



ERIN'S STORY

Book 1

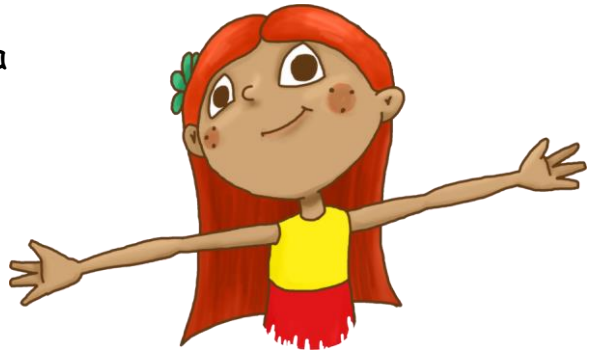
Dear Diary,

That's how these things are supposed to start right?!

Why you would want to write a letter to a diary, I dunno. It's not like she's a long-lost friend in the jungles of Africa, on the run from lions or anything.

Or one of those monks that sit on the top of a mountain and pray all day. Who has time for that? I'd rather be out dancing, playing with **Shadow** (that's my dog btw), singing or painting.

(If you're lucky I'll share some sketches with you...)



My mam says I have too much energy. That I can't sit still for a minute. That's not true. Ms. Reynolds bet me ten euro I couldn't sit still during a whole Mass one time. I'm still waiting on the money. Oh! That's something about me you should know.

I've got a **BRILLIANT** memory! I might not be very good at school (sometimes I find it hard to concentrate) but I do remember stuff *really* well. Even the little things. Like when Eric lost his wrestler toy. Mam looked everywhere, turning over the couch and checking all the rooms. Turns out, it was in Shadow's kennel.

I could have saved them all that bother if she'd just asked me. But she never does. That's why Shadow and me work well together. He's my best friend.

Eric is OK too I s'pose. At least I can be myself around him.

*** IF YOU'RE READING THIS ERIC, PUT THE DIARY DOWN! ***

Can never be too careful in case it goes missing. Not that it will. I'm going to keep my diary in a secret hiding place from now on. I won't tell you where. If you find it, then I s'pose you'll know where it is! (Bet you won't though).

I don't expect anyone to read this. So why are you writing it then dummy? I'm writing this for me. The future me. Erin in twenty years. The Erin that'll have her head screwed on tight. That's what they say, isn't it? When someone is smart and knows what they want? I have no idea what I want to do or be, but when I'm older I will. I hope.

Older Erin will be glamorous and popular, just wait and see. She'll have her own car and house and money to buy as many gummy bears and fizzy drinks as possible. Maybe in the future I won't love sweets as much as I do now. Doubt it.



Who's this beautiful girl?

'Cos then I won't have mam or any of the adults looking over me. I'll be a full-grown woman then. Never got why they say 'full-grown'. If that was the case, I must only be half-grown now, even though I'm taller than the other girls. But I've packed a lot into my eleven years.

It's going to be a lot more interesting soon now that I'm going to St. Michael's.

Oh! If anyone does pick this up by accident or if it's found on a different continent (how cool would that be!? Like one of those messages in a bottle), then I suppose I should introduce myself.

I'm Erin. I'm from Ireland. I already told you my age. What else is usually important? I live with my mam and Eric. And Shadow of course. He's only a pup. I called him that because he follows me everywhere. He likes to nip at my trouser legs with his tiny little teeth. I don't mind much. Eric cries when he does it to him, but I know he's only playing.

Shadow's not allowed inside unless it's raining bad. It does that a lot in Ireland. If you are from another country you probably never heard of it because it's a small island. A lot smaller than America or China. In our geography textbooks it looks like a little crumb that broke off from Europe.

In Ireland we are surrounded by green fields. Outside the towns I mean. I live in Dublin which is the capital. I've seen on maps pictures from high above how green Ireland is. I think that's why it got the name 'Emerald Isle'.

You know about Leprechauns probably. EVERYONE knows about them! They're the little men with ginger beards that follow rainbows to their pot of gold. Have I ever seen one? They have magical powers and cause a lot of mischief, so it's possible I did without knowing it. My old teacher Mr. Boyd looks 'half-grown' but he is an adult. And he has a big beard. He could be one, I suppose. His pockets jingle with coins too...

OK...that's enough for one day. My hand's getting sore. Anyway, I hear mam coming! Night Diary!

Dear Diary,

Do I still have to call it that? I'll think up something better soon. Seems a bit boring. Maybe I'll start with Dear Ms. Poppycock, like some old Victorian maid in the 1800s. Or maybe Dear Future Self. Dear Mrs. Erin XYZ. Me? Married? Haha. Not with a surname of XYZ. I just use that 'cos I don't know who that could be...

