

INVERCARGILL, 2020

Wow, I thought I knew a bit about the dawn raids, but this is HUGE. It happened to my OWN family and I never knew! I had no idea that Granfia and her family had been dawn-raided. She was even a Polynesian Panther!



When COVID-19 lockdown hits Aotearoa in 2020, Jeremy and his whānau retreat to his grandparents' quiet farm near Invercargill. And while spending more time with his grandmother, Jeremy discovers she has an intriguing past.

Fifty years after the dawn raids of the 1970s, Sofia Savea's stories of activism and Polynesian Panther life blaze into reality for Jeremy and awaken a sense of purpose in him that leads to his own unexpected journey. Jeremy begins to see how much words and actions mean – not just to his gran – but to an entire generation who never stopped waiting to be heard . . . and who deserve an APOLOGY.

In this thought-provoking sequel to *Dawn Raid*, Jeremy continues the fight alongside his feisty grandmother.

MY NEW ZEALAND STORY is a series of vividly imagined accounts of life in the past ... making history come alive.



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THE APOLOGY



PAULINE (VAELUAGA) SMITH

MY NEW ZEALAND STORY



DAWN RAID

THE APOLOGY



PAULINE (VAELUAGA) SMITH
with **BROOKLYN TAYLOR**

MY NEW ZEALAND STORY

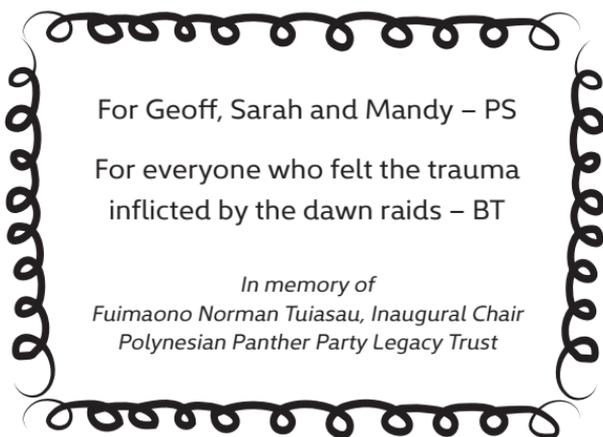
DAWN RAID
THE APOLOGY

PAULINE (VAELUAGA) SMITH
with Brooklyn Taylor

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Dawn Raid: The Apology – Sample Chapters



While the events described and some of the characters in this book are based on actual historical events and real people, Jeremy McRae is a fictional character, created by the author, and his story is a work of fiction.

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WEDNESDAY, 11 March 2020

Today was weird. I was getting ready for school when there was a knock on the front door. I opened it and our dog was standing there (no, she didn't knock) beside a police officer. The first thing she said was "Your dog farted."

I was a bit surprised, and said, "Sorry, officer, I didn't know that was a crime."

She got a bit flustered and said, "It's not a crime, I just didn't want you to think it was me".

I paused, then said, "Okay, thanks for letting us know."

At that moment Mum came round the corner and said, "Oh, hello, can I help you?"

Before I could stop myself, I blurted, "She came to tell us the dog farted."

Mum raised her eyebrow and told me not to be so silly. Thankfully the police officer jumped in and explained what had just happened.

Mum just said, "Oh," then asked if there was anything else. And there was. It turns out a car was broken into on our street last night. The police lady wanted to know if we heard or saw anything and warned us to be careful with security. I thought it was more interesting that she busted our dog for farting!

Our English teacher has ‘encouraged’ us to keep a diary. She thinks we should take turns sharing our entries in class. DOUBT IT! Anyway, I’ve decided to use it to record what’s happening in the world around me. My grandmother Sofia (a.k.a. Granfia) always talks about the importance of keeping a record of our experiences, I think she’ll be proud of me for starting this. So . . .

I’m Jeremy McRae. I turned 14 on the 1st of March and I’m in Year 9.

THURSDAY, 12 March

Spaghetti Bolognese for tea tonight. YUM! Plus salad – not yum.

Diego was in bed early (he’s only 5) so we all played cards after tea. We haven’t done that for ages. We played Euchre. Me and Mum were a team and Ruby and Dad. It’s good now that Ruby knows how to play too. It took her a while to learn because she’s only 9 but she’s pretty good at it now. Didn’t matter though cause me and Mum blitzed them 3–0. Then Dad said, “How about we play one more and losers make hot drinks and snacks.”

