

Port Jackson Waltz

by

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## Clarification

This is fiction.

It strives for historical inaccuracy.

## Dedication

Julie Pachico.

Advisor for life.

Many thanks also to Paul LaFarge for his support and guidance, all my COL professors,  
friends and family.

## Edification

These are some primary sources and compilations of primary sources that were helpful:

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## **To start with: His Excellency Governor Arthur Phillip dictates a letter**

Governor Arthur Phillip was sitting at his desk scratching his dog between the ears when his housekeeper entered with a pale face and told him that the Changeling King was at the door with a larger, angrier Goblin mob than usual, and they were five minutes away from breaking one of the only glass windows in the colony. Instinctively Arthur's hand grasped his desk's upper drawer, where he kept letters he wrote to his housekeeper (who did not read) folded in linen handkerchiefs. He wouldn't have described them as love letters, but if a mob did end up burning the house down (whether it was done by Goblins or by his own colonists) and all that was recovered from the embers were those ragged scraps of paper, he did not want anyone besides Miss Shaw to hold them between her ash smudged fingertips. In his last letter, he described to her the white mountains of Cape Horn, and asked whether the rocks off the coast of Bude were as sea-swept. He always made sure to write the last paragraph in Greek, because he was teaching her how to pepper her conversation with Greek phrases here and there. He did not know Greek – it was one of their jokes.

Did you try speaking with them, perhaps they're only being chatty, he said to her. He pushed his dog's muzzle off his knee and began rubbing the sinews in his hands. It was not an English dog, but had been a gift from the Changeling King about a year ago, in exchange for a cup of crusty damp sugar. Now, with the dog's first master at the door, Arthur watched the animal's saw-toothed ears closely, looking for a prickle of sympathy, the betrayal of a growl, a drool-thick snap directed at Arthur's ankle. But the dog only looked back with brown slitted eyes, thin as cracks through a pin. A strange race, the

Goblins of Sydney, Arthur thought, when their mobs are so loud and bellowing but their dogs so long-eared and silent.

Describe the damage so far, he said suddenly. He had a stooped and scholarly way about him, a glossy politeness that would never leave no matter how big or angry the mob on his doorstep.

They tore off the barn door, Miss Shaw said. The goats are probably halfway to Rose Hill at this point. We're never going to see *them* again.

Arthur looked down at the pale ring on his desk left from his cups of chamomile tea. He touched the upper drawer containing the letters one last time, then sighed and pushed back his chair. Many years ago, back when he was still an up-and-coming midshipman excited about the first time he would face cannon fire (at Cuba), and the first time he would buy an engagement ring (for a widow, whose husband died after falling into a vat of boiling leather in his glove factory), every week his stepfather would mail him letters to the Admiralty office in Portsmouth. Arthur received them all in a bundle, peasy-smelling and tied with boot twine, when he finally returned from Havana to prepare for his wedding. His stepfather had written in German on vapor-thin parchment, about how the schoolhouse needed new roof-tiles and had Arthur heard about how well his grandparents were doing in Dusseldorf? At least, that is what Arthur guessed the letters were about, because Arthur had forced himself to forget his stepfather's native language long ago. Midshipmen and Lieutenants and Commodores and Governors spoke French and Latin, not German. It was while leafing through his stepfather's mail that Arthur first realized that sometimes it was enough for one only to pretend that certain letters were read.

He saw the red band of dusk squeezed between wispy grey clouds above the harbor as he carefully stepped through the front door of the Government House, his dog padding behind him. Slow and distracted, he checked the land on either side of the cove for any marines on duty. Lieutenants in a flat-bottomed dinghy, maybe, crossing the stream that divided the marines' camp from the prisoners, a group of sergeants, hopefully, passing a pewter pannikin full of rum between them as they made their way back to their bungalows after finishing afternoon guard duty at the storehouse. Sydney was divided into two by a shallow creek, pink and slippery-looking at dusk, like a pale thin vein running through a sausage. On the far west end of Arthur's side of the river was the Government House, built on a small hill that overlooked his farmlands on one side and the marines' encampment on the other. The officers in what had once been a nothing more than a huddled mass of canvas tents, but was now a suburb of one-room houses made of warped, bleached timber, inhabited by either the marines' limp-faced wives or, in most cases, their grateful lovers. Beyond the officers' vegetable gardens was Sergeant Dawes' hunched stone observatory for star-gazing, then Surgeon General White's hospital, then the court, armory and bakehouse, a trinity of rosy clay buildings marking the border with the women's camp, where Miss Shaw would have otherwise been living in a hut gone wobbly from the weight of the reed hatching. If he'd squinted across the stream to the other side of the cove, Arthur would have seen the mess of crate-like shacks where the male prisoners packed themselves away whenever they could escape their shifts in the barley fields; beyond that, the heady musk of the storehouse, mill and whipping tree, beyond that, the pulsing sepia bush, where Goblins moved on callused feet in between the shadows. Standing in the doorway of the Government House, Arthur was aware that Miss Shaw hovered behind him, and then she was hissing



in his ear and pressing something long and cold and iron-made in his hand. He looked down and he saw it was the fire poker.

It'll be all right, he said, and shook his hand away. He wanted to pretend best he could that in another few hours he'd be sitting at his desk again, scratching his dog between its ears, looking out the window at the upside-down constellations creeping across the sky and wondering what Miss Shaw would think of Cape Horn.

These people, these natives of Sydney, these black creatures who lived in beach caves with their long-eared dogs that didn't even know how to bark, these people with their gobbledy gook, hated the colony, hated Arthur. Lieutenant Tench – who'd fought in the wars in New England and knew about these things – called them Indians, which, truthfully, is what they were. But in Arthur's mind, he could only think of these men – these women, these children, these flossy dark limbs and heads and chests packed to the brimful with briny sour anger that Arthur suspected was increasingly channeled at him and him alone – they were Goblins. Among the things that these black skinned Venus-Mars-men-from-the-moon hated included: cockerels, bayonets, cauliflower, spare change, Lieutenant Bradley King's cigars, pocket compasses, pocket watches, muskets, toffee that stuck their teeth together, Sergeant Dawes' dictionary of Indian words, salt, empty bottles of gin, matches, sewing kits, His Majesty's Anthem, and much more. This mob of hateful Goblin things, so raisin colored and sun-furrowed, lungs puffed with shouts as they waved spears and declared their disgust outside the Government House, Arthur guessed they looked twenty to twenty five pounds heavier from the weight of the hatreds they bore. The biggest of them, Willemering, who used to eat plateful after plateful of Miss Shaw's hot oatcakes whenever he paid Arthur house calls, was now waving the barn door over his head, the torn brass hinges glinting in the fading light.

