



Girlfriend *fiction*

**my life
& other
catastrophes**

ROWENA MOHR



ALLEN & UNWIN

april

Tuesday 19 April 4.30 pm

Okay, let me get one thing straight. This is not going to turn into *Bridget Jones's Diary*. I don't know what I'm supposed to be writing in this stupid thing but I can tell you right now you're not going to get any personal stuff. Mrs Parisi – she's my English teacher – said that this is simply supposed to be an exercise in self-expression and even though we have to hand these diaries in at the end of the year, no one is actually going to read them. Like I'm going to fall for that one!

Tuesday 19 April 4.37 pm

About *Bridget Jones's Diary*. I didn't read the books but I saw the movies. What a loser. As if anyone couldn't tell that Hugh Grant was the sleazebag and Mr Darcy was the nice guy even if he did have terrible taste in jumpers.

Tuesday 19 April 4.42 pm

Actually, the thing that I hated most about those movies – apart from the fact that we were supposed to believe a. that Renee whats-her-face was fat, and b. that men secretly like ginormous underwear on women – is they perpetuate the myth that for every sleazebag there is a nice guy hanging around just waiting to be noticed by the heroine. Yeah, right!

Tuesday 19 April 4.49 pm

Okay, just to prove a point here, let's take a random sample of men in my life and see what happens.

1. Dad: Currently engaged in WWII with ex-wife, my mother. Unemployed, unmotivated and unbelievably tragic. Sees his kids once a fortnight but can't actually afford to take us anywhere we want to go.
2. Chris the Creep, Creepazoid, the Creepster: Mum's new boyfriend. The name says it all, really. Also teaches PE at Wilga Heights so not only do I have to watch him smooching my mother at home like a wrinkled old Romeo, I have to attend his seriously torturous PE classes as well. Honestly, it's like being at boot camp or something!
3. Sucky Little Brother, Ben: Not enough room in this diary to explain what's wrong with him.
4. Mr Dixon or 'Dicko' as he is known: Gay as. Coaches netball!! Also teaches music and directs the school musical every year.

5. Ivan the Smellable: Disgusting fart-machine. The reason they never found any Weapons of Mass Destruction is because they are still hidden up Ivan's butt.
6. Vince Cuocolo: School drug dealer and standover guy. Thinks he's Marlon Brando in *The Godfather* and smokes sixty cigarettes a day trying to talk like him. Is developing a reassuringly fatal-sounding cough instead.
7. Matt Nguyen: Not called 'Door Matt' for nothing. Moons around after Marisa Mendoza (Big-haired teen queen! So stupid she actually thinks *Mean Girls* is a documentary!) like he actually finds her attractive or something!! Needless to say, she wouldn't wipe her feet on him.

So you see what I mean. If my life was a multi-million-dollar box office blockbuster (Ha!) there is not the slightest possibility that one of these prime specimens would turn out to be the nice guy.

Tuesday 19 April 4.53 pm

Whoops. Sorry, Mrs Parisi. Guess I shouldn't have put in that stuff about Dicko – but you know it's true.

Wednesday 20 April 4.23 pm

Haven't got a clue what to write about today. Mrs Parisi said that we should try and write something every day even if it's only to say that you've got nothing to write about. So for today – nothing, nada, zip.

Thursday 21 April

See Wednesday.

Friday 22 April

Long weekend coming up. Yaayy!

Saturday 23 April 9.14 am

Chris the Creep showed up on the doorstep at about six o'clock this morning to ask if we wanted to go tenpin bowling!! As if! If Mum and SLB want to go and play happy families with Super-Jock they can do it without me. Besides, what if someone SAW me!

And anyway, what is *with* this guy? It's like he has just moved in and taken over my whole life. First he turns up at school in the middle of term to replace Mr Estrella, our old PE teacher, then two weeks later he and Mum are going out on a date. I can't escape him. And there really is something creepy about him. He's always taking private calls on his mobile and sneaking off into another room so no one can hear what he's saying.

