

THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME (Lauren DallaVecchia)

The shrill of the alarm woke me -7am. My head started to pound. Another restless night without sleep.

"Carly," I heard mum calling.

She wanted me downstairs. Hoping I wasn't in trouble, I waddled down stairs. When I walked into the kitchen Mum had prepared a nice breakfast of fresh ham and cheese croissants and fresh strawberries. I sat down to eat. After I had eaten Mum passed me a plane ticket. Instantly I knew what this meant. I was going to Paris. Finally, Mum had changed her mind. In six days I would be in France. She was going to let me be an exchange student. A part of me felt guilty as mum was a single parent and I was her only child.

The next few days were frantic with packing and saying good-bye to friends. After all I would be gone for a year. Finally the arrived and we were off. I hugged and kissed mum goodbye this would be our last time together for a while . I could here my name for boarding. I found my seat and sat down. The pilot announced the plane was about to take off. The plane started to move. Within a short time we were flying. There was that feeling of guilt again. All I could think about was my mum that feeling subsided after I took in the view. When the food cart came around. I ordered a delicious mini cheese tray. My taste buds were dancing. If this is what they eat in Paris I could get used to it.

After an eighteen-hour flight we reached Paris. When I got to Arrival lounge my new family was waiting for me. Standing there was a boy, Francesco, two girls, Alexandra and Valentina, their mum Sophia and their dad Alfonso.

This family seemed nice. They had a certain air about them. They took me to their home on the outskirts of the city. For dinner we had fire roasted tomato-basil crab bisque, at least that's what Sophia told me. After dinner Francesco said he would for a tour of the Eiffel tower tomorrow. I was so excited. My first time to the Eiffel tower.

Finally the day dawned. I was dressed and ready to. We were going to get there on Francesco bike. We reached the Eiffel tower and the tour started the tour. The view from the tower was stunning. At every level the view was more extravagant. It cost 27.10 euro for the three levels so we only went to the second level. Once the tour had ended we ate at a restaurant on ground level. For the first time in my life I tried snails. I was pleasantly surprised at how nice they tasted. I looked up at the sky to see if there was a storm approaching. I noticed that the Eiffel tower was of balance. I thought I was just dreaming. How could this be?

Suddenly my thoughts became a reality. Before my eyes the tower came hurdling down. I shouted to Francesco, "Run."

I managed to escape. Then I saw Francesco lying under the rubble. I thought he was dead. I ran up to him through all the dust and held his hand and cried. All of a sudden his hand clenched mine. I was screaming for help. Then Francesco opened his eyes.

"Carly," he said

I replied, "Yes."

"Why are you crying," he said laughing a little. I laughed back. I helped him up and we walked over to the ambulance.

Francesco had sustained a crushed rib, a broken arm and a severe cut to his face. Other than that he was fine. When Sophia, Alfonzo, Alexandra and Valentina showed up to the hospital they kept asking me questions I couldn't answer. At exactly the same time Alexandra and Valentina said, "Is Francesco alright."

Alfonzo replied, "I'm sure he's fine girls."

The doctor came out at just the right time and said, "you're right Alfonzo he'll be fine but he will have to come back for regular observation."

We all went home and prayed that everyone in Paris would be all right. The news reporters are calling it the 'great collapse of 2013'. The next day I returned home because the collapse of the tower frightened me. I needed my mum. What was supposed to be the best trip of my life was one of the worst, but my host family was so kind and nice that I would definitely come back some day in the future and continue my holiday.

THE TORNADO DISASTER (Ethan Darveniza)

It was early Sunday morning when James and his family were leaving for a trip of a lifetime. They were planning to explore the Pacific Ocean. They were going to visit Fiji and many Pacific islands.

"The boat's ready," said dad.

"Great! Can we jump on board?" shouted the kids.