So . . . Mum made a platter with strawberries, crackers and cheese, and I made the hot drinks. I hate how that happens – we had been doing really well until there was actually something to play for.

While we were playing cards, our dog Bell was asleep under the table. Ruby screwed up her face. "Yuck, Bell farted again." Me and Mum looked at each other and cracked up laughing. Dad and Ruby couldn't figure out why it was so funny coz Bell's quite old and she does that a lot. When we stopped laughing Mum tried to tell the story about the police lady. Every time she got close to telling it she would crack up again so I had to tell the story. Mum said she found it so funny because she could imagine the surprise on everyone's faces while it was happening. Dad and Ruby didn't find it as funny – guess you had to be there. Dad did try slipping in a joke, "Looks like Bell's bowels are ringing again." He laughed, none of us thought it was very funny, but we gave courtesy laughs coz Dad likes that.

There's been lots of talk at school and on the news about a thing called COVID-19. It's some kind of disease or something, and it's killing heaps of people around the world. Yesterday the World Health Organisation declared it an official pandemic. New Zealand has closed its borders to foreigners. It's making people do crazy things like buying all the toilet paper and canned food. Hope it doesn't come here to Southland. I think we're safe at the bottom of the world.

My friends are coming over this weekend. Gonna have a late birthday celebration as we were away on my real birthday.

FRIDAY, 13 March

In English class today Ms Anderson asked us what we knew about keeping a diary. Our group suggested *The Diary of a Wimpy Kid*. Another group said *The Diary of Anne Frank*. Miss said they were good examples and asked us to share the features of each. We didn't know a lot about Anne Frank, so she filled us in. Then we did a mind map to look at the similarities and differences between the diaries. Finally, we did a summary about the purpose of a diary. Our group thought diaries were to make your everyday life sound interesting and to make people laugh or maybe cry, then we decided they just need to make you feel or understand something.

Miss told us we did an excellent job at investigating diary features and comparing diary styles. She's pretty clever at letting us figure these things out for ourselves. It feels like we're always learning with her, and we don't even notice.

She chose three of us to share an entry from our diaries. Of course she picked me. I say 'curse' not 'course' because these things always happen to me. Jay went first, his was about smashing us on the game. Miss asked us to give him some feedback and feedforward.

Jason said, "My feedback is, you need to fact-check your information mate, and my feedforward is we'll smash you next time!"

Everyone made hooting noises and Miss smiled. We like her – she lets us be ourselves but keeps everyone in line in a good way.

Jimmy was next, his entry was about the view from his window looking at the piles of woodchips in Bluff Harbour. Miss thought it was almost poetic. I think Jimmy liked that.

Me next, so I chose my first entry about Bell and the police. Everyone was laughing hard out when I finished.

Miss said, “No need to give feedback. The reaction from everyone was the best feedback you could get.” It felt good that everyone had enjoyed my writing.

She asked us to think about a title we could give each entry. I thought this was a good idea to give a clue about what’s coming up. So I called my first entry ‘The one with the illegal fart.’ Stole that idea from the TV show *Friends* where every episode starts with ‘The one . . .’

Entry no 2: The one where Dad and Ruby hustle us.

Entry no 3: The one with the curse to be chosen (that’s this entry).

I thought diary writing was going to be boring but so far, it’s been okay.

J-Club’s coming over tonight. Mum is making us chop suey and some snacks, hope it’s chip and dip. We’ll do gaming and stuff. We’ve also planned a secret thing, but I can’t write about it here because only the J-Club knows about it.

This is who is in the J-Club:

Jay – his real name is Jayme, he’s the mysterious one who loves UFC, he’s always shadow boxing. We’ve been friends the longest. We started the J-Club at primary school.

Joshua – he’s in the First XI for football and cricket. He’s also smart and could be Head Boy one day, but he’s a procrastinator. (Good word, eh? I know it because I’ve been called that too.)

Jason – always jokes around. He knows how to get his friends to share their work with him – you’ll hear him say, “Can you just send that to me so I can blueprint it?”