Arabadoo, who'd lived in the colony for two weeks as their official translator before he'd managed to escape, running away into the bush with iron fetters still clinking around his ankles, now gripped a hatchet stolen from a convict in his hands, tense and staring only at the ground. Then there was Yemmi, nervous and dopey looking as always, trying to imitate Willemering's bellows in his squeaking voice. There were many others in the mob whom Arthur did not recognize, all armed and smeared with white and orange ochre, muttering to each other in their throaty language, sullen and watchful as they left most of the shouting and weapon-waving to Willemering and Yemmi. Were they all fellow tribesmen to the Changeling King? Or was this an alliance of former tribal enemies, tired of poking at each other with spears and eager now to ransack and burn Arthur's soft slouchy buildings? Oh but it was difficult with Goblins, with governing a colony. Arthur scanned the restless faces as Miss Shaw crouched behind him, big-eyed with the fire poker. Then, he locked eyes with *him* – Bennelong, the Changeling King himself – who stared back with hard lumpy eyes, wearing nothing except strings of dog and kangaroo teeth braided into his hair. Arthur felt the old spear wound in his chest give a throb. Oh that old memory of Goblin diplomacy. But surely if it once again came to spearings, Bennelong would call off his Goblins in time, he and Arthur would arrange a parley the following week in the cabbage swamp, he and Arthur would laugh off the violence and clap one another on the shoulder, things would be talked through, things would work out?

Yes, said Arthur.

No, said the King. His creature-people shouted agreement.

This is folly, this is vaudeville, Arthur told them.

You could try handing out illustrated copies of the New Testament, the King said. Perhaps pictures explaining the life of your Lord, as Lived, as Narrated, as Codified, as Interpreted, it could help with the language barrier. Isn't that what your father does for his Introductory German lessons?

Arthur pointed. His long-eared dog stood behind him, watching its two masters, silent, panting. You, Arthur said to the Changeling King.

Arthur, Arthur. The King shook his head. You'll only have yourself to blame, in the end.

The pounding of a military drum made them all jump and swivel their heads towards the parade ground, a strip of cleared land just beyond Arthur's vegetable gardens where the marines would practice about-faces when they weren't on garrison or court duty. A twelve-man marine unit was marching in armed columns towards the scene, their red uniforms pacing in rhythm as they followed the sloping, dusty path that wound up the hill towards Arthur's front door. If Arthur shaded his eyes with his hand, he could just make out the unmistakable swagger of Watkin Tench leading the way – Tench, 1st Lieutenant 3rd division of the *Charlotte*, recommended for Captaincy, author of a best-selling memoir about his time spent as a prisoner in Maryland during the New England war, and (as Arthur put it in a letter to Miss Shaw) a close companion and, dare I say, protector of yours, am I wrong? But that was a stupid question to write in a letter that Miss Shaw could not even read, because Arthur knew that he was not wrong. The sight of Tench's marines started up an angry murmur among the Goblins, louder and more buzzing before. More shoulders were tensed, more spears were gripped in throwing-arms, and then there was a shout and a flash of something hard and rocky chucked into the air, then an ear-splitting crash that made Miss Shaw scream and the dog bristle and

bare its teeth, and Arthur and his housekeeper ducked their heads as glass from the second-storey window sprinkled down on their heads like snow.

Go back inside, Arthur told her. Miss Shaw pressed her lips together and shook her head. She offered him the fire poker again. Arthur sighed and ran a hand over the secondhand wig that sat crookedly on his brow. A cloud of dust rose above the marine column as they pulled to a halt, a few privates already nervously fingering their musket-straps, but then Tench stepped forward all blue eyed and boyish and grinning, looking thrilled out of his mind to be standing in front of the biggest Goblin mob he'd seen yet. How's it going Bennelong old friend old pal, he said to the Changeling King. So this is quite the party you've brought to town.

You know how these things go, the Changeling King replied, in the language neither Tench nor Arthur nor Miss Shaw nor anyone could speak or understand, the sap-slippery words of Goblin-speak. Us Indians have to make an entrance.

Why, that you do.

Truthfully, I just have a personal complaint to make. To him. He pointed at Arthur.

Tench giggled, and Arthur couldn't help wondering what kind of journal entry he was going to write about this at the end of the day, *Governor speared (again!!) during yet another one of Bennelong's ruckuses, Miss Shaw seeking new employment in the marines' camp, of course, my doors are always open.* But at this point even Tench must have known that a spearing from a Goblin didn't always mean death, if a man was lucky, just a lazy three-week wait in the hospital before the buried spearhead finally started curdling with infection and even the hairs on a man's chest went stiff with pus. Even Arthur had survived a shaft of wood to the chest, a little over a year ago, back when the

Government House was still a canvas tent strung over gum branches, and the only scars on Bennelong's face came not from smallpox but the small pointed fists of his first and favorite wife who always seemed to be in some bulging stage of pregnancy. Back then, Arthur could have forgiven the Goblins for anything – oh, but he couldn't help feeling sorry for them, their beach caves so sodden and squashed looking in the cold. Bennelong had speared him in the chest, but it had been forgivable. Bennelong had been forgiven. But now, watching Miss Shaw brush broken glass from her hair, listening to angry Goblin mutterings and the thudding of spear-butts against the ground, Arthur did not think things would be so easy. There was a growling sound at his ankle. He whirled around, all air sucked from his lungs, but the dog that had been a gift from Bennelong was just sitting there with its golden paws together, placid and sly-eyed. Sir? said Tench. What are your orders sir?

In a minute, Arthur said harshly. He tried to take a deep breath. Clear away the images fogging his brain, the Indian spear, lunging so unexpectedly at his chest, his Indian dog, lunging – What do you want me to do sir? Tench was saying. Should I tell the men to fire a warning shot, sir?

Tell them – said Arthur weakly. It seemed to him he was surrounded by Goblin faces on all sides, all distorted and sneering from the weight of their revulsion. You and your colony and your dog, Arthur. You are hateful. Although it would be a long time before Arthur would be able to admit it to himself, the weight of such hatred was well worth carrying. He would see another glimpse of that weight himself, in his housekeeper's expression, that day awaiting him in the near future, when he knew that for some inexplicable, unseen reason he would shoot his dog dead in the garden, and

Miss Shaw would cover up the brains with an apron before washing them away with a pail of sudsy water.



