

Dear Ex-Dad

March 1

Dear Ex-Dad

When you left us five years ago I wish you hadn't made promises. That you didn't say, "Nothing much will change. You're still my boy."

It was my tenth birthday a few months later and you forgot. You were already shifted to Auckland. Mum says I went to the letter box every day for six months before I gave up hope.

Remember you said you'd buy me a BMX bike? Well it's too late now. I'm fifteen years old. I'm as tall as you are. So this is just a letter to tell you **DON'T BOTHER.**

I have finally come to my senses about you. You don't care about me or remember my birthdays - you don't even ring me up. Do you know I've won the school cross-country cup two years in a row? Mum takes me to Harriers, watches me race, lines up with the other *dads*.

But I don't want you now. I don't want to keep on hoping that you'll turn up one day, so this is the end.

Yes, this is a redundancy notice to you, to say that you are my ex-father now. Good-bye. It has not been nice knowing you.

Your ex-son,
Rikki

15 March

Dear Rikki,

I was shocked when I got your letter. More than shocked. Deeply hurt. All I could think was that your mother must have put you up to it.

You'll never get rid of me as your father, Rikki. You only get one Dad in life - and that's me. So no more of that ex talk. You're my boy, remember.

I know I have neglected you. I've got a high pressure job in marketing, and maybe you won't understand till you're working yourself how the months can go by and birthdays get missed.

I'm sorry I missed your tenth birthday though. It must have been the strain of your Mum leaving me. I was upset for a long time. I don't remember ever promising a BMX bike. Maybe that was just a kid's hopeful imagination, eh? I've never believed in spoiling kids. Us kids had to pay Dad off for our bikes by doing a paper run.

Anyway, you're a big guy now, fifteen. I just want to say to you, man to man, I am your Dad and I want to be here for you. OK, so I've missed a few years, but we can make it up.

Do you get to run in the nationals or anything? Maybe I could go to those. My Dad always wanted me to be a runner but I never quite made it. You're school champion, that's something.

I'll leave it to you if you want to see me again. How's your Mum? Give her my regards.

Love,
Dad.

30 March

Dad,

So you wrote. I'm amazed. It's even your own handwriting. I asked Mum if it really was. (And she had nothing to do with my letter to you, either.)

I have been invited to run in the National Cross-Country. It's in the South Island this year, Christchurch, and it's going to cost heaps. So if you're serious, send me \$250 before the deadline next Tuesday, and I'll meet you there.

Rikki

20 April

Rikki Lane
115 Tangaroa Street
Mangere
Auckland

Dear Rikki,

Please find enclosed a cheque for \$250. I realize it's a fortnight over the deadline date, but your Dad was on a marketing trip to Sydney. He rang me last night and asked me to send this anyway. Hope it's not too late. He says to tell you it's on for Christchurch.

Yours sincerely

Celia Papadopoulos
Secretary to Bob Lane

4th May

Dear Celia,

Please inform my father that the money was needed by the deadline but Mum managed to get a loan from her boss and the school held a mufi day to pay back my costs. But I am not returning the cheque. I have bought myself a much needed pair of training shoes, which no doubt Dad can write off as expenses. If he's upset about it, get him to imagine how I felt a day before the cut-off date when I still hadn't heard from him.

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Also, this is ridiculous having to write to his stupid secretary. If he wants to be "man to man", he can write his own letters.
Rikki

12 May

Dear Rikki,

Please don't be rude to Celia. She feels quite fondly towards you, even though she has never met you. Don't worry about the money, I'll say it's the money for your missed birthday presents.

It's a shame your Mum didn't get on to her boss earlier and save you some worry, but never mind, you're going to Christchurch and so am I. Please send me dates, etc., and I'll get Celia to book us a motel. Unless you'd rather be at a hostel with all the other runners? However, you're old enough now to have a beer with the old man at the motel, after the race.

Here's to your success.

Love,
Dad

20 May

Dad,

I hope you're not expecting me to win or anything. There'll be over three hundred runners in

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the race, and heaps of them from schools where they get trained like an Olympic athlete. I haven't even got a coach to help me. But I'm training six days a week now and I'm pretty fit, plus some of the guys at Harriers say I'm a natural athlete. I hope I get in the first fifty. If you don't think that's worth coming for, tell me now.

It's at Hemmingway College, June 21.

Rikki

2 June,

Dear Rikki,

Of course I'll be there. I didn't say anything about winning did I? That was my Dad's way, not mine. If I didn't win something, he didn't want to know.

I'm glad it's June 21, as the week after that I have a trip to Melbourne. Celia has booked us at the Redfern Motels near the course. Will you need meeting off the plane or anything?

Love,
Dad

10 June,

Dear Dad,
Transport's all taken care of. I'm travelling in a school team and I'll probably stay with them too. I

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can't get it out of my mind that you'll let me down somehow - and I don't want to be stranded somewhere in Christchurch and my race stuffed up.

So don't take offence, I'm looking forward to having that beer afterwards with you at the motel.

And also, just the idea that during the race when I'm busting my insides and wanting to give up but not giving up, and my heart is just about pounding out of my chest wall - to know that you're on the sideline somewhere yelling for me, well, it's worth a second chance, Dad.

Sorry about my first letter. See you in a few weeks.

Love,
Rikki

25 June

Rikki Lane
115 Tangaroa Street
Mangere
Auckland

Dear Rikki

Your Dad has asked me to write and say sorry that he missed your race. The trip to Melbourne was suddenly called forward. He was on the plane when he realized it was the 21st of June.

I looked up the results in the paper and saw

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that you came in twelfth. That's pretty good at a national level, isn't it. I know your Dad will be so proud. He'll be back around the end of July and will get in touch with you then. I know he wants to see you.

In the meantime, good luck from me, Rikki, for your training and future running.

Regards,
Celia Papadopoulos
Secretary to Bob Lane