Jimmy – we call him the Crown Prince of Bluff. His parents have a fishing boat and they’re really rich. Heard of Bluff oysters? In fancy restaurants I’ve heard they sell them for about \$5 or \$6 – just for one oyster!

Johnson – well, he is kind of in the J-Club. He was the third member after me and Jay but he moved to Auckland about three years ago. Not just him, his whole family moved for his mum’s job. We keep him in the chat but it’s hard for him to be part of things.

Jeremy – ME! The cool leader! Ha-ha, not really. I like music, gaming, sleeping and food.



SUNDAY, 15 March

The one where A LOT happened!!

Woah, A LOT has happened.

1. Mum made a mean chop suey for the J-Club. There was chip and dip plus Twisties, lollies, caramel popcorn, and cheerios with tomato sauce and fizzy drink. The J-Club loved it.
2. We played Fortnite until we were sure everyone in my family was asleep. It took ages coz we were being rowdy and got told off a couple of times for swearing. Oops.
3. We snuck out! Down to the trees at the end of the street. All week we've been collecting rocks, sticks and logs, ready to make a campfire. We took the lawnmower petrol can so we had fuel for the fire, and the fold-up chairs from the garage to sit on. We'd put them all behind the shed earlier, so we didn't have to open the garage late at night.

We set the rocks up in a circle and made a base for the fire with the smaller sticks and a splash of petrol. Once it was going we added small logs, then, as the fire took hold, we added some bigger ones.

Everything was going great!

Then it wasn't. The big logs smothered the fire then crazy hyper-guy Jason decided to add more fuel. There

was petrol on the handle which made the can slippery, and as he tipped the can . . . HE DROPPED IT ONTO THE FIRE!

There was a massive WHOOSH and next thing the fire was spreading everywhere – even the tree branches above us caught alight. We shouldn't have built the fire so close to the trees, but we wanted to stay hidden. We started kicking dirt at the fire but it got too big too quick. We realised we needed to get out of there, so we took off. By the time we got back to our games room, jumped on our mattresses and pretended to be asleep, we could hear fire engine sirens.

We didn't sleep very well after that. In the morning we pretended we hadn't heard a thing. Mum told us she saw on the Facebook community page there was a fire in the trees down the road and most of the row had burnt as well as some fences.

Phew! Lucky we got away with that.

Jason looks a bit weird. I think he might have lost some eyebrows in the blast.

4. Some countries are going into lockdown which means people will have to stay in their houses to avoid spreading COVID-19. There are now six cases in New Zealand and people must go into quarantine for two weeks if they come to NZ from another country. This is bad – lucky we live way down south, far away from it all.



MONDAY, 16 March

The one with **BAD NEWS** for the J-Club

BAD, BAD, NEWS. We are in SO MUCH TROUBLE. When we were escaping the fire, Joshua dropped his school sports hoodie with his name on the back. The firefighters found it in the paddock and took it to our school. The whole J-Club got called to the office coz the teachers know we do everything together. I don't know who cracked first but I guess we weren't letting Josh take the rap on his own. Our parents were called. News spread like wildfire. Ha-ha, see what I did there?! Probably shouldn't be making jokes.

Mum and Dad were SO ANGRY. They said we were ungrateful and reckless, and the J-Club would have to disband. (UM, I DON'T THINK SO! I know we caused a lot of damage, but we've been the J-Club forever.) They said we gotta go see the farmer who owns the trees and apologise.

TUESDAY, 17 March

The one where the J-Club are sorry

Our parents were called to a meeting after school. All the senior staff were at the meeting, including Ms Anderson. Because Joshua's school sweatshirt was found at the fire we are all on detention for 2 weeks and have to write

letters of apology to the Board of Trustees.

Jason smiled and said to Miss, “This is a good learning opportunity for English. Maybe we could write them in class?” Talk about badly timed jokes! The rest of J-Club sucked in air and glanced sideways at Jason. Sometimes I think he needs to read the situation better. Jason’s dad gave a sort of low growl, which made Jason pull his head in.

Then we were taken to the farm owners to apologise. They made us meet them at the ‘crime scene.’ There wasn’t much left of the plastic petrol can and just some twisted metal from the outdoor chairs. The damage to the trees and the fenceline was way worse than I had thought it would be.

