on his toast except plum jam.

That's when I asked her if I could use the ship's log as a diary. There are heaps of pages left. I've just put my name under his on the cover. Now it says Peter Webb and Rowan Webb. Better stop writing because Auntie Noelene and Uncle Bill have come to take us to the races at Ellerslie.

Wednesday, 2 January – We had the best time ever yesterday. Mum let me have a couple of one dollar bets and I won six dollars! I tried to convince her to give me more money since I was on a

winning streak. She just said something weird about not wanting me to turn out like Grandad. Sometimes I don't know what she's raving on about. I haven't decided what to spend my winnings on yet. I might save up for a Madonna record. Madonna is so choice. I'd really like to meet her one day.

There were two famous people at the races. I wish I'd had my autograph book with me. One of them was Mark Todd. He won a gold medal in horse riding at the Olympics last year. And then I saw the Prime Minister! My next-door neighbour Alex thinks David Lange is the best prime minister New Zealand has ever had. It's mainly because of his stand against nuclear ships being allowed into our ports. Alex and his parents are into Greenpeace big time. They even have a NO NUKES sticker on their letterbox. Ours just says NO JUNK MAIL.

The shops are open again at last. Mum's taking me to buy some new clothes for my birthday on Friday. I hope she gets me one of those bubble skirts. They're choice.

Friday, 4 January – My 13th birthday – I'm officially a teenager. Not that there's any evidence when I look in the mirror. I reckon I still look about



nine. Mum thinks I should make the most of looking young. She doesn't want me to grow up too soon. "Growing up leads to all sorts of problems," she said.

"Which problems in particular?" I asked. "Sex, drugs or booze?" I just said it for a laugh – I didn't realise it would cause a civil-defence emergency. I thought she was actually going to explode! She eventually cooled down enough to buy me some birthday presents.

My main present from Mum was a pink bubble skirt! She also gave me money to choose some makeup. I got black nail polish and a makeup kit with blusher, eye shadow and lipstick. I still can't believe it. No way would Dad have let me wear makeup. Or anything even remotely trendy. He was quite old-fashioned like that. I'm wearing my bubble skirt now.

Alex should be back this weekend. He's been away with his parents on their yacht. I bet my black nail polish will freak him out.

Monday, 7 January – What a great weekend! Alex phoned on Saturday to say they were tied up at Marsden Wharf. Mum let me go and visit the yacht.

RAINBOW WARRIOR

I wore my new skirt, of course. Alex's mum thought it was a strange outfit to wear sailing, but Alex seemed quite impressed. He didn't say anything about the black nail polish though! We chatted on the deck for ages while his parents cleaned up after their trip. It was a real holiday this time. Usually their sailing trips are to places where they help the environment and stuff. They're planning to go on a big protest mission to an island called Mururoa this year. I've never even heard of it, but Alex said it's where the French government have been testing their nuclear bombs. He won't go, though. It's too dangerous for kids.

Tuesday, 8 January – Today Alex and I organised some boxes in the garage so we could start recycling to help the environment.

We're putting glass bottles in one box and newspapers in the other box. Alex and I both want to be marine biologists when we grow up, so it makes sense to look after the environment while we're young. I told Mum I'm going to start a compost bin too. She thinks I'm crazy.



Wednesday, 9 January – I was looking through some of Mum’s Woman’s Weeklies today before I put them in the recycling box. I found a pen pal column and ended up writing a letter to a 14-year-old French girl called Lisette Romaine. I’ve had a thing about France ever since we did family trees at school and I found out that Dad’s great grandmother was French. It made me feel really special. I think Dad would approve of me having a French pen pal.

I hope she can understand my handwriting! She wants to write to someone who’s interested in sailing and environmental issues. That sounds more like Alex than me, but he’s not looking for a pen pal – and especially not one from France. He says the French government’s wrecking the environment by testing their nuclear bombs in the Pacific.

I’m sure Lisette isn’t involved with any of that though. She wants to *help* the environment! I told her I’m involved with Greenpeace, which is only a tiny white lie. And I mentioned that Alex’s parents are going on the protest flotilla to the Pacific in a few months. That should impress her enough to make her write back soon.