Bennelong, leader of the Carmigal tribe, liked to call himself many names. But Arthur knew a King of Kings when he saw one, and his housekeeper once said to him that she could smell a Changeling a mile away. Hence, in Arthur's mind: Bennelong, the Changeling King, ruler of this sandy scrubland, where really there lived only Indians, no real Changelings or Goblins to speak of, hiding somewhere in the brittle thicket that buzzed and hummed beyond their little houses.

Almost everyone in the colony had experienced some kind of run-in with real blueblood Changeling folk, but that was back in England. Arthur's stepfather spoke German at home and taught his adopted son the names of Prussian royals, but he could not teach him the tricks that locals seemed to absorb at birth, the do's and don'ts that everyone in Greenwich knew when it came to dealing with magical populations, who poured in from the countryside scrumming for work in London's alchemy and fortune tellers' shops. Arthur still remembered the shame he had felt, eleven years old during his first day at the Royal Seaman Institute, when he had confused a Changeling for a regular schoolboy. Technically, it was a school where only orphan boys were admitted, but, as Arthur's stepfather had explained, in a German Arthur had not yet forced himself to forget, his stepfather's schoolmaster salary was very small, and Arthur must understand why it was all right to keep some things secret, didn't he? This was before Arthur had learned about the adoption, before he figured out that the man he called father knew what he was talking about when it came to secret-keeping. His first day in the schoolroom, Arthur had walked up to a green-eyed boy with butterknife cheekbones, the

only other one wearing biscuit-colored linens that looked like his own. Before he passed the back row of desks, Darby Lodge grabbed his forearm so hard it was like he was trying to Chinese-burn him.

Don't you *know* any better? Darby Lodge said, the words thudding like bricks. *Don't* talk to one of *them*. Only thing to do is ignore them all year long, until they finally go away.

Arthur spent the school year staring at the back of Darcy Lodges' starched collar, because everyone who wore second-hand, ill-fitting jackets sat in the back rows. Only now and again when Captain Bostock paused between lectures would Arthur turn around and steal a glance at the green-eyed creature in the back, sketching rude things on the wall with chalk that everyone had to pretend not to notice, pictures that Captain Bostock washed away daily with a damp sponge when the boys tramped outside to fist fight in the schoolyard.

Miss Shaw, Arthur said suddenly to his housekeeper when she was serving him dinner, the heat-hazy night before Bennelong's Goblin mob would appear so inexplicably at his door. Tell me your opinion on something. You must have encountered Changeling populations on the Devon coast, did you not?

Some, sir, she replied. She was serving his stew like she always did, tongue sticking between her teeth. On the creased censor list that recorded the name, date of birth, and length of prison sentence for every colonist, Miss Shaw's birthplace was listed as Bude, Devon, where it was well known that great numbers of native Changeling folk – as well as fairy refugees from Scotland and Ireland – congregated in the inaccessible spaces between the wind-scoured Camelot ruins and the wrinkled moors. Well, Arthur said, with the same stiff politeness that never left him, each word as dry in his mouth as a

bite of toast. Hypothetically: what would you say if such populations wished to emigrate to Sydney, to set up a settlement of their own?

I am not saying they would ever want to do such a thing, he added. Let alone think of it. I know magical races do not leave their homelands lightly. But what if they did? Should we accept Changelings from Britain in the colony?

I ask, he said, because of your experience with such creatures.

The dog nudged his knee underneath the table. Arthur looked down and automatically placed his hand between the animal's spade-stiff ears. There was a squiggly furrow in the dog's forehead that always deepened after Miss Shaw beat him with a saucepan for killing their chickens. It gave him the same fretful expression that would always sneak unnoticed over Arthur's face, whenever he had to calculate by how much could he cut flour rations without starting riots in the garrisons.

Changelings in the colony? his housekeeper repeated. It's not really my place to say, sir. With that she poured the last of his stew into his soup bowl. She was wearing a pale blue paisley apron, checkered with tiny scabs of yellow wax, from the candles she insisted on making because she said Arthur would ruin his eyes, working so late with nothing but an oil lamp to light his study. A year ago she'd gained some weight when she'd been pregnant by Lieutenant Tench – Arthur had been impressed at the lengths they went to hide it – but that was over and gone now and she couldn't have weighed more than a hundred pounds, the starry auburn freckles of her skin wrapped tightly around her bones as reserved as a neat bow around a package. If Arthur looked, he probably would have seen the bony lumps of her kneecaps through her skirt, her legs cocked from carrying the tureen. She really should not have been carrying so heavy a thing, but Harry Rhys, Arthur's steward, no longer helped with serving dinner because



he was busy farming the private plot of land which Arthur had awarded him, mostly to get him out of the house.

I must also ask your opinion on the puppy, Arthur said. They still called the dog the puppy even though this had stopped being true months ago. It was another one of their jokes. Are you going to give him a double beating today?

It's up to you to decide, sir, Miss Shaw said. Yesterday I used the saucepan again, and it seemed like he was getting the idea finally.

You are wrong, Arthur said. I found feathers on the doorstep again this morning. Translucent ones – not a chicken, in this case. Last time this happened, where did you say such feathers came from?

I think it would either be a Welsh pixie, sir, or a Cornish one.

Yes – I remember – Surgeon General White told me he believes that a sailor must have smuggled some onboard one of the ships, before we docked from Portsmouth, that is, but now the creatures are loose and running wild in the countryside. Don't misunderstand me now, they are beastly little pesks, but still. It'd be a shame if the puppy hunted them all down one by one. Pixies aren't easy to come by here as they are in England, you know.

Yes sir, she said. I'll use the firewood on him tonight. She made as though she was going to head back to the kitchen.

Wait, Arthur said. Then he added, Describe to me, specifically, your experience with the domestication of dogs, Miss Shaw.

All dogs are different, sir, she said blandly. I wouldn't ever call myself an expert. She had a Southwestern accent, the vowels sliding undisciplinedly across her tongue,

even while everything else about her was unfailingly controlled, her eyes fastened tightly against her face as two grey buttons.

I mean, describe specifically, Arthur said. He pretended to concentrate on scratching the dog between the ears, but really he studied her from the corner of his eye. The little indentations of pox scars across her jaw. Her thin auburn hair falling out in patches from bad food or bad feelings, Arthur didn't know which.

Well – said Miss Shaw, then hesitated. Arthur petted the dog and looked at the loose wrinkling skin hanging like an untucked shirt between his knuckles. It really was a handsome dog, he thought, for an animal that had far too much Goblin-influence in him, that is. Never mind the blue scars lining its muzzle left in memory of Miss Shaw's saucepan beatings. Even when splattered with chicken or kangaroo blood, its fur was sweet and fresh smelling, reminding Arthur of his lucky pair of stockings, recently washed and tucked away in the back of a drawer.

