

Come Back Home

By Sophie Ng
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17th of November 1854, Aboard the Ship

If I must do it, then I shall. It's bothering me, the sound of the sailors laughing as they take down each bird. How must it feel to take away an innocent creature's life? Terrible, I assume. Molly is still sleeping. How can one sleep on such rough waves? Imagine if the ship was taken, and there was but the sea to rest on. I have so many questions, yet it is only the beginning of my journey towards the Colony of Australia. Should I sleep? What would be the point? Should I read? Wouldn't I get sick? But I should do anything but listen to the sailors' demented laughs. I remember that Pa gave me *'The Seamstresses' Guide'* to give to Mama for the flag.

18th of November 1854

Last time I checked, it was nighttime. Now it is dawn. How does time go fleeting so quickly while us humans blunder along like tortoises? I know not. Mama is calling me. And Molly. I walk over to Mama's bed. She is still sewing the flag that we will put up on top of our tent when we arrive at the diggings. It is a dark navy colour with a few white marks, and a star in the middle. Well, that is what is planned, anyway.

"Mama? Pa told me to give this to you. He said it will help you. Do you want a cup of tea?" I have tried to make tea before, but Mama said I was too young back then. I think I was seven or eight, and now I am twelve. Am I too young now? No. I walk to Pa's tea leaves put in a jar. There is only a bit of boiling water left, but Mama drinks very little tea, and we can always boil more. I look at the water and then the tea leaves. I figure out that I need a teacup, so I get Mama's *favourite* teacup and start making the tea.

19th of November 1854

The people are shouting and cheering as I walk out of the cabin. They're all shouting,

“GOLD! I’M COMING FOR YOU! GOLD! GOLD! YAHOO!” Even Pa and Mama. Molly pulls me out of the crowd and brings me to a very small lookout point of the ship. I can even see the thousands of albatrosses and gulls flying.

Later

We're finally here! I am ever so excited to walk again, but I find that I can barely stand! I fall onto the shimmering golden sand but almost slip into the shallow waters below the ship. The sea is so crystal clear it might as well be a diamond! Molly helps me up. Although I am older than her, she is the strongest one out of us two.

“Thank you, Molly. The water is very cold, but very refreshing.” She is not listening; she has turned towards Pa and Mama to help with the portmanteau. Oh well! It is fine.

Later still

We have set up our tent! The blue and white flag is flying above it, and I shall now go to sleep. Tomorrow Pa will begin to look for gold. I wonder if I will be able to find any.

20th of November 1854, Ballarat

It's so very different to wake up here than in London. You wake up to the sound of 'cockatoos' – they are a type of bird in the Colony – squawking and flapping about the lovely gum trees, or 'eucalyptus', as Pa calls it. He says it is the Greek name for the plant. Such beauty the cockatoos create! Their sweet voices trill in the morning, but of course the richer of us kill them for food. Even Pa is considering it. I hope he does not end up like all the other men. I would be heartbroken, and I think even Molly would be disappointed, even though she seems to not

care at all. The more I think about it, the more I am starting to believe that it is my fault. I broke our promise. Our promise to tell each other everything. I hid the truth. I did not tell her we were moving to Australia.

21st of November 1854

I wake up to find Mama trying to cook mutton over the flames. I stand up and ask her,

“Mama, do you need help? I can cook very well.” Mama smiles but she shakes her head.

“No, *liebchen*. You can cook quite extraordinarily but it is not like London, where there is a stove to keep you safe. It is a naked flame. How about you go get some damper for Pa instead?” I nod. I grab a few pounds from our money jar and run to the man that sells the best damper on the goldfields. His name is Samuel Clark, but everyone calls him Sam. He is Irish.

“Hello, Sam! I am Jane, and I need to buy some damper for Pa.” Sam grins and says,

“Because you are little girl, you need not pay full price. One pound only.” I smile back. I like hearing Irish men’s voices because they sound very funny. Not in an insulting way, of course. I give him a pound and grab the damper. I wonder where Pa is. I head for the diggings but he is not there. Instead, he is at the tent.

“Pa, Mama told me to bring this to you.” I find out that he is tending to Molly. She has scraped her knee. When I hand the damper to Pa, I can see her icy grey eyes fixing a cold stare at me. I back away and run to Mama. She tells me to leave before she burns the mutton. I feel like I want to cry. Before I broke the promise, I would go to Molly when I was sad. Now I have no one to lean on. I am by myself.