Alex doesn’t know about Lisette yet. And I haven’t

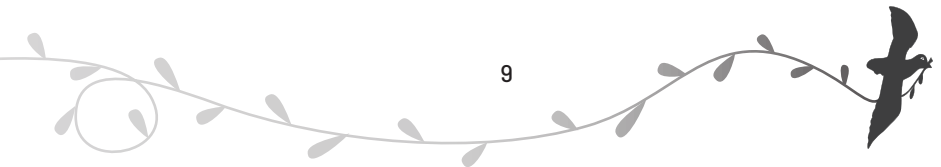
told him that I'm taking French at school this year either. He'd *really* blow a fuse then.

Thursday, 10 January – Mum took me and Alex to St Luke's shopping mall today. It's huge! There were clothes shops *everywhere*. I couldn't buy anything though. The others weren't interested in looking at clothes, and everything's so expensive anyway. Alex and I tried on some mirror sunglasses. I thought they looked cool. Mum said it was just another fad.

We saw a display about the Outward Bound course at Anakiwa. People go there to challenge themselves on rocks and ropes and stuff. Mum said she might do something like that one day! Alex and I laughed our heads off when she wasn't looking. Mothers can be so embarrassing!

Friday, 11 January – Mum spoiled everything. She told Alex about my French pen pal. And not only that – she told him I'm taking French at school this year! Apparently, she didn't know it was a secret.

I gave her the silent treatment for ages. Alex was pretty good about it in the end.



“It’s your life,” he said. “If you want to fraternise with the enemy, that’s up to you.”

“Maybe not *all* French people are our enemies,” I said. I reminded him that Jacques Cousteau is French and he’s the world’s best-known marine biologist.

Sunday, 13 January – Alex and I are friends again. He agreed that all French people aren’t our enemies – only the French government. Mum’s glad because she likes a drop of French champagne every now and then, and she’d hate to think she was supporting the enemy.

Tuesday, 15 January – School starts in exactly two weeks. Alex is so lucky – he doesn’t have to go to school. He’s home-schooled by his mum. School would restrict their freedom. They need to be able to take off at a moment’s notice.

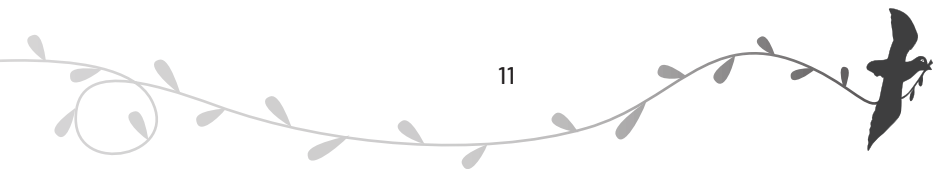
Mum calls them “alternative”. I don’t think she really understands Alex and his parents. They’re into making the world a better place to live. I think that’s much more important than school. Mum reckons it’s over the top. That must be what people mean by the generation gap.

Thursday, 17 January – Holidays can be so *boring*. Alex has gone away somewhere with his parents – again! My best friend Pravinda is finally back from her holiday, but she’s helping her mum in their shop today. So I had a lazy day reading the books on my shelf for the umpteenth time. My favourite is ‘Under the Mountain’ by Maurice Gee. I’d forgotten how scary it was.

I’m going to read through some of the entries in this logbook of Dad’s before I go to sleep. I love studying his handwriting. It’s so tidy. He must have used a fountain pen. There’s even a few newspaper clippings about the ships he was on or the ports he visited. Looking through these pages helps me to feel closer to him somehow.

Friday, 18 January – I had a horrible dream last night. I was standing at the top of a tower. Dad was near me but he didn’t seem to know I was there. As I called out to him, he faded away. I reached out to grab him, but it was too late. He was gone.

I woke up feeling awful. I told Mum about it, which was a bad idea. She thought my imagination was working overtime because I’d been reading too much. I’m sure she deliberately tries to avoid



talking about Dad sometimes.