Is disciplining the puppy the most disagreeable case you've across so far? Arthur pressed.

My uncle, he ran an inn at Devon, he had a Baskerville hound, sir.

Arthur was surprised. Neither he or Miss Shaw liked to respond to other people's attempts at making conversation, especially if it involved personal details, not just the day-to-day business of living in the colony.

Elaborate, Arthur said.

He was a bad one. Once he knocked me into a stream and broke my arm, a good clean break.

I'm sorry to hear that. Did you uncle help you with the domestication after that?

No, sir. It was just me.

This was a few years ago?

I was eleven, sir.

Baskerville hounds, those are the kind that bookmakers will pit against werewolves when they are looking to promote a fight, aren't they?

She shrugged. No matter how much Arthur tried to trick her, she never admitted that she knew anything about gamblers or housebreakers or will-forgers or dock-women, the kinds of people who did the kinds of crimes that brought them to Sydney, had brought *her* to Sydney.

From what I understand about these things, said Arthur, these hounds can be pitted only against werewolves because their size and strength is such that they crush a fox terrier into a pulp with a single bite. So – I don't understand how you were lucky enough to come away from the encounter with only a broken arm.

The trick is – she said, and then, with a burst: you have to look them in the eye, sir. Even though my arm was broken, I just looked at that Baskerville hound straight in those horrible buggy orange eyes they have – you know those eyes, you can see them glowing in the dark across a moor from fifty miles away, it's so they can trick you and make you think it's campfires or inn windows so you start walking towards them. I'm remembering it just now. You're right that I was lucky about the arm, sir, and about their jaws, they're big enough to snap the heads off of horses. Chomp, just like that. In Devon, you know, it's an ordinary thing for an inn-keeper like my uncle to get up in the morning and find his horses wandering around all headless and confused in the corrals. But I just stared straight at him when he was growling and frothing at me, and I lifted up my chin, and I planted my feet on the ground, even though he'd knocked me in the stream and it was April and the water was all horrible and freezing, and I held up my free

hand, and then, *Not to me you don't* I told him. In a good loud voice too. Didn't matter how much he was baring his teeth. So I kept on telling him that, just those words over and over again, standing there in the stream soaking wet with my hand held up. *Not to me you don't*. It was so cold sir, I remember, but I wasn't shivering. Then finally his ears went down, and his eyes went dim, and the growling stopped. He sank into the grass, and then, he backed away. I watched him for awhile, and when I thought he wasn't going to try anything else, I climbed out of the streambed and back on dry land.

She shrugged. Didn't have much trouble with him after that, she said.

It was the most Arthur had ever heard her say. It was more than he had ever said to her. The ladle clanged against the soup tureen as she left the dining room. Arthur thumbed the sinews in his hands, and he thought about Miss Shaw with her left arm broken, dangling uselessly at her side, the cold water streaming past her shoes scuffed white round the edges from overuse. *Not to me you don't*, she was saying, her auburn hair hanging in thin strands around her pointed face. He thought about Bennelong and his strange silent dog, and the green-eyed Changeling child in the schoolroom, the squeaky sound of its chalk as it drew bulging penises against the schoolhouse wall, how intensely students and schoolmaster carried on as though nothing were happening. He remembered they were right about ignoring the creature in the end – they had driven the Changeling back into the moors before the end of October.

I should turn my back on Bennelong and his people, Arthur thought. I should not question why I think of him as a Changeling King, his people as Goblins. I should enlist Reverend Johnson to teach Miss Shaw her letters. It is not right that her education is so poor.

But what had he been risking, stepping towards the back of the schoolroom, his mouth opened in a half formed *ballo*, the green-eyed creature waiting? What had Miss Shaw been risking, *not to me you don't* to a growling and frothing Baskerville hound? He looked at his housekeeper and her bony knees cocked as she carried the soup tureen from the dining room, and he thought of risks not worth taking.



In a letter that Arthur wrote to President of the Naturalists' Society/his former boyhood hero Sir Joseph Banks, Arthur described Bennelong the Changeling King as weighing approximately 125 pounds on an empty stomach, arms close to 50.5 centimeters in length, at least twenty spear scars corkscrewing across his torso, one missing front tooth. Indeed, Arthur wrote, Sir Banks would have to understand that as much as he pressured Arthur to send a Goblin skull back to England, knocking out the front tooth seemed to be a ritual amongst Goblin males and hence any skull examined for the biological record would necessarily be deformed. Depending on numerous factors, including the fertility or fidelity of his wives, or how likely it seemed the colonists' squash crops would die and they would all sail home to England, the Changeling King's eyes ranged from 0.50 to 0.60 cm wide; his mouth slick and quick as a trigger, anywhere between showing ten or twenty of his teeth, missing ones included. When extra food had been available during the colony's first year, Arthur had tried to cut short Bennelong's friendly visits to the Government House and his endless conversations about his guerilla-war victories against the Gweagal, the Dharag, the Wallamattagal, the Cadi, the Gayimail, by feeding him approximately 7.5 pounds of fish, wine, and bread, hoping that by stupefying him with food Bennelong's mouth would stop moving and his chin would droop against his chest in sleep. To Arthur's horror,

Bennelong had licked clean the fish bones, five ounces, then asked for a batch of Miss Shaw's oat cakes, ten ounces, and did the Governor want to hear about the time Bennelong had won a tree climbing bet against the Wangol King, five hundred and seventy two ounces? The hatchet that Bennelong waved about Arthur's office could not have been more than one hundred ten ounces, when he smashed it against the edge of Arthur's desk. Arthur looked at the wood splinters, not even noticing that his knuckles had gone white from how hard he was gripping the desk drawer containing Miss Shaw's letters, and in his mind he wrote in a letter to Lord Joseph Banks: the weight of things that I can no longer understand, that I can no longer face – a thousand ounces, a million, an unbearable, unthinkable number.

An hour earlier the mob had been hissing and venomous on his doorstep, but with the arrival of Lieutenant Tench – who had an easy-going way about him that Arthur would never have – it didn't matter how tensely the marine unit clutched their muskets, how squeakily Yemmi tried to imitate Willemering's war-bellows. Any eagerness for a fight splintered into a hundred glimmering fragments at the familiar sight of Tench's laconic grinning, like a stone tossed into a school of fish. He referred to Bennelong by a personal nickname and kept bringing up private jokes of theirs that no one else understood, but everyone secretly wished they did. Another fifteen minutes, and Tench had convinced Willemering to rest the barn door upon the grass, and Bennelong said enough was enough, he would send most of his Indians back across the bay in their canoes, if in return Tench sent his marines back down the hill to the garrison. This was done. For a while it almost seemed as though the afternoon would end without broken windows or the need for fire pokers. Willemering had started to look a little embarrassed about chasing away Miss Shaw's goats, Yemmi had stopped looking so dopey and scared,

Arabadoo stopped gripping his hatchet and passed it quietly to Bennelong. But then Arthur had told Bennelong to come into his study, so that they two of them could talk, alone.