It was awful, coz it wasn’t just Mr and Mrs McIntosh – their kids and the grandparents were there as well. I wasn’t expecting all those people, especially kids from our school. That was embarrassing. Mr McIntosh asked us what we had to say for ourselves. We all kind of mumbled “Sorry.” I was looking at the ground. Then the grandad said, “My father and I built these fences with our own hands. We even cut trees down and milled them to make the posts.”

That made me feel REAL BAD, I went bright red. Jason opened his mouth (I think he was going to crack another dumb joke like “Maybe it was time for some new fences”) but his dad did that growl thing and Jason shut up. Thank goodness.

We all shuffled around a bit and then Joshua lifted his head and spoke, “We’re all very sorry our actions have caused this damage and we would like to make up for it. Could we help to clear the area and rebuild the fence?”

See? That’s why I think Josh will be Head Boy. He knows the right thing to say at the right time. Jason could learn a few things from him.

Mr McIntosh looked at his dad (also Mr McIntosh) and they nodded. Well, that’s a lot of work we’re signed up for: two weeks’ detention, a letter of apology **and** building a new fence. I hope we don’t have to cut down the trees by hand and mill them too!

Meantime, in COVID-19 news, 7070 people in NZ have completed self-quarantine and 2875 people are being monitored. Scary how the numbers are growing so quickly!

WEDNESDAY, 18 March

The one about COVID-19 worries

IT’S HERE! 🤪 Invercargill has its FIRST CASE of COVID-19! Some guy who had travelled overseas brought it back with him. I can see why Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern has put restrictions on the borders.

Day one of detention sucked. We were given toothbrushes and told to scrub mould out of window channels in the



classrooms. Is that even safe? I think we need a lawyer. (Mould or mold? Not sure which spelling is correct, must check that.)

Afterwards, the J-Club walked home. Jimmy was going to Jay's to be picked up by his parents so we parted at the playground. I was going to ask Mum if they could all come over, but she's still thinking we should disband so better we aren't seen together.

THURSDAY, 19 March

The one where we are MORE WORRIED about COVID-19

There are two more cases of Covid in Southland. What's even more scary is that the guy announced with Covid yesterday has kids at our school.

*%#"&\$# %!! (swear words)

There's a list of all the places he's been in Invercargill and the times he was there so people can check if they've been in the same places. They were:

- The Batch Cafe, March 16 at 8.30 a.m. and March 17 at 9.30 a.m.
- New World, Windsor, March 12, between 4–5 p.m.
- Waihōpai Football Club, Surrey Park, March 12, 5–6 p.m.
- Southland Athletics Championship, Surrey Park, March 14, 10–11 a.m. and 3–4 p.m.

He seems like a sporty guy who likes food, ha ha ha. Actually, it's not funny, people are really scared, and I feel sorry for his kids. They are all isolating at home now.



Granfia shops at Windsor New World.

The borders are now closed and we have to try to keep apart from each other as much as possible to avoid spreading germs. Man, everyone is buying hand sanitiser and washing their hands CONSTANTLY. Gatherings of people are being discouraged.

Wow this is very serious.

I heard Mum talking on the phone to Granfia. They're really worried. Especially about my great grandparents, Mary-ma and Poppa – they live in Porirua, near Wellington and are in the high-risk category. I hope they stay safe.

SATURDAY, 21 March

The one with COVID-19 Levels

Sleep-in day. Mum woke me at lunchtime but I think I could have slept all day. I blame it on detention and the toothbrush cruelty. It sucks having to scrape mould from the window channels, but what's worse is having other kids at school seeing us do it.

While I was having my banana on toast for breakfast and lunch I listened to the government daily updates on the TV. They have introduced four alert levels, so we know how

to respond to Covid. Dad said this is actual history in the making, so I have summarised what they mean here:

LEVEL 1: Prepare

Disease is contained.

- Persons entering NZ must go into a managed isolation facility for 2 weeks, or be quarantined if symptomatic or testing positive
- Contact tracing of any positive cases, with stringent self-isolation
- Physical distancing encouraged
- Schools and workplaces open, but must operate safely
- Face coverings required on public transport and planes
- Mass gatherings over 500 people cancelled
- Stay home if you're sick, report flu-like symptoms

LEVEL 2: Reduce

Disease is contained, but risks of community transmission growing.