Friends had gathered to bid them farewell. Finally after exchanging hugs and kisses they set sail. James soon settled into the routine. Life was good on the boat. It was Dad's pride and joy. It had a kitchen, lounge room with TV and a gaming console. The vessel also had five luxurious beds. During the day James swam and snorkelled with the fascinating sea life. In week ten of the trip James's dad was aiming to pass through one of the most dangerous channels of the Pacific. The reef was shallow.

Just as they reached the north of the Pacific, dad yelled out, "Buckle up! It's going to be a rough night!"

As he went below deck James felt excited. Tomorrow he would get to use his spear gun for the first time. He kissed his mum and went to bed.

"Wake up!" yelled dad. "There's a tornado ahead. We need to evacuate the vessel."

James quickly ran to the lifeboat, while mum frantically gathered some food. Dad yelled at everyone to get into the lifeboat, "There should be life jackets under the life boat's deck," he said.

James had never seen his dad so scared. The tornado was getting closer. Waves were breaking over the boat from all directions. Water was smashing the front deck of the boat. Suddenly the boat was ripped off. Dad knew he had to evacuate now..... but it was too late.

The boat capsized, James's family disappeared. He yelled out, "Mum, dad, are you there?"

There was no response. Because of James's quick thinking he grabbed a life jacket and some rope from the lifeboat. He tied the rope to the life jacket. James quickly dove beneath the water risking his life for his family. He knew he had to be quick. James swam inside the boat where he found his mum and dad caught under a cupboard. He grabbed them and swam to the surface. He swam to the lifeboat. His parents gasped for air. Dad knew that they had to get away or the tornado would crush the lifeboat into a million pieces. They quickly drove away.

The next day the wild weather calmed down. James and his family were starving. They knew they would have to find help soon. James was starting to lose hope. It was reaching the end of the day. James and his family had to conserve their food because if they were stranded on the ocean for some time they would run out of supplies. James wished he never went on this trip. They had been floating for two days without seeing another ship.

By the third day James and his family were really low on food. They could only eat one tin of beans, which they shared every second day. Dad would scan the sea with his binoculars hoping for land or a ship. Dad was about to give up when he saw something in the distance.

“A ship. We’re saved!” screeched dad.

James and mum jumped for joy. Suddenly dad shot a flare into the air. Soon after they were picked up and taken to the nearest port. James was a hero, and he always told the story of his rescue, with pride.

THE STORM (Rebecca Piccolo)

It was a warm summer’s day. The wind gently brushed against Samantha’s face blowing her dark brown hair. Coco, her small brown and white dog ran around chasing the birds. Suddenly that all changed as a dark cloud rolled over the town. The thunder rumbled and the lightning flashed. Rain began pouring down in torrents. Samantha who was enjoying her picnic, suddenly realised there was a storm coming. She quickly packed up her gear and placed it in her bike basket.

“Coco where are you,” Samantha yelled.

In the distance she heard a small whimper. She quickly spun round and ran to the river.

“Coco I’m coming,” she reassured her dog.

Samantha looked at the river in horror. The water was rising and rapidly flowing. The banks were littered with debris. The once calm sparkling water was now a boiling caldron. Samantha’s clothes were drenched. She looked at the river. Suddenly she caught sight of a small brown figure gripping on to a partly submerged, rotten log. Without thinking Samantha jumped into the river.

Her mouth filled with water. She started to splutter, “Coco, Coco, where are you?”

She heard a soft bark and a whimper. Samantha started to swim towards her dog. Coco barked louder. The log was falling apart. In horror, Samantha saw that Coco was losing her grip. With one last bark Coco fell into the water. Samantha swam frantically, trying to reach her dog.

Samantha grabbed Coco. She pulled herself up on to another log floating past. Samantha was now shivering with fear and cold. Happy to be in Samantha’s arms, Coco gently nudged Samantha. Suddenly, with a thud the log hit the shore. Coco started to pull Samantha back to the shore. Coco shivered, and snuggled into Samantha’s damp clothes.

