

a  
Girlfriend  fiction  
Letter  
from  
Luisa

ROWENA MOHR

  
ALLEN & UNWIN

# Chapter 1

Dear M

Hi there

OKAY, THIS IS WEIRD! THIS is, in fact, a little bit creepy. I don't think I can do this.

Please don't be offended. It's not that I don't *want* to write you a letter – it's more that I don't quite know what to say or where to start. I mean, this was Jane's idea. She thinks maybe there's a whole lot of stuff that I wish I could talk to you about or something. She said it might make me feel better. But that seems a bit dumb. I just write a letter and suddenly everything will be okay? If that was the case everybody would be doing it. The universe would be choked with letters. People wouldn't have time to go to work or have babies or go shopping – they'd be too busy writing letters to solve all their problems instantaneously.

I guess the other reason I'm not so keen on writing this letter is because I don't have anything good to tell you. In fact, I'm in a lot of trouble at the moment because of these really stupid things I did. I don't think it's a good way to start a letter, *Hey, guess what – I'm a total screw-up! I got suspended from school, had my Biology teacher arrested on terrorist charges, nearly killed about fifty people – oh, and I set fire to a poor defenceless dog.*

And to be honest, I'm not that thrilled about going back over everything that's happened, because it makes me think maybe everyone's right. Maybe I *am* a complete loony. Maybe I *do* deserve to be locked up.

But you know what? Right up until last Saturday – the day of the fete – I was doing all right. It's true. Everything at home was fine – I mean, I had that place running like clockwork – and school was okay. I wasn't dweeb of the week or Miss Popularity, but somewhere in the middle, same as always.

Jane also said everything that happened at the fete was really just a symptom of something else. Like I had some kind of disease. I think she meant that it wasn't really my fault because – let's face it – it would take an evil genius to plan all that stuff. And even though some people seem to think I'm pretty evil, I'm not *that* smart. Like I said before, I'm just your normal, average sixteen-year-old and so totally not some kind of teenage Osama bin Laden. (I do feel bad about Mr McGregor, but at least they dropped the terrorist charges when they realised it was all a big misunderstanding.)

Okay, maybe Jane's right. Maybe if you had been here and I could have talked to you, it mightn't have ended up quite

like it did. But I don't know if even that would have helped.

I saw a DVD once called *The Butterfly Effect*. It was about the idea that minor, seemingly unimportant actions can have a much greater effect than you would think. For instance, a butterfly flapping its wings on one side of the world could start an avalanche thousands of miles away. Even though it's hard to comprehend that such a tiny insignificant thing could possibly make a difference, that one unbelievably small action might put in motion a chain of events that could cause a major life-threatening disaster.

And that's kind of what happened with the fete. Because, you see, it all started with one tiny insignificant thing – Jet Lucas.

## Chapter 2

JET LUCAS WAS THIS TOTALLY hot guy in Year Twelve and the embarrassing fact is that I was in love with him. He was the kind of guy who made girls suddenly buckle at the knees and turn into piles of giggling flubber whenever he walked past. I'm not talking just a little bit cute here, I'm talking drop-dead, cardiac-arrest, call-the-crash-cart beautiful!

Besides being gorgeous, Jet Lucas was also an awesome singer-songwriter. Some people were already comparing him to the lead singer from Death Cab for Cutie, only cuter. Rumour had it he was about to sign a major recording deal with Rocket Records. And my dream – my totally delusional fantasy – was that one day I would get to be with Jet Lucas. And he would want to be with me.

Of course, I'd never actually spoken to him. He was two

years older than me, for a start. Plus he had an entire harem of adoring nitwits who drooled over him every lunchtime and after school, souveniring his chocolate bar wrappers or anything else he touched. Double-plus he only ever went out with older women – cool muso chicks who were already at uni or had their own bands – or that’s what I’d heard anyway. Tiahna Theodoros said she once pashed him behind the bike sheds, but I’m pretty sure she was lying. And Melissa Kravitz claimed to have actually *dated* him – but I didn’t believe that either. The fact is, Jet Lucas could have had any woman he wanted – probably even a supermodel – so what chance did I have? Nil. Zero. Zilch. Wipe-out!

Until, that is, Mr McGregor told me Jet Lucas was going to sing at the Motherwell High Twilight Fete.

Do you remember Abbie’s nickname for me when I was little? *La sombrita*, ‘the little shadow’? I used to follow Dad everywhere, even into the toilet if he forgot to lock the door. Everything Dad did, I had to do too. He played guitar – so I begged and begged and begged until he bought me a teeny-weeny guitar the size of a ukulele. I loved that guitar. Abbie embroidered a little strap for me so I could wear it around all day, and at night I’d take it to bed with me and cuddle it until I fell asleep.

As soon as I could play a few chords, Dad helped me write my first song. I think it was called ‘*Amo a los perritos, a los gatitos y las hadas, pero amo a mi papá también*’ – or ‘I love puppies and kittens and fairies, but I love my dad too’. It was

a real hit, as I recall – with Dad, at least. He was so proud of me that he recorded the dumb song and would play it on his Discman to anyone who'd listen. He'd stop people in the street and say, 'Listen to this. My daughter wrote this and she's only six. And she's bilingual!' How embarrassing.

When Dad first built the recording studio in the back shed, we'd spend all weekend out there together, playing and writing and recording songs. Every Sunday afternoon, we'd have a barbeque and invite lots of people over for a big jam session. All Dad's old muso friends would turn up with their guitars. Abbie would play the castanets and stamp her feet in time to the music like a real flamenco dancer. Even Nina would join in – twirling around and around in that dumb fairy tutu she never took off, until she got so giddy she fell over.