- Entry border measures maximised
- No more than 100 people at indoor or outdoor events
- People can connect with family and friends but must follow public health guidelines, e.g. physical distancing of two metres
- Schools early childhood centres and tertiary institutions can open with appropriate public health measures



- Businesses and public venues (eg libraries, museums, cinemas) can open with public health measures in place for physical distancing
- Businesses start alternative ways of working (e.g. working remotely, shift-based, staggered meal breaks, flexible leave)
- Sport & recreation activities allowed, subject to conditions, contact tracing and physical distancing
- Physical distancing on public transport (e.g. leave the seat next to you empty if you can)
- Limit non-essential travel around New Zealand
- High-risk people (e.g. those over 70 or with pre-existing medical conditions) advised to remain at home

LEVEL 3: Restrict

Heightened risk that disease is not contained.

- Travel in areas with clusters or community transmission limited
- Affected educational facilities closed
- Schools can open but with limited capacity – children should study at home if possible
- People instructed to stay at home in their support bubble other than for essential movement – e.g. supermarket, medical testing, or for exercise (always maintaining physical distance and staying local, within 2km of home)



- Mass gatherings cancelled, and no more than 10 people allowed for weddings, funerals and tangihanga
- Public venues closed (e.g. libraries, museums, cinemas, food courts, gyms, pools, amusement parks)
- Alternative ways of working required, and some non-essential businesses should close
- Some procedures in hospitals deferred so healthcare staff can be reprioritised

LEVEL 4: Eliminate

Likely that disease is not contained.

- People instructed to stay at home
- All schools closed
- Businesses closed except for essential services (e.g. supermarkets, pharmacies, clinics) and lifeline utilities
- Rationing of supplies
- No mass gatherings – limit of 10 people allowed only for weddings, funerals and tangihanga
- Travel severely limited
- Major reprioritisation of healthcare services

Later on . . .

We had a bbq dinner – lamb chops, salad with homemade condensed milk and vinegar dressing (my favourite) and new potatoes. After dinner, Mum and Dad talked to us kids



about the Covid levels. They were trying to reassure us but honestly it made me feel more ~~anxious~~ anxious, (haha, had to look that one up). They said if we get to Level 4 we will need to lockdown at home for 4 weeks!

Mum and Granfia have been talking, and they think we should lockdown on the farm with them. Well, it's not a real farm, it's a 10-acre block just out of town, but they grow tons of veges and have sheep, chickens and eggs (duh! if there are chickens, of course there are eggs).

I talked about it with Ruby, and she was VERY anxious too. I thought she was scared of getting Covid but it's because she won't be able to see her friends!

I wonder how we're supposed to get food and stuff if we are locked down?

MONDAY, 23 March

The one where things get serious very quickly

There were a couple of fights in the playground today. I think everyone is feeling edgy. The teachers had the TVs on all day, waiting to hear developments.

And then it happened . . .

Jacinda Ardern and Ashley Bloomfield (the health specialist guy) announced that NZ has moved to Alert Level 3, effective IMMEDIATELY! It means we have been ordered to stay at



home and schools and non-essential businesses will be closed from tomorrow. We must stay in our ‘bubbles’, which means only the people in your home. Essential businesses are food stores, petrol stations, hospitals and stuff like that. Our parents are non-essential workers. Thank goodness their jobs aren’t classed as ‘essential’. Dad works in forestry and Mum is a social worker.

There are now **102** cases of Covid in NZ – that’s 36 new ones since yesterday! Man, that’s moving quickly.

I’m sick of writing ‘The one where . . .’ New diary titles will be ONE WORD ONLY.

WEDNESDAY, 25 March

PANIC!

This has been the CRAZIEST day of my life, or as Dad says, “ALL HELL HAS BROKEN LOOSE!”

At 1 p.m. the Prime Minister announced we are moving to Alert Level 4 and the whole of New Zealand is going into complete lockdown from 11.59 p.m. tonight. Level 4 means there is a ‘risk of widespread outbreaks.’ New statistics from around the world say 16,231 people have already died from COVID-19. 😬😬😬

THURSDAY, 26 March

LOCKDOWN!

Today is the first day of the COVID-19 lockdown. DON, DON, DON . . .

We've moved in with Granfia and Grandpa. Everything feels so strange and uncertain. I can't go to school, and Mum and Dad are apparently working from home. It's like the whole world has come to a standstill.