Saturday 23 April 9.27 am

Rami rang and we're going op-shopping. Rami's my best friend. She is an anti-globalist, socialist-feminist eco-warrior. And she plays the sitar! To be honest she's not great to go shopping with because she always has to remind you about the evils of capitalist consumerism and Third World sweat shops. It kind of takes the fun out of it. But op-shopping is cool. Rami says that buying second-hand stuff is karmically

brilliant because not only are we conserving the earth's resources by recycling, we are also subverting the capitalistic conformity of the global fashion machine AND expressing our individuality. Me? I just love retro.

Saturday 23 April 4.54 pm

Op-shopping a bit of a disaster. Found this FABULOUS old fur swing jacket – totally divine – but Rami wouldn't let me buy it because she says wearing fur is environmentally irresponsible! I mean, hellooo? The animal has been dead for about fifty years! Honestly, she is such a pain sometimes!

Anyway, after that we decided to go and see a movie. Rami wanted to see some depressing Russian movie called *Winter Harvest* about a family who, one-by-one, get sent to the gulags by Stalin but I made her go and see Johnny Depp's new movie instead.

And do you know, I think she was even upset about that because she hardly spoke to me at all on the way home. Which is just really pathetic because what she doesn't realise – because I haven't actually told her yet, in fact I haven't told anybody yet – is that I have decided that I am going to be a famous actress – like Kirsten Dunst or Lindsay Lohan – and it is therefore practically research for me to go and see the latest movies!

I have been thinking about becoming a famous actress for a while now – ever since Mrs Parisi told me that I have a real talent for drama! – but the only problem is, I don't know how to go about it. I mean, it's not like I live in Hollywood or London or somewhere. How do you go about becoming

famous if you come from a dump like Wilga Heights? I've probably got a better chance of ending up in gaol.

Saturday 23 April 8.41 pm

Just to prove to you how totally unglamorous my life really is, here is a transcript of a conversation that took place at our house earlier this evening.

SLB: What's for dinner, Mum?

Mum: Spaghetti Bolognese.

Me: Again?

Mum: You don't like it, Erin, you know where the kitchen is.

SLB: Spag bol's my favourite. Can I set the table for you, Mum?

Mum: Thank you, darling. Heaven must be missing an angel tonight. (*Gagging sounds from me.*)
I hope you've finished all your homework, Erin, because you certainly haven't done any of the chores I asked you to do.

Me: Yeah, of course I have. Almost.

Mum: Chris, could you drain the pasta for me, please? Look, young lady, you'd better pull your socks up. I do not want a repeat of last year's results.

SLB: Oh, Mum, I forgot to tell you. I got ninety-eight

per cent on my maths test. (*Unexplained sucking sounds!!*)

Mum: Really? That's great, darling. See, Erin, all it takes is a bit of application.

SLB: Ow! Mum, Erin kicked me.

Mum: Really, Erin! Grow up.

Creepazoid: Your Mum's right, you know, Erin. From now on every exam counts.

Me: Excuse me, but what business is this of yours exactly?

Mum: How dare you speak to Chris like that. Apologise immediately. (*Silence – punctuated only by loud glaring between mother and daughter.*)

Mum: Erin, I'm warning you.

Creepazoid: It's all right, Janet. Don't push it.

Mum: No, it's not all right. Apologise to Chris right this minute or go to your room. (*More glaring. Sound of chair being slowly scraped across lino. Footsteps heading out of kitchen and down hallway. Sound of door being slammed shut.*)

Sunday 24 April 6.17 pm

Mum made me take Sucky Little Brother into the city because he wanted to see some nerdy exhibition at the

museum about the history of postage stamps. I'm not kidding! SMSed Rami to see if she wanted to come too but she was taking part in an urban revegetation project somewhere and couldn't make it. (Rami is very committed to the environment and is always trying to raise my environmental consciousness. Not that I don't care about the environment and stuff but I don't see how I am single-handedly supposed to make the Australian government sign the Kyoto Protocol or stop the Japanese from killing whales for 'research'. I mean, I can't even convince my own mother to start a compost heap. She told me that if she wanted to live next to a pile of rotting vegetables she'd move into one of the dumpsters out the back of the local supermarket!)