And then when I was a bit older, when Dad had some big project that he had to finish, he'd take me to his work and show me all the pro recording equipment and how microphones and mixers worked and that kind of thing. I'd sit there watching while he'd compose corny jingles for margarine, or background music for community service announcements about depression showing some sad old bloke gazing across the paddocks trying not to cry because all his sheep had died in the drought.

It was pretty lame stuff, but I didn't care, because in between the jingles Dad would tell me about the bands he'd been in and all the semi-famous rock stars he'd met. Of course, I didn't know who most of them were, but I do remember him telling me that he once played with a famous kids' band

– before they became a famous kids’ band (I think they were called The Christmas Beetles or something) – and how one Christmas Beetle had accidentally-on-purpose spilt beer all over Dad’s mixing desk so Dad’s band sounded crap and his band sounded great. How that explains why they went on to become internationally famous, mega-rich children’s entertainers and Dad ended up working at Sound Advice, I’m not sure. But sometimes I couldn’t help feeling that deep down Dad secretly wished, not that he was a rich and famous children’s entertainer, but that he was still a real songwriter instead of just some guy who made margarine sound edible.

But all this is beside the point – which is, of course, that I know everything there is to know about sound-teching. Which meant that suddenly I had the perfect excuse to actually *talk* to Jet Lucas in person. All I had to do was rock up and say, ‘Hi, Jet, today is your lucky day, because I’m the perfect person to be your sound engineer at the fete.’ Simple, yes?

Jet spent almost every lunchtime sitting under the same tree beside the oval composing songs on his guitar. And every lunchtime he was surrounded by a gaggle of Year Seven and Eight girls salivating in unison like an entire kennel of Pavlov’s dogs, so it was pretty easy to find him – I just followed the trail of drool.

I was a bit nervous about talking to him for the first time, I have to admit, but this was my big chance and I was not going to let it get away.

Scattering dribbling ninnies left and right, I marched up and stood there – so close I could have reached out and fondled if not him, then at least his guitar – waiting for him to finish writing in his notebook.

After about two minutes, he stopped writing and began to strum a chord sequence on the guitar. The ninnies behind me were whispering and giggling – and not in a nice way – so I said, a little shakily, ‘Um, hi Jet.’

Still he kept on playing. He was trying to work out a chord progression from the verse to the bridge, but I could tell he was struggling with it. I waited another minute or so, then tried again.

‘Hi, Jet ... hello?’

Finally, he squinted up at me.

‘My name’s Luisa. Luisa Linley. Hi.’ I tried not to sound too gushy and excited. This was a business proposition, after all. I stuck out my hand like I’d seen Dad do when he was meeting a new client.

Jet looked at my hand as though it was covered in dog poo.

‘You’re standing in my light,’ he said.

‘Oh, sorry.’ I moved to the left. ‘Is that better?’

He just grunted and kept strumming.

‘Actually,’ I said, ‘I’ve just heard that you’re going to be performing at the fete – which is fantastic. I’ve been telling Mr McGregor for ages that he should organise something so the school community could get behind you and really show their support—’

‘What ...’

‘I said, I’ve been telling Mr McGregor—’

‘... do you want?’

‘Oh, well, um, I know that you’re going to need someone to handle your audio requirements for the fete, someone totally professional who can make you sound good ... Not that you don’t already sound good,’ I babbled, realising what I’d just said. ‘I mean, you’re fantastic. You could sing into a tin can and you’d still sound great.’

He was looking at me now like I was a total doofus, which just made me say even stupider things.

‘You’re brilliant, everybody knows that. In fact, you probably don’t even need a sound engineer – you could just do the whole concert unplugged – but if you do want a sound guy, I mean *person*, I could do it for you because my dad used to play with The Christmas Beetles and he taught me ...’ I fizzled out as I realised:

- A how lame I sounded
- B that Jet Lucas had already stopped listening
- C that I was blathering away to myself like some kind of monument to doofusness.

Jet had gone straight back to worrying away at the same chord sequence, and without even thinking about what I was doing – and perhaps with just a touch of venom – I said, ‘You should try dropping down into the relative minor at the bridge there. It might give the song more depth.’

Jet froze. And so did I, as the seriousness of the crime

I had just committed became apparent – kind of like giving the Pope advice on the best way to run the Catholic Church, or telling the Queen how to improve her royal wave. My first instinct was to run away as fast as I could and hope he hadn't heard me, but I seemed to be paralysed from the mouth down. I couldn't do anything but stand there staring at Jet Lucas staring back at me.

Finally, he spoke. 'What did you say?'

'N ... nothing. I'm sorry.'

'You said something about the relative minor.'

*Great, I thought. Now he's going to humiliate me in front of his little fan club.*

'Um ... well, yes. The song's in C major, right? So to make it sound more complex ... um, you could drop down to the relative minor key – A minor – at the bridge.'

I thought he might start laughing or at least point out the obviousness of my not-so-brilliant advice, but he just sat there tapping his fingers against his guitar as if he was seriously considering my suggestion.

'What was your name again?'

'Luisa Linley.'

'You're that Spanish chick, right?'

Behind me, I swear, there was a collective gasp from the ninnies – obviously astounded that Jet Lucas actually knew who I was. They weren't the only ones. But it took me about two and a half seconds to realise that this wasn't necessarily a good thing. How did he know who I was? What had he heard about me?

‘Half-Spanish.’ I stammered. ‘My mother ...’

He didn’t let me finish. He grunted once more in that vaguely Neanderthal way he had, picked up his guitar and his notebook, and walked off.

The ninnies started sniggering again as I stood staring at the tree, trying to look as if I was actually very interested in bark.