The Changeling King's anger was deadweight when he showed it. Whereas Bennelong was all good-natured war stories and dirty jokes that involved plenty of hand gestures, his eyes shiny with a slick, arrogant charm, like pomade rubbed across hair, rage turned his face into an anvil hard and flat, reasonable words striking helpless sparks against the iron surface. It was the inhuman expression of a creature Arthur could not reach, the same incomprehensible face worn by the green-eyed creature that skulked in the back of the schoolroom gripping chalk like a butcher's knife, an expression fit for a King, for a Changeling. It was a terrible thing to see, how there was no twitching or flopping in Bennelong's face, when the hatchet splintered into the desk, and Arthur's hand leapt towards the drawer hiding Miss Shaw's letters. You see what I did to your desk, the Changeling King told Arthur, in the language that Arthur could neither speak or understand. That's not what I'm going to do to my youngest wife. It's not going to be like *snap* through her skull like lightning through the branch of a tree, or through one of your beloved ships' masts – quick, then teeny tiny pieces whizzing everywhere – not like what you saw in Cuba when a piece of French artillery went right through Bosun Hurdle's head so fast he flipped head over heels – not like that, Bennelong told him, Bennelong was saying as Arthur's mind desperately tried to translate, translate the difference between what it was possible for the Changeling King to be saying and for him to know and what was not possible –

The lying bitch is getting split all the way down the middle, Bennelong said. At least that part did not need much English to be unmistakably clear. Crunch, Bennelong repeated. Swish. Two pieces of Karubarabulu falling apart. Just like that.

Arthur listened quietly, his fingers gone numb where they clutched the upper desk drawer. His old spear wound began to throb.

This sounds like a personal grievance of yours, he said. It's so typically unnecessary of you, you know, to bring the whole damn family circus to my front door for a problem that doesn't involve anyone except you and, I forget her name.

Of course, old man. You're a fighter and father to a people, you know how these things go. Put on a show and all that. What kind of an Indian would I be if I didn't understand these things?

I have absolutely no idea what you're saying, Arthur said helplessly.

That's a big loss for the letters you're later going to write about this incident of ours, isn't it? Because what I'm saying to you is so important that – you're just going to have to fill in the gaps in your mind right now as I'm talking to you, isn't that the way it goes? He nodded at the wooden shards scattered over the study floor like hay from a threshing. How's the old spear wound, Be-anna, Father, father to a nation, how's your Jesus been hanging on your crucifix?

Bennelong, said Arthur, and at the sound of his name, so clumsily pronounced, the Changeling King looked shiftier than ever, began blinking furiously, drew the hatchet closer to his naked chest.

A year ago we were able to talk so much more clearly between us, Arthur said. We were able to talk things through. My spear wound, thank you for your concern, could have meant the end of any talking. No more talking, just guns, and fire, and prisons. You



understand? Not like you people needed the help dying off. But instead, I decided to overlook the fact that you shoved a spear in my chest. You know with your way of laughing things off, acting all hurt and surprised when faced with accusations, you made it easy to pretend that this – Arthur tapped the scar on his chest, where beneath his undershirt the last shreds of healing skin were flaking away – was forgivable. But with scenes like *this* – he pointed at the remains of his desk – it makes it all so unnecessarily *difficult*. Just tell me, what kind of pidgin-speak, or gobbledy gook, or Elvish, or Faerie, or French, or German, or Latin, do I have to be able to speak in order to understand why, why, why, why do you do these things, why you are who you are?

His fingers were tingling now, clutching the desk drawer filled with Miss Shaw's letters. The Changeling King just stood and glared, chest moving up and down as he breathed heavily. What was Tench was doing with the other four Indians outside? Tench who was so damned open and loveable, his animated eyes that so often filled with tears when he laughed hard enough at a prank, probably asking Arabanoo if he could imitate whistling to this sea shanty or that one. Arthur shuffled some court martial records around so that they covered the hole chopped into the desk, and he didn't know what else to say, he said the obvious: whatever else it is you're planning to doing to your poor wife, what is her name again – well, you should not.

Bennelong smashed the hatchet into Arthur's chair, the curved armrest exploding into a hive of tiny woodchips that buzzed frantically across the room.

I'm telling you, it's our law, he told Arthur. So please don't interfere in laws that you don't understand and aren't your business anyway. I just came to warn you so you aren't surprised when you find two pieces of Karubarabulu lying like logs on the beach with seabirds nesting on them.

With that, he brushed the thick line of his jaw with his fingers, the same easy going, flippant Bennelong beneath the inhuman veneer of the Changeling King, spun on his heel, and exited the study.

Arthur looked at the splintered tooth that was all that remained of his chair's left arm. Not to me you don't, he thought. Not this time. Not one of *your* laws executed with one of *our* hatchets you don't! He pushed back his crippled chair so quickly it toppled over and went after Bennelong, and the two of them stepped through the front door of the Government House together, back under the red dusk slicing across the sky. The dog trailed behind them, pointy-eared, panting. It had given no sign that it had recognized its original owner, but then Bennelong had given no sign that he remembered the dog. Still, if Goblins had such sly sneaky ways, then what could you expect from their animals? The rest of the gang were still standing outside the Government House, Willemering kicking the barn door, which now leaned against the outhouse, Yemmi looking terrified all over again to see their leader re-emerge still carrying the hatchet, Arabanoo his blank, careful self, head craned to one side.

Karubarabulu, Karabarabulu, shouted Bennelong. There was a growl at Arthur's heels. He tasted metal in his mouth when he whirled around, but again the dog just sat there on its slim yellow haunches, cool and collected as anything, and staring at the dog Arthur was once again struck with that unwanted, unexplainable vision of the future – the dog with its brains spilled in the garden, Arthur with smoking pistol in hand, Miss Shaw covering the sticky mess with her apron. Arthur prayed he didn't look as jittery as he felt when he told Tench, You should not have sent away the marine unit. That was stupid. Now we have to follow him, alone.