22nd of November 1854

*Little Molly, all alone, with no one to lean on,
But Jane Johnson will save her, and all sadness be gone,
The worries and the fears, banished forever be.
The love and the joyfulness, will come to save thee.*

I listen to the little poem Molly and I had made up when we were young in my mind. I can hear Molly's voice singing it. Molly. I think of her so much, as if she were the only person I had ever met in my life. Yet on this very morning, when I say good morning to her, she pushes past me as if I do not even exist. I think about running after her, but what could possibly be the point? I get some mutton from the pile of food Mama has made. It has some damper, some chopped onions, two dried figs, mutton and a cockatoo pie Sam gave to her for free. I think it was because no one wanted to buy it. Poor Sam.

Later

YES! HE DID IT! Pa found the biggest gold nugget I have ever seen! It is not that big, compared to my palm, but Mama and Molly and I are so very proud of him! After only two days of hard labour, he has found what he has been looking for. I love him so much for that.

23rd of November 1854

Pa takes me out with him to go sell the gold. We are planning on getting twelve pounds, or maybe even more! On our way to the shop, I see a young boy about the same age as me. Once Pa goes into the shop, I go over to him. He has chestnut brown hair that is in messy curls all over the place. He walks around, looking very nervous.

"Greetings!" I say, but I have startled him, "Sorry. I am Jane Moriah Johnson. What is your name?" He trembles but takes a deep breath and introduces himself.

"I am Edward Mannor. My father is the owner of this shop, a miner. He is Charles Mannor. It is a pleasure to meet you." He turns out to be a lot

more fun than I expected, and I talk to him for the next hour or so. Edward is older than me. He is fifteen but people say he is short for his age. I feel sorry for him, but there is no more time. My father pulls me away as I wave goodbye to Edward. Pa shows me the twelve pounds and tells me he even got an extra sixpence as a tip. I run back to the diggings with him, although he walks instead, and I tell Mama and Molly. I pull Molly into a corner of the tent.

“What are you doing? Jane, I told you to stay away from me.”

“I know, Molly. I’m sorry. I apologised!”

“You broke the promise. It is alright, though. I just thought you were avoiding me, I thought I had lost my only friend.” I stare at her in shock.

“I wanted to talk to you! How could I ever do that to you? I love you, sister. There is a boy that I want you to become friends with.” Molly’s eyes are twinkling like Pa’s gold. I have solved my problems with Molly, so we shall see Edward tomorrow.

24th of November 1854, Ballarat

I wake up, feeling like the happiest person in the world. It is time to introduce Molly to Edward!

It is now twilight. I walk around the shop with Molly, looking for Edward. Suddenly, I see a hint of movement around the opposite corner. That same nest of brown hair. It is Edward!

“Edward, come back!” I call. Edward stays silent but runs back to Molly and me. How can one be so quiet and shy? I know not. Molly examines Edward’s eyes and nods.

“I am Molly, and I am Jane’s sister. What is your name?” Edward is a little taller than us, but his voice is soft and sweet.

“I’m Edward. Pleasure to meet you, Molly.” We have much fun on the bank of the muddy valley, and Edward even teaches us how to use a pan to look for gold. He tells us that the valley is called the Yarrowee

River, and sometimes the Cornishmen come and look for gold if they are desperate. *Very* desperate, Edward says. However, it is almost dinnertime for Molly and me. So we must run back to the tent. We say our goodbyes to Edward. He watches us walk back to the diggings for as long as he can, and walks back to the shop. It is now completely dark. I reach for Molly's hand, but it's not there anymore.

"Molly? Molly, where are you?" I hear a whimper on the other side of me. It is Molly. I hold her hand and step forward.

"Whoever is out there, show yourself! Do not be a coward!" I yell, still keeping Molly's hand in my firm grasp. A noise rustles through the bushes, and the next thing I know, Molly has fainted in fear. I try to carry her and run, but I am too weak...

25th of November 1854

I open my eyes and smell Mama's roast. I listen closely and hear the sound of cockatoos. I look to the side, and I see Molly. I know I am now back home.

26th of November 1854

Nothing really interesting is happening today. Except that there will be a license hunt in four days. And Pa and Mama are searching frantically for the money for next month's license. Thirty shillings, it costs! Of course, Pa already has this month's license. I think I will now go help them look for the three missing shillings. I will write about the license hunt in four days.