...I know who I would like it to be...



Anyway. I start my new school tomorrow. First year. Mam keeps asking me if I'm OK and how I feel. I don't know what to say. I'm OK. Especially when I have Shadow.

He's snoozing on my belly now. I'm using him as a little table to write on. Not too hard! His little breaths are moving the page around making it difficult to write. He's only six months.

When he gets older he's going to be my guard dog. He'll scare away any bullies. He's growing so fast. Sometimes I pretend he's my student and I get out my blackboard and teach him like we're in class.

He lies on the bed and watches me. He's not too good at answering questions though. I guess we both share that, so I can't be too hard on him.

Anyway, my mam wants me to try on my uniform again. Next time I write, I'll be a new pupil at St. Michaels!

Dear Mrs. XYZ,

I just loooooove your last name! Please, say hello to Mr. XYZ for me 😊

So, I started St. Michaels yesterday. First year. Did I tell you that already? The teachers are really nice to me. Well, most of them. Ms Bullard scares me a bit. She teaches maths. Some of the girls are already calling her Ms Bulldog. Not to her face though!

The classes are a lot bigger than St. Anne's. It's really weird not having my old friends there. Not that I had many of them...

The new people in the class don't know anything about me. Mam says that can be a good thing. A chance to start again. I don't know what that means exactly. It's not like I wasn't super-unhappy in Anne's before. I just never...I don't know. *I don't feel like talking about it today.*

Some of the girls are really pretty here and super-confident. Everyone seems like best friends. They pair off into little groups when we finish class.

Mam says to just *be myself*. Uh! I hate that. It's not like I've been someone else for eleven years! Everyone knows I'm the new girl. I stand out like a sore bum. I think that's the expression...

One of the girls pointed out a hole in my cardigan today. I think Shadow must have done it. The others starting laughing and pointing, putting their finger through the hole and making it bigger. I laughed with them like an idiot. I didn't know what else to do. They said I looked like a traveller and a gypsy. I don't know what that is. I don't want to know.

Mam is sewing it up now. I just want to snuggle up with Shadow. Least he doesn't judge me...

Dear Alien,

If you have found my diary by accident years in the future, you should know that I was a very important person in history. Queen Erin of Ireland.

People came from all around the world to ask me for advice. I was a wise and noble Queen and ruled for seventy years alongside my royal Jester Eric.

Actually, I don't think we have a King and Queen here. Not like England.



History lesson #1 - We have a President and a Prime Minister. I just asked mam. Our president might be a leprechaun. I've seen pictures of him. He looks like the kind of person you would love as your grandad. Imagine the pocket money you'd be getting off him and his pot of gold!

History lesson #2 - The Irish people love to play hurling and Gaelic Football. Hurling is where you use a wooden stick and slap a ball around the pitch. My dad used to watch it on the TV. The ball moves so fast that you can't see anything. Gaelic is better. That's like football but you can use your hands. My brother Eric plays it. He's only seven but he's already better than me. (Don't tell him I said that.)

History lesson #3 - We speak English here. Some of us speak Irish. It's our native language. There are parts of Ireland, especially in the West where they **ONLY** speak Irish. Mam says if I do well in my studies, we can visit there. How cool would that be?

History lesson #4 - We celebrate St. Patrick's day here. The city turns green. I don't mean that it literally turns a different colour or anything. Everyone wears green for the day. There is a big parade and to celebrate our patron Saint. We paint our faces and wear wigs. It's really fun! Every year, Uncle Ivan and Auntie Pat come around in the evening when me and Eric are near ready for bed. I always hear them and mam talking and laughing. I don't mind that it keeps me awake 'cos sometimes I forget what mam's laugh sounds like.

History le...

School's out! I'm getting sleepy. Bed time. Cya! xx

Dear Dublin Museum of Modern Art,

You don't know me. Yet. But one day I'll be a famous illustrator and well...I'd like to offer you some samples of my work.

My old teacher Mrs. Graham said that I could be the next Banksy. I don't know who that is exactly but I'm guessing he's good 😊

No need to pay me for these *amazing* sketches. Please sell them at an auction and give the money to a good cause. Something like a puppy charity.

Yeah, that would be cool. So it can help other dogs like Shadow...can you spot him below?

Erin



Dear Diary,

I wish I could bring Shadow to school. ☹️

At lunch today, all the girls bunched together and I was on the outside. It's like they were ignoring me. Or worse than that. They didn't even know I existed. They're a lot louder than me. A lot more confident. Whenever I say something, they talk over me, like I'm not even there. They don't even look at me! It's like I'm invisible!