I never imagined something like this could happen, but I guess history is being made right now, and I want to remember it all. I'll try to write in this diary as often as I can to capture what it's like living through this unprecedented time. (Miss would be proud of big words like 'unprecedented'.)

I do feel worried but it's also exciting not knowing what is going to happen next. It feels a bit like a movie where everyone is ready to spring into action, but they don't know what they need to do.

Hopefully this will take the heat off us about the fire. Hahaha – heat about the fire – that's funny. At least we've been released from scraping mould detention.

So, this is what happened on the CRAZIEST day of my life when ALL HELL BROKE LOOSE!

Mum and Dad flew into action. We had to pack everything we needed to stay with Granfia and Grandpa for 4 WEEKS. And I mean EVERYTHING: computers, toys, clothes, Bell

and all her gear and school stuff. (Though I'm hoping we won't have to worry about schoolwork.) Mum was in charge of packing while Dad boosted to the supermarket and bottle store.

The government has been telling us not to panic buy, but I guess when something like this happens people lose all their sense. Dad described it as apocalyptic (great word, Dad!). He said you couldn't move at the bottle store. It got so crowded and tense that the staff opened a side roller door and brought out pallets of beer to the carpark to make distribution easier. They brought out a mobile eftpos machine and served people right there in the carpark.

There were two small car crashes, some people yelled at each other, and a couple of people cried. He said it reminded him of the movie *Titanic* when the boat was sinking and everyone was holding on to ride it down, some screaming, some crying and some silent and stunned. (Bit dramatic, Dad!)

But if he thought the bottle store was bad, the supermarket was worse! Shelves were stripped and there was no toilet paper, flour and very few cans of food. Dad had a list, but he couldn't get lots of things, so he ended up buying weird things we don't usually have like jumbo bags of lollies and dried fruits. Was pleased to see the lollies but don't know what he thinks we will do with the dried fruits. Mum just sighed and kept packing.



We put all the pot plants into the bathtub and filled the bottom with water then we left.

Granfia and Grandpa have a big old cosy farmhouse. Luckily there are tons of rooms, so I got my own. Ruby and Diego want to share. As everyone is feeling a bit unsure, it'll be nice for them to be together. Granfia has the comfiest beds in the world. It's like sleeping on a cloud and the duvets are fluffy and light but the best thing is, she always has soft flannelette sheets – summer, autumn, winter or spring, it doesn't matter. I love this! If we have to lock down anywhere, I'm glad it's here.

FRIDAY, 27 March

UH-OH

We had the first COVID-19 DEATH in NZ today.

Now everyone is worried. Specially because Mum has a scratchy throat, a temperature and a headache. She was so worried she had Covid she rang the Helpline. They sent her to the testing station in town. Dad took her but had to wait in the car. Mum said it was horrible; a person came to the car and gave her a mask to put on. She had worn her pjs because she thought they did the test while you sat in the car. When she got inside the testing station, everything was covered with white plastic, even the floor. She said it looked like they were going to spray paint the whole place.

Everyone had to keep well apart. The test sounded awful, they put a swab (like a long cotton bud) right up her nose and way into the back of her throat, which made her gag and tears ran down her face.

The worst part was she had to wait till the next day for them to ring with the results. She had to stay in isolation while she was waiting, so Dad moved into my room for the night. Mum kept saying, “What if I’ve got it and I’ve given it to all of you?”

I’m not going to lie – we were all terrified. It was a long night, and I know everyone was a bit tearful at different times. It was such a relief when we got the phone call to say she was in the clear. Granfia said this was a good wake-up call for us to all be vigilant about hygiene and keeping in our bubble. I hadn’t been taking this very seriously but now we’ve had a close call, I will be. I know Dad was rattled as he was quiet all day.

SATURDAY, 28 March

Chicken two ways (there was no way I could do a one-word title for this one)

So, for lunch we were having Granfia’s chicken chow mein – her specialty. SO YUM. While we’ve been here, Diego’s job is to feed the chickens and collect the eggs. Suddenly, he goes, “Hey Mum, there’s two types of chicken, eh? One,

the chickens that I feed, and two, the chickens that we eat?"

