

*Japanese Tea, with salt.*

Adele Reweti

It was my first winter mountaineering adventure, cold, crisp, firm conditions, I had climbed Mt Rolleston a few times already with once being fuelled only with a small tin of tuna between two up the Otira Face during summer, a rumbly stomach but still fun. I felt familiar with the approach and the area. I was excited of course. Winter was present all around me as we wandered up the Otira Valley toward the slide, pretty easy sort of a day. Up to the head of the slide under the Goldney Ridge. There were also a few other people who were taking advantage of the conditions, 11 other parties in fact. We had planned to camp up near Low peak, but saw the wind blowing a gale up there, and opted for the head of the Otira Slide. We pulled out our shovels and got digging. Not such good conditions for snow caving, hard and crusty. Took us a while.

The other climbers who were climbing beside us, had headed on up the Low Peak. We kept our eyes on them as we dug into the snow, and started to shape our home for the night. We had finished our small house and decided up head up toward the ridge for a look. As we were coming back down the to the snow house, we looked up to see a small moving object making its way down the hill, it slid past down the right side of the three climbers. Then another object came rolling down toward them, and one of the climbers reached out and grabbed it half way through a pitch. Jeepers...I wonder whats happening up there on the summit. Aaron and I started to wonder what else was going on, we noticed the party had stopped completely and were stationary for ages. Man, whats going on, get on with it or come down, I had just taken my seat for the Saturday night drama. Might put the billy on.

The three climbers started to descend and eventually made their way over to us, with some extra equipment; a jacket and a nice looking glove, all in a pack. They pulled out a cell phone, and called DOC Arthurs Pass. They had already called the Police up on the ridge. One of them asked us if we were 'Aaron and Adele', and we looked strangely at each other knowing it was Anabel, Its Anabel he said, We said Hi Anabel, we're ok, and I think she breathed a sigh of relief. Anabel and Tristin, our surrogate parents in the pass, unfortunately and fortunately they know of our whereabouts whenever we are out and about in the Pass. They leave notes on our car after trips to drop by on our way by checking on us if we haven't arrived back at a usual time usually, but reward us with roasts, whisky and cozy beds. Anyway, we were okay but someone was gonna get real cold soon without their gloves and jacket, even if it was snow boarder looking. The party left us and Anabel and SAR had been alerted. Ah Saturday night drama.

The billy had boiled and I was slurping on my tea, when I hear the helicopter deepening as it roared up the valley, on a very clear and busy night up the Otira. It hovered around and attempted to land, the wind battered it about a bit. At the same time, we had another party descending down from Low Peak. Four climbers. With what it looked like one rope, one less pack all pitching the descent. As the helicopter was landing we see a head bobbing up and down in the helicopter, some really nice white teeth, then he waved and we waved back, chuckling to our selves. There was our mate Tristin, was he checking up on us as well? It was nice to see him, strange though.

Then a pair of fleecy pants and legs ran over to us to the 'low down.' Aaron informed him of the situation, I was still sort of excited by the whole thing, and in the back of my mind, hoping everything would be okay, knowing that hope only gets me so far sometimes. We relayed all the information and kept the pack to hand over the party who were descending, hoping it was theirs and hoping all was okay. The helicopter then left to get a thumbs up from the four climbers, one who was packless. As the helicopter left, my hope sort of disappeared a little. Friendly faced Tristin had gone, and we

were left to keep a watchful eye on the climbers heading our way. The sun was starting to head down, down, down, we went back in to our house. We came out as the sun was definitely out of sight, and have a look at the progress. They hadn't moved far, but there was still some dusky light around.

We'll make some noodles and eat them and if they haven't really gone far, well we'll talk about it then, Aaron had decided. Yep, okay. I thought.

Noodles warmed the cockles. We came out apprehensively and noticed only one light what it seemed like 10 meters away from where we had last looked half an hour ago. Aaron got his gear on, took some rope, his head torch and mine. I also had a mag light, which was sort of useless. Of he headed in to the darkness, just like caving I thought, just like caving. I was glad though that I wasn't sitting deep in a cave system with just my mag light, very glad. Aaron made fast ground, up to the first back of rocks and quickly ascended up toward them. We didn't have any sort of plan, if anything happened, well I had my mag light, realising at this point Aaron also had the lighter in his pocket. The mag light was so piss poor I couldn't find any other fire. I settled in the drama was getting more intense and I was just sitting on the couch. Watching, ... my hope had sort of returned too. I saw more lights now, and things were moving slowly. After 2 hours, it was now 9pm, I see them all down on the head of the slide making their way over the whare on the hill. Weary, tired and happy. I quickly grabbed the lighter off Aaron and made up some Miso, they appreciated it, taste this guys one of them said enthusiastically; Japanese tea with salt

I was trying to be useful, not just an extra in the Saturday night drama.

The rescued climbers were all okay; the gloves had blown away, when he had tried to get his jacket out at Lunchtime on the summit, then his bag followed. As they were descending in the dark they had become disorientated, they were all extremely grateful for Aaron's.

They still had a wee bit to go down the slide but made their way down after a bit of a refuel and rest. Off they went into the darkness, the Saturday night drama was over and it was time for bed, so we could have our own adventure in the morning and not just watch someone else's unfold, because I was in the hills, not sitting in front of the telly.