So, I'm stuck here with you Ms Diary. They've gone away to play. They didn't even ask me. Not even Lucy and I thought we were becoming friends. So...here we are.

How was your day?

Terrible?

Yeah. Me too.

☹️

Dear Diary,

Happy anniversary! One month since my first entry. *Conas tá tú?* (If the alien has read this far, please use your advanced technological brain to translate that common Irish phrase!)

It's only two weeks until my birthday. The big 1-2. Almost a teenager! Mam wants to make a big deal about it but I'd rather she didn't. She's talking about inviting a clown over and having one of those big bouncy castles. I think she still thinks I'm five years old!

Even worse, she wants to invite some of the girls from school, even the ones I don't speak to (which is pretty much everyone). That would be absolutely mortal. Jane, Tara, Sheila and some of the others from St. Anne's said they'd make it. They are really busy these days though. They've probably made a lot more cooler friends. We don't talk much since I left the school ☹

Want to hear a secret?...

I cried in school today. (Eric if you're reading this, put it down or I'll kill you, I swear!!).

The girls made fun of my shoes. Brigit took off one of them and they tossed it around outside in the playground like pass the parcel. I hopped around in the mud, half laughing, half desperate, trying to get it back but they were too quick.

Mrs. Bulldog came over and scolded them. That's when I started crying.

She took me into her office and that's when I let it all out. It was *really* embarrassing. I don't know why of all people it had to be her. But I'm glad it was. She's actually really nice. She told me about how she sometimes wears a mask to hide her feelings. I was like, WOW. But she's so tough!

She laughed at that. She knows what the girls nicknamed her. Always found that funny. A nickname. Like someone's nicked your name...

...Anyway, you won't believe what happened next...

She gave me a hug! It wasn't like one of those weird awkward ones where you're stiff like a corpse and want to get away. But a *real* one like mammy gives. Or even Eric when you find his wrestler man.

There was nothing said in class thank God. Some of the girls even asked if I was OK. That was nice. Let's see if it lasts!

BONUS PIC!

('cos I'm feelin' a lot better today)



Smart chic and elegance – what do you think? ☺

Dear 11-Year Old Erin,

Tomorrow is your birthday. This is the last day you will EVER be 11 in your ENTIRE life. How scary is that?

Mam has decided not to have a party here. Instead, she's going to take me and Eric to the cinema. She's also promised that we're going to go to Eddie Rocket's for burgers and Oreo shakes!! (Hello Alien - Eddie Rocket's is an American diner that makes the best hamburgers and chips in our galaxy).

I wish Shadow could come but he's too small for a leash and he'd probably chew the leather seats there anyway!

School is...*better*.

Some of the girls are really nice. They include me in their games and I tell them all about my adventures with Shadow and in my last school. They don't believe everything 'cos they think I'm too shy.

But I'm not! I really am not! They'll find out soon what a hellraiser I can be 😊

Dear Diary,

It's 12.03am. I'm writing this under the covers with the torch on. It's officially not my birthday anymore. *Booo!* I had so much sugar and salt from the cola and popcorn that I can't go to sleep. Or maybe it's because of what happened today. I mean yesterday.

It was...

...perfect!

Mam organised a surprise for me and some of the girls in the class showed up! Yeah, yeah. I know what you're thinking. And it was. **REALLY** awkward. At the start. I had what mam calls 'a wobble', but the girls were all really nice and friendly.

It was really shocking. They didn't even say Happy Birthday to me in class (I didn't want to mention it). It turns out they were keeping it a secret all this time!

Even Mrs. Bulldog was there and when she finished her smoothie, she had a chocolate moustache that we all laughed at. She didn't even bother wiping it off!

Mam also organised for a little cake to be brought out. Again...**REALLY** awkward, especially when everyone sang Happy Birthday. But she said I deserved it because it was a really hard year and she was proud of me.

Proud of little ol' me? 😊

I haven't seen Mam cry for ages but she did then.

Anyway...things are a lot better in school now too. It was really hard to begin with but in the last few weeks, I'm getting stronger. My best best friend Lucy has been helping me with homework. She's really clever. *Brains to burn* is what one of the teachers said. I don't know why you'd want to burn brains personally. Unless you were a zombie. I guess it'd taste better then.

Anyway, for the first time in ages, I'm looking forward to school tomorrow.

Can you believe that?

Hopefully I'll have a few more adventures to share Dear Diary. Or is it Alien? Or Mrs XYZ?

No. Let's go for Queen Erin...I like the sound of that!