We're going to George Courts to buy my school uniform today. That should take my mind off it.

Saturday, 19 January – My new uniform is ghastly! It's a dark blue tunic with a white shirt underneath. I thought Mum would pass out when she saw the cost of it all. I offered to get a part-time job to help pay for it, but Mum said we'd cope somehow. Pravinda was at George Courts too. She invited me to go ice skating with her tomorrow. I can't wait!

Sunday, 20 January – I *love* ice skating! We went to Paradise in Glen Innes. I was quite wobbly because I haven't been ice skating for ages. Not since primary school. We kept crashing into each other and giggling like crazy. I nearly wet my pants from laughing so much. Now I'm covered in bruises! It was the best fun I've had in ages.

Monday, 21 January – Kelly Tarlton's Underwater World opens on Friday. Mum's agreed to take me and Alex. She's worried about long queues because it's the first day, but we don't care about

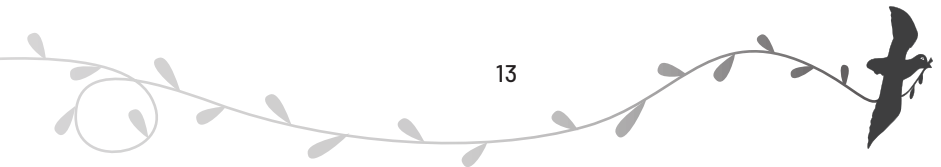
queues. I suggested staying at the gates overnight in a tent, but that didn't go down too well with Mum. I don't know when she lost her sense of adventure, or if she just never had one.

Kelly Tarlton is so inspiring. He had a dream in his head and he just went for it. I hope I can be like him one day. I feel a bit strange about walking under the ground through those stinky old sewerage tanks, but I didn't tell Alex that.

Wednesday, 23 January – Pravinda's 13 today. We went down to Victoria Park Market to celebrate. Mum was funny about us going without an adult. She'll have to loosen the apron strings some time. I don't know what she imagines could happen to us! I took my makeup and we went into the loos as soon as we arrived. I look a lot older when I wear lipstick and eye shadow. Pravinda didn't want to wear much lipstick. She thinks makeup is weird.

We spent ages walking around the clothes stalls. We tried on some lacy tops and cool rubber bangles, even though we couldn't afford them. Pravinda said I looked like Madonna!

Then we had a milkshake at Rick's American Café. We felt like real teenagers then. Pravinda



found a sterling-silver wishbone necklace she liked. Her mum had given her some money to buy something for her birthday, so she got that. It's gorgeous. I might save up to get one too.

Thursday, 24 January – Only one day until I go completely underground! I'm just a tiny bit scared.

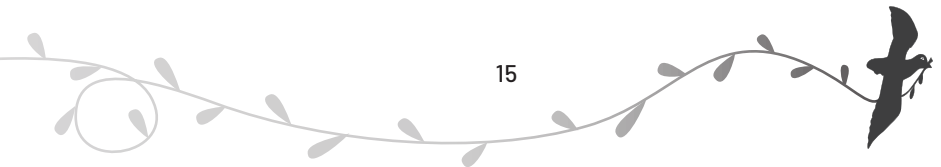
Friday, 25 January – Wow! Kelly Tarlton's Underwater World is absolutely incredible. Mum got fed up with the queue, but I didn't mind at all. It was so worth it. The floor even moved underneath us like a conveyor belt. I went around zillions of times. There aren't any sharks yet, but the fish and stingrays were all swimming over our heads. There was just this clear tunnel between us and them. It was quite spooky really.

I wish Dad could have been there with me. He loved everything to do with the sea. I thought about him a lot while I went round and round looking at the fish. It reminded me of the time when Dad and I went fishing together in his old dinghy. He felt a tug on his line and the rod bent so much I thought it would snap. Dad spent ages reeling it in but it was only an old gumboot covered in seaweed!

Dad and I sure had some great times together. I'm lucky to have so many happy memories of him. But I'm still sad that I'll never see him again. Life is so unfair. I had a few tears when I thought about Dad in the tunnel at Kelly Tarlton's. Alex asked me what was wrong, but I just said I had something in my eye.