Anyway, was wandering around the museum totally bored and trying to pretend that I wasn't related to SLB when I noticed that this guy seemed to be following me like some kind of psycho stalker. Every time I turned around he was there pretending to be all interested in a case full of stuffed wombats or something, but I was on to him. Just as we were getting close to the exit, I grabbed SLB by the elbow and dragged him off behind a display about the life-cycle of the cane toad. My plan was to wait there for Stalker Guy to come charging round the corner trying to catch up with us and then jump out and ask him what he thought he was doing following me around the museum. Nothing happened. I waited for about five minutes and he still hadn't shown up so I stuck my head out around the cane toad's butt to look for him when suddenly I heard this voice really close behind me.

'Hey, don't you go to Wilga Heights?'

I swear I screamed so loud the dinosaur bones hanging from the ceiling started to rattle! I spun around and there's Psycho Stalker Guy leaning against the giant fibreglass tadpole trying to look all cool and un-stalkerlike. What a tool! 'Hey,' I snapped back, 'do you always follow people around museums like some kind of weirdo?'

Psycho Stalker Guy looked at me like I was the psycho one. 'I was talking to him, actually.' He pointed at SLB. 'Aren't you the guy who's started up the radio station? I wanted to talk to you about maybe putting together a segment featuring original music. Stuff actually written by the students. What do you think?'

How do you like that? The two of them then proceeded to totally ignore me for the next ten minutes and crap on about how fantastic it would be to give the kids at Wilga Heights 'a voice'. I mean, get real. How many musical geniuses do they really think they're going to find lurking among the dope fiends and no-talent desperadoes that populate our school? I must have actually said that out loud because Psycho Stalker Guy suddenly turned to me and asked, 'What about you?'

'What about me, what?'

'You look like the creative type,' he said sarcastically, looking at my new leggings with the purple skulls on them. 'Do you sing or write music or anything?'

'Actually, I'm more of an actress.' Well, it will be true. One day.

Psycho Stalker Guy smiled like he thought that was pretty funny. 'Really? That's interesting. I don't remember seeing you in any of the school shows before.'

‘That’s because I’ve always been too busy before.’

SLB started sniggering and I made a mental note to hurt him on the way home.

‘Well, you should audition this year. It’s great fun.’ Oh well, if Psycho Stalker Guy thinks it’s fun . . . !

Out loud I said, ‘I’ll think about it.’

And Psycho Stalker Guy sauntered off – probably to find another victim by pretending to be interested in her brother!

It’s a shame really, because he was kinda cute!

Monday 25 April 10.55 am – Anzac Day Holiday

Oh my god! I don’t believe it! This can’t be happening. I got up this morning and there’s you-know-who standing in the kitchen WEARING MUM’S DRESSING-GOWN!! How could she? What about Dad? What about us? I mean, she’s only known the guy for a month! What does she think she’s doing? Doesn’t she realise that this could scar her children for life? Well, maybe not Ben – but me? And I know Dad was no George Clooney – but Creepazoid?

What am I going to do? How am I going to make her see sense? When Creepazoid went to the bathroom I gave Mum this look like ‘How could you?’ but she pretended she didn’t understand and asked me if the milk was off!! It is so obvious that she doesn’t care about us at all and instead is only selfishly pursuing her own desires.

Monday 25 April 5.21 pm

Trapped in room for rest of day since Creepazoid appears to

have taken up permanent residence in our house. Only communication with the outside world – SMS.

Me: TOTL disaster! HELP!!
Rami: WTF?
Me: Mum & Crpzd had sex 1st nyt!
Rami: U serz?
Me: I swear!
Rami: OMG!
Me: Wat do I do?
Rami: Mayb just a fling?
Me: Wat about my dad?
Rami: Not looking good :(
Me: My lyf is ova! :0

No response. Texted her again. Nothing. How can she desert me at a time like this?