30th of November 1854

Oh ho! The license hunt is starting! I can hear the troopers marching and riding their steeds towards us. Edward's father is staying here for several days; exactly how many I know not. He must have forgotten to buy his license, for he is being kicked by one of the troopers. Poor sir! I wish I could save him. Perhaps I could. Our tent is on the other side of the goldfield. We are not being visited yet, so I have time. I run to Pa and ask him,

"Pa, I need your license. Just for a minute, Pa." He nods but looks sceptical. He hands me his license and I run as quickly as I can.

"Hello, sir!" I say innocently, "I am this man's daughter, my name is Jane Mannor. Here is his license. I accidentally took it with me when I went to fetch water." Mr Mannor looks at me, confused, but I look at him and nod to show that I know what I am doing. The trooper is not impressed.

"Well, sorry sir," he says mockingly, "Next time have yer license on ya, eh?" Mr Mannor stares at me. He is still confused. I bow and smile.

"Hello sir. I am Jane Moriah Johnson, Edward's friend. I live on the other side of the goldfields, so I must return. It is my father's license." He looks at me like I am a supernatural spirit. I run back to Pa and give him the license just in time.

So many poor diggers got arrested, beaten, so the miners have decided to hold a meeting at Bakery Hill, the highest hill in Ballarat. Pa is going to bring me to the meeting. Molly, of course, will also go with us. Mama will stay with the other ladies to talk. I am looking around the crowd to find a suitable spot for Molly and me in which we can see. I find a little area near a tree stump. Pulling Molly by the arm a little too quickly, I stumble into a tall man with a red sash. I recognise him! He is Captain Henry Ross, a Canadian man. He created our Southern Cross Flag, or our Eureka Flag. I mumble 'sorry, sir' and walk back to the visible position. I can see a man shouting on the tree stump. It is Mr Peter Lalor, who is Irish like Sam. He looks at me for a second and continues to yell,

“I order all men who do not intend to take the oath to leave the meeting at once. We swear by the Southern Cross to stand truly by each other, and fight to defend our rights and liberties!” Everyone cheers and applauds, but I can only think of how different it would be if we created a revolution. And what could prevent us from a stab in the back? As we walk home, I think of all the things that could happen.

1st of December 1854

Here in Australia, it is like everything is upside down! In December, it is winter in London. Here, it is summer! It is blazing hot today. I have decided to stay inside, but if the weather becomes more tolerable, I shall go out. Molly and I exchange thoughts about the revolution the miners are planning to create. She tells me that they are going to create a fort. A very small one. A stockade, really. We pretend we are the miners and we build a small tower out of mud. It is fun playing with Molly, just like old times. There really isn't anything happening right now. I will write when there is.

3rd of December 1854

There is indeed *something* happening now! It is daybreak. The sun has barely risen when I hear yells. I cannot tell if they are of triumph or despair. Either way, I must go out and investigate.

“Molly. Molly! Wake up, Molly.” I whisper. Molly sits up immediately. I breathe in the natural fragrance of eucalyptus one last time and then I notice that only Mama is sleeping. Pa is gone. Oh no. I run like the wind to the Eureka field. Oh no. Oh my goodness. No. I must find Pa!

“Jane, what is happening?”

“It is a protest, Molly! Look around for Pa.” Molly's head whirls around in all directions, but she shakes her head. Oh no. We are early risers, but

disaster is already one step ahead of us. I look around desperately. Then I suddenly realise that I am not looking for my father, but instead someone who owes me a favour.

“I will be back, Molly, stay here.” Molly nods and she turns towards the battlefield. My palms are sweating, and I am tired to death, but I run on, urging myself to keep going. I finally reach the shop and knock on the door.

“Sir! Mr Mannor! Edward! Please! My father’s in danger!” I yell and knock on the door several times. Edward opens the door and smiles. “How can I help?” I thank him happily.

“I cannot find Pa. Please help me look for him, Edward.” We run back to the battlefield and look around. Molly is not here anymore. No, this cannot be happening. Not Molly. Anyone but Molly. Except Pa and Mama. She must have gone off somewhere. Oh, but I told her to stay here! Edward watches my face slowly run out of hope.

“We can find him, Jane, don’t worry,” he says, trying to calm me down.

“It’s not him, Edward, Molly’s gone too. Why? Why is my life like this, Edward?”

“It is not your fault. Let’s go to the diggings to see if we can find her –”

I silence him. I can see a man, he resembles Pa. Bending over a little girl covered in blood. I continue walking closer to them.

“Pa? Is that you?” The man turns around and I can see he is crying. He reveals the little girl. I cannot believe it. It is Molly. Why?

“Please, Molly. Wake up! Please...It is too early...Come back home.”

-The End-