Saturday, 26 January – I dreamt about Dad again last night. This time he turned and smiled at me before he disappeared. I just stood there, staring at the place where he'd been standing. I hope I don't need to see a psychiatrist. This time I didn't bother telling Mum.

Sunday, 27 January – Alex says the nuclear issue is causing problems between Australia and New Zealand. His parents were talking about it over dinner last night. The Australian prime minister wants us to let nuclear warships into our ports, but we've said no. It's led to a trade war between Auckland and Queensland (who have banned beer and chocolate imports from New Zealand)! Alex is quite clever for someone who doesn't go to school.



Monday, 28 January – Thinking about my new school is making me soooo nervous! My stomach was so churned up I couldn't even eat lunch. Mum says I'll love it once I get there. But she doesn't understand. It's nothing like Ponsonby Intermediate. Auckland Girls' Grammar School is enormous!

Everyone calls it AGGS. Mum went there when she was my age – she had to catch a bus from Mt Roskill. Our house in Freemans Bay is just around the corner from AGGS, so I'll be walking. Mum made heaps of friends and learned masses of stuff at AGGS. She's super-enthusiastic about it.

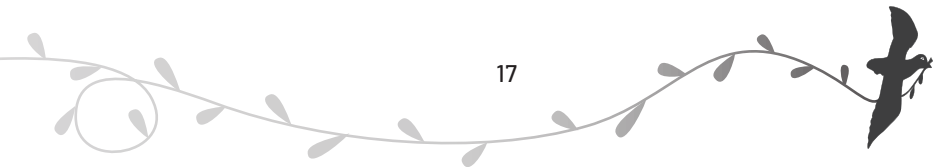
At least I'll be starting French. I still haven't had a letter back from Lisette yet though. Mum says it'll be at least another week. France is way over on the other side of the world. I'm surprised any French people know about a tiny little place like New Zealand.

Tuesday, 29 January – Well, I made it. I am now a third former at AGGS. It's even bigger than I thought. I've got a nice form teacher who's young and friendly. Pravinda and I stuck together all day. She was even more nervous than me because she's

Indian and she was worried about standing out. But there were heaps of girls from different cultures.

I got my timetable in the morning and managed to find all my classes eventually. I only got lost twice. It's funny being in a school with only girls after having boys *and* girls at intermediate. At least there aren't any boys laughing at how gawky we all look in our stupid school uniforms. I might prefer being at a school without boys, now I think about it. They can be quite distracting. Even Mum agreed when I said that. But I don't think we were talking about the same sort of distractions ...

Mum had her first day at a new school today as well. She's working in the office at my old intermediate because the office lady left to have a baby.





February

Friday, 1 February – I’ve been so busy with homework this week that I haven’t had time to write anything in here. I’m getting to know a few more girls at school, and most of the teachers are helpful. French is exactly as I imagined it. It’s such a beautiful language. The teacher likes to be called “Madame”. You don’t say “madam” like in English. You say it with a French accent and stretch out the last syllable –“madahhhh”. I told her that I want to be a marine biologist like Jacques Cousteau, so I’ll need to know the names for all the fish in French. She laughed and said the main one she could think of straight away was “poisson” (she said it like “pwah-son”, not poison), which means fish. I guess it’s a start.

Sunday, 3 February – It’s the anniversary of Dad’s death on Tuesday. Mum woke up feeling low

and I wasn't much better. I even heard her crying in the bathroom this morning. I wanted Tuesday off school but she said no. Mothers can be so mean sometimes. The only thing different about Tuesday is that we're having Dad's favourite dinner – steak, eggs, mushrooms and chips. When she saw how annoyed I was about having to go to school, Mum told me we're doing something special on Waitangi Day instead because there's no school that day. It's a surprise, but I think Alex knows something about it.

Monday, 4 February – A girl at school wants me to join the Peace Group. It sounds good, but I'm worried about getting involved in too many things and not having enough time for myself. I read an article in one of Mum's Woman's Weeklies about teenagers needing more rest because they're growing so fast. But when I look in the mirror I can't see any extra bumps, even though I'm exactly 13 years and one month old today. Mum says she was a late bloomer too. Great! She still looks flat as a pancake to me.