There was a pause, then I snorted and Ruby started to correct him but Mum stepped in and said, "Uh-uh-uh." Ruby went "But . . ." and Mum repeated in a stronger tone, "Uh-uh, Ruby – leave it." Then she said, "Eat up, everyone, then we'll find a movie to watch." Dad and Grandpa really, really wanted to laugh but they had to hold it in so they were doing a sort of wobbly shaking. Dad couldn't handle it, so he left the table while Mum was giving him the death glare.

I guess Diego will figure it out eventually, but good on Mum for leaving it for now. She didn't lie, she just didn't correct him, so I guess that's okay.

We all agreed to watch *Toy Story*. Think we will watch them all while we're here.

SUNDAY, 29 March

Dust-fest

I woke at 8 a.m. so got up. I usually sleep late on the weekends, but I must be rested enough from being in this lockdown bubble. I heard Dad and Grandpa making plans to move piles of dirt or something, so I snuck back to bed with my toast.

Then Granfia asked if I could help her with some jobs. She wanted to make the most of us being here to help her lift stuff out of the loft so she could clean and reorganise it.

We used to play up there a lot, but it had got full and dusty and there were spiders, so we didn't really go up there anymore.

Not being rude, but it's not like I could say no to Granfia. After about the 20th box I wished I'd gone to shift dirt with Dad and Grandpa. It wasn't just lifting boxes down, we had to take them all the way to the garage where Granfia had set up tables to lay it all out on. Old people collect A LOT of stuff. I'm going to be a minimalist and will never ask my grandkids to eat this much dust.

We got sidetracked with the boxes of photos and spent most of the afternoon going through old albums and tins of loose photos. The funniest thing was mullet haircuts. I'm not kidding, Granfia and Grandpa both had mullets, and Granfia's was permed as well. Then there were photos of Mum and Aunty Nina as kids with a mullet style too. Looks like the mullet's been going through each generation. I said I hope it skips this one!

"We're a bogan family at heart," said Mum, "so I doubt it. Find the box with Grandpa and Granfia and all the old cars and you'll see." Well, that was a surprise. I couldn't imagine Granfia and Grandpa as bogans.

Granfia disagreed with Mum. "Salamasina Mary, don't fill the kid's head with nonsense. We just loved cruising around in our cool car – that doesn't make us bogans, does it?" Mum shrugged and smiled. Granfia doesn't usually use



Mum's full name – wonder if she was annoyed by the bogan comment.

We did find the 'bogan' box and they looked very cool in their jeans. Granfia even had a crocheted tank top. Grandpa used to drive an old Chrysler Valiant and told us he never should have sold it. But money was tight and they were raising a young family so he made the call. I could tell he was sad about that.

"Once we get out of the bubble," he said, "I might buy another one."

Granfia snorted this time, then said, "Whatever makes you happy, dear." I hope he gets one – that would be cool.

Old photos are fun. Granfia has done a good job of keeping them all in order. She even has an album for each of us kids. I think I'm the favourite coz my album's the fattest. When I said this, Ruby got pippy. Mum sighed and said not to fight about that, just enjoy the memories. I think because Mum was on the brink of death last week, she has become wiser, so we all listened to her.

MONDAY, 30 March

Burnouts

Such a FUN day!

Grandpa decided to return to his bogan days and got his old hack car out into the paddock and said we could all

have a go at driving. He set up some hay bales and we got to have turns driving around the circuit. Ruby was really good. Mum had to put cushions on the seat and behind her so she could reach the pedals, but she did awesome. Everyone had a go. Even Diego sat on Dad’s lap and did the steering – he loved it and thought he was driving.

Each time I went around I got gutsier. I even did a bit of slide one time. Grandpa said I would be doing reverse doughnuts next!

When Grandpa was putting the car away he did a burnout on the concrete driveway! Way to go, Grandpa – AWESOME!

The washing that was hanging on the deck now smells like burnt rubber! I thought Granfia would be angry but she just laughed and said, “Okay, let me have a go”.

Then she did this MASSIVE burnout – which made the washing even worse!

Turns out Mum is the one who wasn’t impressed. I couldn’t believe it when Granfia did that. Mum told her off and said it wasn’t safe, but Granfia wasn’t worried. Who knew my grandparents were so cool!

We have to do schoolwork tomorrow. Everything is coming to us online. Sucks.