Tench only cocked one handsome, questioning eyebrow but said nothing. Neither of them looked back to the house to see which of them Miss Shaw was watching more closely, which was neither. When the Changeling King tossed his head and started marching down the grassy slope from the Government House, heading towards the hut that Arthur had built for him at the eastern edge of the cove, Tench and Arthur knew they had no choice but to follow, Willemering, Colbee and Yemmi trailing behind, their faces dark and alert.

Arthur had built Bennelong's hut many months ago, long before the spear wound, back when the puppy was so small it became lost in Arthur's left boot and Miss Shaw had to pour in a whole bottle of shoe-grease before she could squeeze it out. It was a stone hut, built with one of the best views of the harbor, a view fit for an opera house. In building it, Arthur hoped to give a polite hint that Bennelong's constant visits to the Government House, while appreciated, were also a serious threat to their food stores. Miss Shaw had been carrying Tench's baby at the time, and Arthur reasoned that she needed the extra helpings of whiting that Bennelong downed so easily, licking the glimmering scales from his lips. However, as things turned out, Miss Shaw didn't need the extra food, Bennelong didn't stop his weekly visits, and the only people who seriously spent time in the hut were Bennelong's wives – all three of them. Arthur kept to himself as he trailed the Indians through the dry grass, Bennelong cursing and miming chopping motions through the air all the while, the chipped blade of the hatchet slicing through the air in the same way that sandstone juts of land neatly bisected the blue of the harbor. Around them the acacias and eucalyptus in the forest shed their leaves with a crinkling sound, as they walked along the winding edges of the coastline. Tench made small talk with Willemering and Yemmi, so, friend, tell me about that tattoo you got

there on that shoulder, while Arthur leaned on his walking stick, trying not to grit his teeth every time his old spear wound gave a pang. He was thinking about Miss Shaw. The worst of the pox scars on her face like chicken scratches. You know what else is stupid, he pictured himself telling Tench, you and your stupid face. You know what else? You thinking that you're saving yourself for brighter and better things back in England, another best-selling memoir, a marriage to a girl who isn't a widow or anything like that, but whose family owns sugar plantations in Barbados or Jamaica or someplace warm and buggy. It was indecent, really, the way Tench wouldn't have his union with Miss Shaw recognized by the Church and Government of Sydney. The Governor himself would bless their union, why would he not? The Changeling King swung his hatchet through the air. Fuck her, fuck her, he said. Lies, lies, betrayal, lies. None of the other Goblins responded to this. They eyed Bennelong with a cat's cool patience as they brushed through the scratchy grass. Arthur tried to concentrate on walking, but the Changeling King kept swinging the hatchet so violently and cursing Karabarabulu so loudly for this and that, and telling them how when he smashed her skull it wouldn't be a like a tree splintering from lightning, teeny tiny pieces everywhere, it would be Crunch. Swish. Just like that. Finally Arthur's nerves got the best of him, and he wrestled away Bennelong's hatchet before Bennelong knew what was happening, and then Arthur shoved his own walking stick into Bennelong's hands instead. Here, Arthur said. Beat her with that, if you must.



One of Arthur's most superior and unappreciated kindnesses, he wrote to Miss Shaw, was the way he took in Karubarabulu after she'd received a husbandly beating. Although it would be a long time before Arthur could admit it to himself, he liked

Bennelong and the Indians because for the most part, unlike the convicts or the sour dusty land they farmed, they responded well to Arthur's kindnesses. They responded to salt beef and demonstrations of musket fire. At various times throughout the year, Arthur had seen them respond to waistcoats, to seagulls which they ate half-plucked, to the sentinels' six o'clock cry that all was well, to carpenters' axes, to boiling water, to red wine, to the stuffed black swan Arthur sent back to England for Sir Joseph Banks' collections, to funerals for starved convicts that Arthur encouraged that they attend, to encyclopedias, to armed patrols, to mirrors, to explorers pitching tents in the mangroves, to syphilis, to hangings Arthur encouraged that they witness, to dirks, to tobacco, to trees tumbling down to make room for ever more convicts arriving from Sterkenwell, Poplar, Soho. About three out of every four of the Indians responded well to children, and even though Arthur was childless and indifferent about it, there was nothing like seeing Bennelong picking a louse out of a blonde child's hair to make him think, so maybe these people are not so Goblin-similar after all.

Karabarabulu showed up outside the Government House – her face stained with bruises and tear-snot – one week before Bennelong's mob arrived with their untranslatable threats to ransack and burn, Bennelong with his lover's complaint and the hatchet that he had traded – stolen? – from a convict. Miss Shaw had let Karubarabulu sit at the kitchen table and had given her some bread dough to play with. The girl, her slim waist curved as a sail full of wind, looked only a year or two younger than Miss Shaw. She had a wound to the head, the scab flecked with orange and violet, and ashes rubbed over her naked body. In a letter to Sir Joseph Banks, Arthur wrote that he believed she was in go-lahng, ritual mourning, and Bennelong must have kidnapped her from the southern part of Botany Bay against her will, from a rival tribe of Goblins who

hunted and killed and sang in the salt-marshes beyond the hills. In a letter Arthur wrote to Miss Shaw, he admitted there was really no way of knowing. Trying to talk with Goblins was like the high tide trying to whisper secrets to the shoreline, every time it looked like things would be coming together they suddenly pulled apart. Back when she still lived in Bude, he wrote, did Miss Shaw ever take in creatures that were beyond her understanding – did gnomes with broken legs, green as sin and naked as hairless monkeys except for their red caps, sit at her kitchen table and pinch bread dough between their fingers? Did she ever look at her uncle's Baskerville hound, as Arthur looked at the dog, and have a sudden unwanted vision of the animal lying dead on the ground, the gun in the guilty hand still smoking?

Should I give her some bread and then send her off, sir? Miss Shaw said to him. Arthur said that like most of Miss Shaw's suggestions he thought this was very sensible. Miss Shaw chewed on her bottom lip as she dabbed at Karubarabulu's head wound with a clean kitchen rag. Surgeon General White wouldn't be happy to see this, she said. Arthur nodded. There was nothing that drove the Surgeon crazy like men who beat their women too hard. He bent towards Karubarabulu and tried asking her from where she had been abducted, how badly did she want rescuing, but the girl only pulled back like waves from a beach and bit Miss Shaw's finger when she pressed too hard against the head wound, and it made Arthur think again, useless, useless to try and do anything to help a Goblin. Miss Shaw sucked the blood out of her finger with eyes that were chilly and somber like the Cornwall moors that surrounded her uncle's inn, she was like an Admiral of the Navy that had taken Arthur in, she had an Admiral's shoulders, her feet were made for striding purposefully across the decks of battleships but the kitchen floor would have to do, the old pox scars on her face like chipped paint, and though he didn't