Tuesday 26 April 7.45 pm

Day from hell! Not only did Creepazoid give me a cheery wave this morning on his way to the staffroom – IN FRONT OF EVERYBODY – thereby making me want to throw up AND completely destroying what little ‘cool’ I possess among my fellow students, SLB was called up before the whole school to receive ANOTHER award.

He already has – I’m not kidding – an entire wall of his room devoted to trophies, awards and certificates of appreciation for everything from raising money to save the blue-bottomed barking tree frog or something, to

runner-up in the Young Australian Investor of the Year. This latest one is for setting up the Wilga Heights AM radio station or – wait for it! – WHAM Radio. Somehow he managed to get some old broadcasting equipment for free, the school gave him an office, and before you know it the guy's a media mogul before his fourteenth birthday. Even more embarrassing, it looks like Psycho Stalker Guy was telling the truth!

To top off a perfect morning, Kerry Fennessy, this mate of Ivan the Smellable's, asked me if I wanted to go to his brother's twenty-first on Saturday night!! He tried to entice me by telling me that his dad was providing three kegs of beer and that he himself had booked the stripper. No doubt Ivan will be performing his world-famous fart solo – 'The Wind Beneath My Wings' – to round off the evening's entertainment. I felt even more flattered when I discovered that I was about the fourteenth girl in our year that he'd asked. Imagine? Me? Number fourteen on KF's list of hot babes!

Unbelievably, the day continued to head right round the S-bend and I spent my lunch hour re-doing my art assignment. (It's not fair! Some beret-wearing 'genius' paints a canvas dead-white and it gets hung in the National Gallery. I do it and I get detention!) I needed a serious caffeine hit after the day from hell so arranged to meet Rami for coffee after school. We went across the road to Le Cafeteria as usual. It's this really cool (well, as cool as we get in Wilga Heights) retro-style cafe with laminex tables and lounge chairs that don't match. The waiters are all arty types who look like they spend a lot of time drinking red wine and making short but incomprehensible black-and-white films.

I bet they don't get detention just because their art teacher can't take a joke!

Had to buy Rami two double-decaf skinny soy cappuccinos and a bio-dynamic carrot-and-yoghurt slice. Her allowance all ends up in Africa somewhere because she sponsors about three little kids so they can go to school and don't have to eat rats off the garbage heap. She's very noble. Mine mostly goes on cappuccinos. I know that seems like a lot of cappuccinos but that's probably because I have to buy Rami's cappuccinos as well because she's already sent all her money to the Africans.

Asked Rami why she didn't respond to my SMS yesterday and she made some excuse about having to turn her phone off because she was visiting her grandfather in hospital.

'But I really needed to talk to you. Can't you see that this is a major crisis for me?'

'I'm sorry, Er. I didn't know Grandad was going to get sick at the same time as you were having a crisis.'

'Well, what am I going to do about it? You've got to help me. Imagine if they actually decided to get married or something?'

Rami gave me this funny look over the top of her coffee cup.

'Look, play it cool, okay? You don't know what's going to happen. Your mum's probably just lonely.'

'Lonely?'

'Yeah. Mums get lonely too, you know. I mean, how long have your parents been divorced now?'

'Only five months.'

'But they were separated for a long time before that, weren't they?'

'Yeah.'

'So she's probably just lonely. Now calm down and pay attention. I've got some really good gossip for you.'

And then she told me that Serena Immas told her that Marisa Mendoza is going to audition for *Australian Idol*! Apparently it's this big secret except the whole school already knows. Oh, God, imagine if she actually gets in? She'll be even more unbearable than she normally is.

Rami and I call her Mandozer – you know, like bulldozer except she knocks over men instead of trees. And she has this little gang that always follows her around – like the Pink Ladies in *Grease* – and we call them the Dozey Doras! And – this is just to give you an idea of how stupid these people are – guess what they call us? You'd think that with names like Ramiya Cabot and Erin Costello they'd have come up with something better than 'Cabbage-head' and 'Urine'! I mean, I know Rami's got a round face but she certainly doesn't look anything like a cabbage. To be honest, she looks much more like one of the muppets. Especially when she laughs because then her head nearly splits in half! In a very attractive way, of course.