I'm going to put Dad's logbook under my pillow tonight. I want him to know I'm thinking about him.

Tuesday, 5 February – one whole year since Dad died ... I tried to get the day off school again today, but Mum stuck to her guns. I knew a Māori girl who had the day off for her auntie's unveiling the year after she died. Mum said we don't do unveilings. She doesn't even try to understand me. I started to cry but Mum showed absolutely no sympathy.

I'm sure she thought I was just putting it on to get out of the school swimming sports. Untrue! I do *hate* the AGGS swimming togs, but I was feeling really sad about Dad. I just wanted to spend the day in my room looking through his old suitcase again. So much for what I want. I can't wait until I'm 16. Then I'll be free to do whatever I feel like.

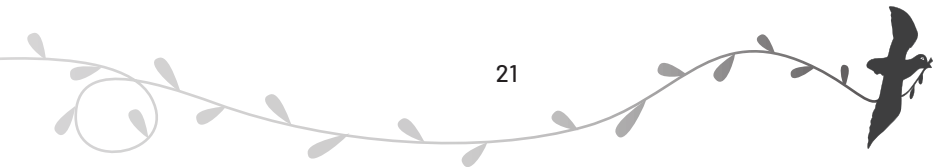
Pravinda gave me a nice card at school. At least she understands me. I only just managed to hold back the tears when I read what she'd written. No one else at school knows about Dad. I'm going to play Dad's special tape now. His friend Des made it for his birthday one year and we played it at Dad's funeral. It's full of all his favourite songs – old stuff like 'Yesterday' and 'Moon River'. The songs are quite slow – nothing like what Madonna sings – but I always feel closer to Dad when I listen to it.

Waitangi Day – We had the most amazing day out on Alex’s yacht. Mum took the urn with Dad’s ashes and we both had turns scattering them in the water around the Waitematā Harbour. Mum said it’s what Dad would have wanted.

I’m glad Alex was there with us too. He and Dad got on really well. Dad treated him like the son he never had.

I took this diary on the yacht with me. Alex’s dad wanted me to read out some of the entries from Dad’s days at sea. It was a good idea but I had to make sure no one saw anything *I’d* written. Most of Dad’s stuff was pretty ordinary – things like “sailed for Greymouth” or “arrived at Whangārei Heads”. But there was one with a newspaper clipping attached. It said a ship called the Turihaua had run aground on Great Mercury Island. In the margin, Dad had written that he had been on the wheel when it happened. I guess that meant it was his fault. The clipping said there were two holes in the hull, but it had managed to reach port safely. Mum said it was the first she knew about it!

Before we sailed back to the wharf, Alex gave me a present from his family. It was a camera and two rolls of film. He said it was partly for my



birthday and partly for Dad's anniversary. I can't wait to use it.

Thursday, 7 February – Lisette's letter came today. There were three French stamps on the envelope. I'm sure Madame will be impressed. The letter was quite long and some of the sentences didn't make much sense because her English isn't very good. She seemed pleased with what I wrote about Greenpeace and the protest against nuclear bombs at Mururoa. She's got a little sister called Monique and a much older brother called René who's coming to New Zealand in May for his work. Lisette wrote that he'd like to visit us. I can hardly believe that I'll be meeting a real French man! I'm writing back straight after I close this diary!

Friday, 8 February – It's been a terrible week. I'm so glad it's over. Everything's so complicated at school. There are more rules than I can ever hope to remember.

I'm all emotional because of Dad. And now I find out that Mum's got a boyfriend! Well, not a boyfriend exactly. But she's out on a date. Right now! Tonight! I just don't think it's right to do that kind

of thing so close to the anniversary of Dad's death. And I don't even know the guy!