want to, Arthur wondered what crime she had been sentenced for. He imagined her burying smuggled goods in the strips of sand that dotted Devon's rocky coasts, burying sacks of gold, burying bodies with the intestines turned inside-out from arsenic. She couldn't ever do such a thing, he knew, but he couldn't help himself. She'd done such a good job hiding her pregnancy by Tench, who knew what else Arthur didn't want to know, but couldn't help knowing. A week later, he was following the Changeling King down to his hut, with the moist sea-salty wind blowing against his lips and the Changeling King cursing Karubarabulu, cutting his hatchet through the air. I don't want to be here anymore, Arthur realized. He couldn't keep his thoughts from wandering. He couldn't give the colony all the attention it needed. Colbee and Willemereng and Yemmi walked behind him, strips of bark barely crunching beneath their surefooted steps, and his nerves got so bad that he forced Bennelong to take his walking stick, partly just to get himself to do something, to keep from slipping into private hidden thoughts, that inexplicable vision of his dog with a bullet wound in the head, Miss Shaw carrying bags of gold along the shores of Devon, walking barefoot in the sand. The old spear wound in his chest throbbed and throbbed. Bags of buried gold and Baskerville hounds and green-eyed Changelings and German words, all left far behind.



Arthur wrote no entry in the shiplog about why and how Bennelong had speared him, composed no letter to Sir Joseph Banks, left no written record for Miss Shaw. There was no explanation he could have given in any kind of language that he could understand. It happened back when the clay was still drying like a floury cake-mix between the cracks of Bennelong's new hut, and Miss Shaw still wore two aprons to cover her pregnant belly, and the puppy was big enough to have killed its first chicken

but not its first pixie. Bennelong hadn't been seen in the colony for two months, not since the first dead bodies marked with smallpox had been found strewn across the beaches. A whale corpse, bloated and black, had washed up on the shore across from Sydney, and Indian tribes from miles around had gathered to gossip and feast. Eager for news from Bennelong, Arthur had immediately taken a few marines and a cutter across the harbor to investigate. Arabanoo had been squatting in the sand eating whale meat with the rest of them, wiping his fingers on a copy of the New Testament that he'd been given, back when he still lived in the colony as their official translator. Yemmi sucked on a fin bone as though he believed it was higher in vitamins than the blubber itself. Willemering picked at his teeth with his thumb, a long spear besides him, tipped with a stingray's barb. Arthur walked towards the group with his hands clasped behind his back, his marine unit huddled and waiting by their longboat near the shoreline.

Like he always did, Bennelong greeted Arthur warmly. Be-Anna, Father, how's it going? Then he immediately started talking about himself. He had found some bul-la mur-ee dinnin, had Arthur heard? Arthur hadn't heard. Two new women, yes, although neither of them was the one Bennelong really had his eye on, a girl from the salt-marsh tribes, Karubarabulu. I'll get her in the end, Bennelong said, wagging his eyebrows comically, and Arthur couldn't help but smile. Bennelong then asked Arthur about Miss Shaw, whom he tried to kiss during his last visit to the Government House, and in imitation of the scene he gave the clean-shaven Lieutenant Biers a big sloppy peck on the cheek. Everyone laughed when the Lieutenant turned pink and scrubbed his face. Everyone liked Bennelong's silly imitations. That was why when the Changeling King picked up the barbed spear from the ground, and the Goblins turned quiet and surrounded the marines at all sides, Arthur couldn't help thinking that it was this was



Bennelong's imitation of a Goblin parley gone wrong, right up until the spear went through Arthur's chest. All he could remember then was the sight of hot blue sky above him, the stink of the rotting whale meat, shouts and the scuffling of boots across the sand as the marines frantically raced towards him and hauled him by the armpits back to the safety of the dingy, the hissing of even more spears cutting through the air, and a voice crying over and over again – don't shoot! don't shoot back! – which he later was stunned to realize was his own. It did not seem like something he would say, if he'd been thinking clearly.

It took six weeks before his wound had healed enough for him to move around, and the entire time he was thinking about whether he should search for the Goblins, whether he wanted to talk to them or destroy them. He told Tench to find Bennelong, take his marine unit in a dinghy across Sydney harbor to Manly Cove, Dawes Point, Tank Stream, Goat Island, Lane Cove, search it all, Tench, bring me back some Indian heads, because I am on the verge of losing my own. Because Bennelong disliked it when the convicts stole his people's fishing nets, Tench took with him bundles of fizzes, hatchets and a sword kept in a cracked scabbard, which had been traded to the Indians months ago and which the convicts had promptly stolen back. First Tench had found Yemmi, who took the sword and pretended to fight a mock battle with a yellow gum tree on the beach, gap toothed and grinning, the blade clacking harmlessly against the wood. They found Arabanoo next, squatting in the sand and clacking empty oyster shells together, only the leather binding of his New Testament remaining, the pages long gone. You know what impressed me the most, Tench said the next day while making his report, standing in Arthur's study with his hands clasped relaxed behind his back, Arthur pretending to be signing an extremely important letter to the Admiralty Office. When

Arabanoo came up to look the weapons over, you know, just pressing his lips together all thoughtful like he always does, he looks them over one by one by with this careful expression on his face. He must've spent five minutes on each weapon. Then, you know what he goes and does? He picks one weapon. Just one – the one he said that had once belonged to him. Tench shook his head. See, I don't care what anyone else says about them. They're a real honest people, you know? Arthur knew. They found Bennelong next, Tench said, sitting with his oldest wife – who was also his first and favorite – on a log across a stream, nibbling on the bones of a lorikeet. The wife had been pregnant, as usual, resting her elbows on her rounded belly. Although Arthur expected Bennelong to act defiant when confronted, or at least embarrassed, according to Tench he was not angry at all; instead was all smiles, acted surprised when Tench mentioned the spearing. All he said about the incident was that he promised to return Arthur's dirk, which somehow had been dropped during the confusion when Arthur had been bleeding on the beach. He eagerly asked when he could visit the Government House again. His first, favorite and pregnant wife – she who was older, bulkier and more short-tempered than girlish Karubarabulu – shook her head when Bennelong then asked Tench to pour him a swig of wine. *To the King!* Bennelong said, the way Arthur had taught him. Then he laughed and downed the drink in one go, like he always did. Then, Tench explained, shifting from one foot to the other in Arthur's study, when Bennelong stepped into the dinghy with the rest of the marines, his first and favorite wife grabbed the good spear he had left on the beach, and she broke it across her knee with an ear-splitting snap.