The next morning found the sun shining brightly. “Coco, you must be hungry because I sure am,” Samantha said. Barking with joy Coco ran to Samantha. “Good girl, you saved my life”, Samantha gently ruffled Coco’s silky brown hair.

Suddenly she heard a loud beating sound. Samantha looked through the trees. Through the bright sunlight she saw a rescue helicopter. The people in the rescue helicopter were dropping a rope ladder.

“Are you ok?” yelled a man. “Yes,” Samantha replied. Samantha climbed the rope ladder with Coco in her left arm. She looked into Coco’s eyes and said, “It’s going to be good to get home.”

A DAY I'LL NEVER FORGET (Jade Schroeter)

It was eight o'clock. I had eaten my breakfast and was strolling down Devadon Beach. I was looking for new shells to add to my collection. I had decided to take a quick dip in the beautiful, pristine ocean. Little did I know what the day had in store for me.

"Jesse, quick, get into the car!" my mother screeched.

I ran for my life, not quite sure why. As I jumped into the car I asked what was happening. Mum just let me sit in silence. I decided to turn on the radio to pass the time. Suddenly a warning message came on the air. I listened in horror.

"An 8.9 magnitude earthquake has occurred 20km off the coast. People living off the coast of Welshmount have one hour to evacuate to the hills. A forty-metre tsunami is expected to impact the coast of Devadon Beach."

I burst into tears and looked at my mum. She was crying too. We started speeding towards the hills, as fast as the car would go. My mother, still in a trance, not moving, not talking, just drove madly along the freeway. She didn't take any notice of stop signs or other cars.

"Speak to me mum! Speak to me!" I pleaded. I must have broken that trance because she began to tremble uncontrollably.

The car suddenly began to chug and splutter. I looked at the fuel gauge – **EMPTY!** We both began to cry hysterically. All we could do was run.

My mum started yelling, "Get out! Start running! I'll catch up."

"Fine! Make sure you do!" I yelled as I got out of the car. I started sprinting as far away from Welshmount as I could. I wasn't taking notice of anything around me. I just had to get out of there. I ran for about thirty minutes. I looked back to see how far I had run. As I turned around I gasped in horror. Half the town was scooped up by a monster tidal wave. I fell to my knees. It was time to find my mum.

I hurried back towards where my mum had parked the car. As I looked around I saw the damage the trauma had caused; children crying, homes wiped off the face of this Earth. It was getting dark so I decided to make camp behind a billboard.

I woke early. I had to find mum quickly. The car was nowhere to be seen, neither was my mum. I burst into tears. I decided to firstly check my home and see where that would take me.

As I walked along the street I was horrified to see how much damage this terrible catastrophe had caused. I found my house. It was barely standing upright. The doors, windows and roof had disappeared. I started yelling for mum.

"Mum! Mum! Mum!" I chanted, but there was no response. I searched each room, but she was nowhere to be seen. I started running to the beach, hoping to find her. I saw someone kneeling down on the beach. It was a lady. As I went towards her I saw washed up jellyfish, octopui and other sea animals. I noticed the lady was helping a young beached whale. I watched for a few minutes. I then asked, "Who are you?"

She looked up at me and replied, "I'm your mother."

I jumped up and down yelling, "Mum, how did you survive?" I was so excited to see her.

"When I told you to run, I realised what was really happening, I ran inland to find shelter. Luckily I made it out before the wave hit."

"I'm just so happy you're alive," I said with tears in my eyes. I gave mum a hug and helped her with the whale, we headed to a hotel, which thankfully survived the tsunami.

When I arrived at the hotel I asked, "Mum, how did you know the tsunami was coming?"

"I saw the waves being enveloped by the ocean. I knew a tsunami was going to hit soon," she explained.

I gave my mum a hug of relief. After that fateful week, we bought a new home off the coast, high in the hills and far away from the sea.