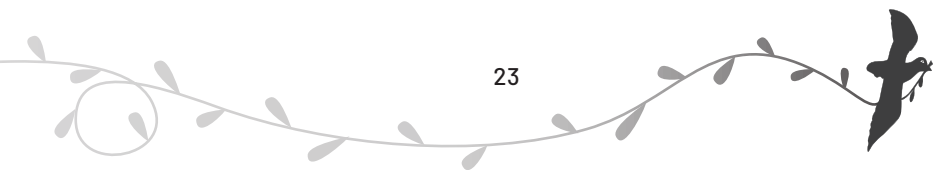
He's someone she met at a Neighbourhood Watch meeting a few weeks ago. I blew up at Mum about it before she left. She just laughed and said it was teenage hormones talking. Unbelievable.

I'm having trouble with my letter to Lisette. It's not that easy writing to someone you don't know who lives in a far-off country. I keep writing things and then crossing them out. Perhaps I'm too strung out. I might leave it until the weekend instead.

Saturday, 9 February – I woke up early to check on Mum. She was still fast asleep after what must have been a late night. She certainly wasn't home when I fell asleep about midnight. I just stood there watching her for a while. Her long, brown hair was all messed up and I could see the outline of her legs under the sheets. I felt a cold marble rising into my throat as I realised she's all I've got. Maybe I was too hard on her last night.

When Mum finally woke up, I took her a cup of tea. She seemed really surprised and pleased.

"I'm sorry for acting like a spoilt brat about your boyfriend," I said.



Mum laughed. “He’s just a friend,” she said. “You have nothing to worry about.” Then she told me I was her “one and only” and gave me a squeeze.

It was the beginning of a really happy day. Mum was relaxed and stayed in her nightie until lunch-time, telling me funny stories about when she was a teenager. She said the girl next door told her how babies were made when she was 13. Mum couldn’t believe it so she went home to ask her mother. Nan would neither confirm nor deny but told Mum to wait until she was older. Mum said she did find out when she was older, but it wasn’t from Nan!

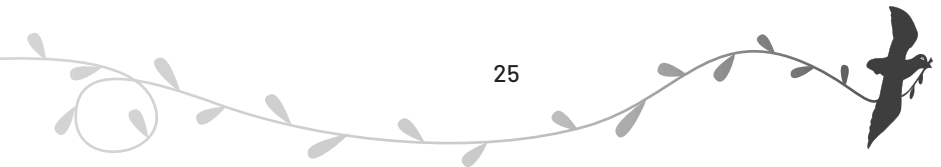
I’m glad Mum and I aren’t like that. She’s given me heaps of stuff to read about sex. If I want to ask her something, I know she’ll give me a straight answer. Not that I talk about it much. It’s far too embarrassing. I’d rather get the answers from my friends.

Sunday, 10 February – I think Mum’s right. I must be hormonal. My moods seem to change quicker than Auckland’s weather. One minute I’m flying high as a kite and the next I’m as low as a worm. I hope my teenage years won’t all be like this. It’s exhausting.

Today I realised that I still hadn't written back to Lisette! Mum and I had such a lovely day yesterday that I forgot all about it. I'll write back to her now since I'm in a writing mood.

Finished. I used my special dolphin writing paper so Lisette will know I'm serious about the environment. It even has a dolphin on the envelope. I said I was looking forward to meeting her brother and I told her about going out on Alex's yacht all the time. I could have gone out on the yacht with them today, but I didn't feel like it. Alex and his parents are really bouncy and I have to be in the right mood for them. I'm off to help Mum in the garden instead.

Monday, 11 February – School isn't so bad after all. I've met a nice Samoan girl called Luana. She just moved into a house up the road from us. We've already got something in common. Her father died in a car accident when she was eight. Luana's mum has to work at three different jobs and Luana has a part-time job as well! She's got four little sisters to help look after. I don't know how she's going to finish all her homework.



Wednesday, 13 February – Our school is like a railway station. There are girls everywhere. And they all look the same because of the uniform – except the ones who break the uniform rules, that is. Some girls do weird things like wearing black fishnet stockings with their uniforms. I reckon they're just looking for trouble.

I've got a new friend at French. Her name is Francine. She laughed when I asked if her name meant she came from France. She likes me so much that she invited me to a sleepover at her house this weekend. Mum's not so sure about it though. She wants to meet Francine's mum first! Why do mothers have to make things so complicated?