Wednesday 27 April 5.16 pm

Trying desperately not to think about my mother and Creepazoid having sex but is extremely difficult when I have to actually have classes with him. He is such a disgusting hypocrite. This morning in PE he sent Serena Immas home

because she was wearing nothing but a thong and a butterfly tattoo under her uniform, but every time she bent over to pick up the ball his eyes nearly popped out of his head. Creep! I bet he only teaches PE so he gets to perv on all the girls. What is my mother thinking?

Serena's excuse was pretty good, too. 'Sorry, sir. It's just so comfortable I forgot I was wearing it.' I think that means she has just graduated from bimchette to fully-fledged bimbo. Question: What do you call a group of bimbos? A bubble-head of bimbos? Or is it simply the case that birds of a feather-brain flock together again?

Thursday 28 April 4.15 pm

Spent the last class being asphyxiated by Ivan the Smellable. The boys all thought it was hilarious, of course. We were listening to this piece of music called *Flight of the Bumblebee* and Ivan decided the brass section needed a bit of help. Dicko, completely oblivious as usual, doesn't hear anything – but it doesn't take him long to smell it. So then he says, 'Someone in this room has foul bowels'. With brilliant timing, Ivan lets off a whole mass of stinkers just to get Dicko up to speed. Everyone else nearly passed out, but Rami and I were well prepared.

Last week we went to the chemist after school and bought a whole box of paper masks – you know the kind you always see Japanese commuters wearing so they don't get germs from all the other passengers? Anyway, Rami and I start handing out the masks pretending we're flight attendants and demonstrating the correct way to put them on.

Everyone's desperate for a mask because the smell's so bad but then Ivan steals a couple from the box and he's wearing them round the classroom like a bra, still buzzing and farting for all he's worth and Dicko's yelling at everyone to sit down and shut up and everything turns into total chaos.

And Mum wonders why my marks are so bad. I mean, how am I supposed to be an academic over-achiever when most of my classes end up like rehearsals for an under-funded French-Canadian circus?

Speaking of rehearsals, Dicko announced auditions for the school musical today. I really, really want to be in it this year but I kind of forgot about the fact that, to be in a musical, you have to be able to sing. I am never going to get my career as a famous actress started at this rate!

Friday 29 April 4.50 pm

The cops turned up at school today, dragged Vince Cuocolo out of geography and started frisking him in the corridor. Apparently they'd had a tip-off about Vince's brother Tony – he's the brains of the drug-dealing operation; well, it wouldn't be Vince, would it? – and were just checking to see what little brother knew. But then, while they're roughing him up, Creepazoid comes storming down the corridor demanding to know what's going on and mouthing off about Vince's rights and stuff. He and the head cop have a little chat, they let Vince go, and two minutes later he's back in geography class pretending he understands the socio-political implications of artificial population control. Only at Wilga Heights!

Saturday 30 April 2.20 pm

As bored as it's possible to be and still be conscious. It's our weekend with Dad and there is absolutely nothing to do. Can't go over to Rami's because Dad won't drive me – says the car's in the shop but it's been in the shop for months! Can't go to the movies coz Dad says he can't afford it at the moment but maybe next time. Yeah, right! Like he'll have found a job in the next two weeks. He says there's not much call for skilled furniture-makers at the moment – everyone's buying cheap crappy stuff from IKEA. He's always got an excuse. Every time we come over, he's just sitting on the couch watching TV and feeling sorry for himself. It's like he's lost the plot totally. Mum's not too pleased with him either because he's not paying child support so the vibe between the two of them could start a new Ice Age. The only one who doesn't seem to mind the whole messed-up situation is Ben. He and Dad have gone across the road to the park to play footy like everything's just a-okay. Sometimes I think that as long as men have got a football (or a remote control) in one hand and a beer in the other, they really don't need anything else.

Kept thinking about what Rami said about Mum being lonely. I'm sorry, but it's no excuse.