Valentine's Day – I've never had a Valentine's Day card. Not from a boy, that is. Mum and Dad gave me one a few years ago. It said I was their beautiful rose and they loved me more than anything else in the world. I keep it in a special treasure box in the back of my wardrobe. But it doesn't count as a *real* Valentine. And now that I'm at a girls' school, my chances of getting a card from a secret admirer are even slimmer.

I gave Alex a Valentine's Day card once. He still

doesn't know it was me. He thinks it was a girl his parents know through Greenpeace, because it mentioned stuff about the environment. I did that deliberately to put him off the scent. It's not that I actually fancy him or anything. I did it to make him feel better because he doesn't have many friends and he looks kind of gawky.

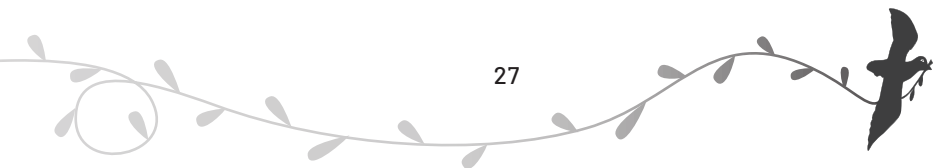
Mum and I went to Francine's house after school. It was a bit embarrassing because it looked like Mum was checking out Francine's family to see if she approved. They live in a huge, old villa on Ponsonby Road with stone pillars at the end of the driveway.

"It looks like they're rolling in dough," said Mum as we drove in.

"You're probably right," I said. "Francine's father is a baker!"

I meant it as a joke but Mum didn't even laugh. I think she was feeling quite tense.

Francine's mum had made custard squares and chocolate caramel slice. Or maybe it was her dad, the baker. Whoever made them, they were delicious. Mum used to bake a lot, but since Dad died she hasn't even made scones. Dad loved her baking, so I guess it brings back sad memories for her.



The meeting seemed to go well. Mum talked to Francine's mum while we played with her little brothers. They're twins – Francine calls them Double Trouble, but that's not their real names. In the end, Mum said yes. I'm going after school tomorrow for as long as Francine's family can put up with me. Yay!

Sunday, 17 February – I forgot to pack my diary when I went to Francine's house. The sleepover was awesome – not that we did much sleeping. We went with Francine's mum to the Video Station and got out three videos. They must be rich. We don't have a video player at home so I was really excited when I found out Francine had one. One video was a cartoon for the twins (real names: Tommy and Davy) and the other two were for us girls. I chose 'Footloose' and Francine chose 'Firestarter'. It's pretty scary.

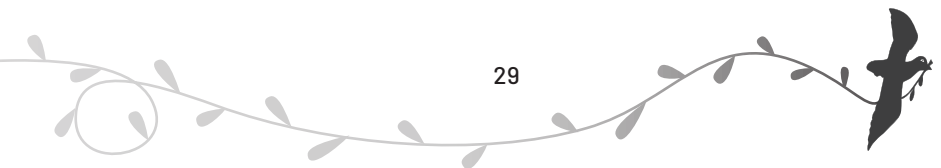
We slept in the lounge in our sleeping bags, which was cool. The trouble was that Francine's dad gets up really early for work. No chance of a sleep in. Saturday we just hung out, putting on makeup and taking artistic photos using my new camera. We even put makeup on Tommy and Davy.

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Francine let me try on a pair of her bubblegum jeans and she brushed my hair up like Madonna's. She's got heaps of amazing clothes. She even said I could keep the jeans because they looked so good on me! I wasn't sure about it, but when I saw all the clothes in Francine's wardrobe I decided it would be okay. After all, they do really suit me. The weather was terrible so we read magazines after that. We watched the videos again on Saturday night but I fell asleep part-way through 'Firestarter'.

Mum came to collect me this morning because she thought I'd been away from home long enough. Maybe she was lonely! She didn't even notice the jeans because she was worried about Gran (that's Dad's mother) who lives in a rest home near Thames. The rain caused terrible flooding there this weekend. We finally got through on the phone, but Gran didn't even know about the flooding. She was in the middle of a game of Mah Jong with her old-lady friends and seemed quite distracted.

I don't think Pravinda's very pleased with me. She found out I was going to Francine's place for the weekend and started acting really strange on Friday. I think she's worried that I might like Francine better than her. Not true.



Monday, 18 February – I was right about Pravinda. I tried to talk to her today, but she said it didn't matter. I feel horrible, but there's not much I can do. Maybe playing Dad's tape will calm me down. I still prefer Madonna or Michael Jackson, but Dad's tape always helps me when I'm feeling confused.

Thursday, 21 February – Pravinda and I are back to normal. I told her she was my most loyal friend and I never wanted to do anything to spoil that. She nearly cried. I offered to go home with her after school to help in the shop. It didn't work out though. Pravinda has visitors from India and she had to go straight home to cook dinner. I feel so sorry for her sometimes.

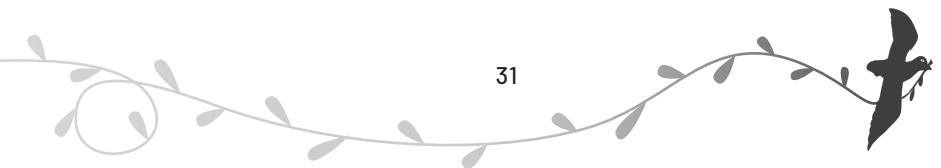
Sunday, 24 February – Alex and I went roller skating this afternoon. We went down to the community centre and then across to the primary school courts. Francine and her dad drove past us. I waved, but I'm not sure if she noticed me.

I'm supposed to be doing my homework right now. Well, I'm sort of doing it. I'm looking through the magazines from the recycling pile to find

pictures of food to stick in my French book. I've just found this cool article about how to take the best photographs. I've ripped it out so I can learn how to improve my photography. There's a gorgeous photograph of Lorraine Downes. She was Miss Universe. I think she's amazing, but Alex says beauty contests are degrading to women.

Monday, 25 February – Trouble! Francine *did* see me roller skating with Alex yesterday. And now heaps of girls have been making fun of me having a boyfriend. I wish! At first I didn't know what they were talking about. Then Pravinda heard Francine telling Sarah some lie about me holding hands with Alex! One girl I don't even know came up and went "kissy, kissy" in my face. It was horrible. I didn't know what to do.

Pravinda said they're just jealous and told me to ignore them. She's met Alex and she knows he's not my boyfriend. I haven't said anything to Francine yet. I was scared I might punch her. Pravinda seemed quite pleased because I hung around with her and Luana all lunchtime, instead of going off with Francine. I was going to talk to Mum about it, but she was complaining about the



mortgage rates going up. I told her I'm happy to get a part-time job to help out. She's still thinking about it.

Tuesday, 26 February – I'm still not talking to Francine. Well, that's not quite true. I had to talk to her because we were standing together outside the science lab. "Been roller skating lately?" she asked.

"It's none of your business," I said.

"Why are you being so aggro?" said Francine.

"You'd be aggro if your friends were spreading lies about you round the school," I said.

Luckily, the teacher arrived before it could turn into a punch-up.

Thursday, 28 February – Mum went out to a concert tonight. Someone I've never heard of called Tom Jones. Alex's mother came over to stay with me until Mum got home. We had a really good talk about the environment. She helps out at the Greenpeace office every week as a volunteer, doing mail-outs and newsletters and fundraising stuff. And she's in a protest group that's trying to organise boycotts of French products because of the French nuclear testing. It's called Le Groupe.

RAINBOW WARRIOR

I asked if she minded me learning French and having a French pen pal. She said that was okay because the French people weren't really to blame. It was their government. I tried to remember what Alex's mum said so I could include it in my next letter to Lisette.

I wish I could talk to Mum about stuff that really matters, like world peace. I said I might help out at the Greenpeace stall in Queen Street one Friday night soon. Not tomorrow though, because the weather lady said it would probably rain.