And then she goes and starts screaming at Bennelong, Tench sighed, These things I can't even imagine. But Arthur thought that he could imagine. Why, my husband, do you insist on following these cobweb-colored ghosts? Why do you insist on

stepping ass-and-elbows first into this dark tunnel from which no amount of wiggling will bring you to an exit? Arthur could not blame her if she screamed such questions, seeing her husband sail across the bay to go visit Arthur, in a boat full of marines wearing red uniforms gone pink in the armpits from old sweat stains. Waiting for Bennelong to appear again was worse than actually seeing him. You never knew whether you'd be getting Bennelong or the Changeling King, alien and killer-eyed, full of questions for which Arthur had no language to answer.



Karubarabulu, come out, the Changeling King shouted outside his hut. He shouted the questions quick and barking, like sad laughter in reverse. Karubarabulu, will you come out? Karubarabulu, do you hear my voice? The air was gluey with heat. Be prepared to grab him, Arthur told Tench. He looked at Bennelong's house, then out across the bay water that seemed dry as his mouth, his eyes trailing the jagged coastline that led back to the grey houses of Sydney thumb-sized in the distance. Everything was still. Sky and British and Goblins. He did not notice that Karubarabulu had timidly stuck her head out the front door until he heard the sound of his walking stick shattering against her head. It was like the way he hadn't noticed that Bennelong's spear had gone through him, until he heard the sound of his body hitting the sand.

The Changeling King managed to clobber Karubarabulu one last time across the face with the walking stick, hard enough to shatter a few of her teeth into bead-sized fragments, before Arthur and Tench grabbed him. The other Goblins watched them wrestle, their faces expressionless. Tench tried to wrap an arm around Bennelong's neck while Arthur tried to pin his elbows behind his back, but the Changeling King was snarling and vicious, pulled and railed against them in quick, hard jerks that never

stopped and made Arthur's teeth rattle from the effort just to hang on. He helplessly scanned the blue line of the ocean's horizon, as though by staring he could wish himself elsewhere, and that was when he spotted the longboat in the water, just rounding the sandstone plateau across the bay, the fuzzy crimson shapes of several marines resting their fishing rods on their knees. Trouble, Arthur bellowed, jerking his head towards poor Karubarabulu's caved-in cheek, leaking blood and spit. The girl was lying screaming on the ground, a small pointed hand clasped against her face, her cries shrill and numbing. What next, what next? Arthur thought. I must think of what a Governor should say and do next. But then, against all of his better judgment, all he could think about was Miss Shaw. His collarbone fractured by Bennelong's spearhead, the useless collapse of his veins and nerves, Miss Shaw burying the wound under too many layers of salve. Sharp, spear-like thoughts. His arms wobbling from strain of pinning back the Changeling King's writhing arm, watching the marines in the longboat inch closer and closer towards them with agonizing slowness, he tried to go over his plans for what came next for Bennelong, for Karubarabulu, for his own people, for Empire, but he was frozen, pinioned like a butterfly against a piece of cardboard, like he was still pinioned against a foreign beach with a shaft of sharpened wood through his chest.

The longboat scraped against the sand as the marines pulled ashore, their faces wet and shiny with sweat as they scrabbled towards the hut, brandishing their fishing rods like wobbly rapiers in place of their muskets.

Restrain him, Arthur said, jerking his head at the bellowing Changeling King.

Kill you, kill you, Bennelong shouted.

Get her in the boat and to the hospital, Tench added, motioning at the wailing Karubarabulu, her cheek peeling back in three ragged strips.

Arthur should have thought of that himself. He should have ordered that himself. But he was distracted. He felt buried beneath thoughts of his spear wound, like the mysterious smuggled goods Miss Shaw had buried beneath the white sands of Devon. It was as though he could still feel the spear's stingray barb pressing into him, only a few inches away from the heart. Tench was talking to him but he did not hear. Slowly and stupidly, he knew that the marines were waiting for him to approve Tench's order to hustle Karubarabulu away. The law, the law, the Changeling King was shouting. Sir? Tench was saying, what do you want us to do now, sir?

But Arthur could not make himself care about the unhappy Goblins, the struggling colony. He'd been speared in the chest by creatures he could not consider human. His dog refused to stop pilfering chickens no matter how hard the beatings Miss Shaw gave with her saucepan, her block of firewood. He'd served over twenty-five years in the Navy, and never once had he imagined he would end up here. This thought was no longer comforting.

If you take her to the hospital, I'll follow her, I'll kill her, the Changeling King told Arthur.

You may, Arthur said, but if you do so, we'll shoot you at once.

The Changeling King tossed his head in disdain. It was as though he was saying, Not to me you don't. Arthur could have both laughed and screamed at that moment, Bennelong was so inhuman and incomprehensible but at the same time so proud and brave and doomed.

Karubarabulu was in the hospital for two days, whimpering in bed like a sad lost ghost, before Bennelong came to visit her, a new wound in his shoulder from another fight with his first wife, his favorite. He held Karubarabulu's hand and spoke to her

quietly for hours. Three of her lower teeth were broken. She had thin black stitches going up under her eye, where Surgeon White had sewn her up. I'm going to go back with him, Karubarabulu told Arthur the next morning. He's going to be very good now. Arthur tried his hardest to change her mind, mostly because he couldn't believe that after giving her the best bed in the hospital, after Surgeon General White gave her a vanilla bean the morning after her surgery, that she would leave them so easily. But she did. Arthur watched them walk, caressing one another, down to Bennelong's house at Tubowgulle Point. Their fingers were intertwined tightly as words on a page.



The following day was when a group of Goblins raided potatoes from Harry Rhys' garden – Arthur's steward had seen them, long dark shapes stealing away into the bush, while the dusk oozed red over the harbor. Arthur led a small marine unit in pursuit, leaning on the fire poker instead of his splintered walking stick, his bandy legs trembling with every step. He dictated a letter to Miss Shaw in his head, as they pushed aside leafy ferns and dangling strips of bark with their musket butts. If you asked me, he wrote to her, I would pick real Goblins and Changlings over the ones here at Sydney. Yes, British Goblins may steal children, but at least they don't stoop to robbing food they don't even know how to grow for themselves. What kind of a city are we building here? Is it one worth staying? They hadn't gone further than a five-minute walk from the men's camp when there was that familiar sharp hissing through the muggy air, and Arthur instinctively clutched his chest wound and ducked his head so sharply his wig came tumbling off, as a spear came hurtling out of a mass of cabbage-trees and embedded itself into an acacia shrub, causing a barrage of half-ripe seed pods to spill across the bark-littered ground. Instantly the sound of revolver shots began splintering in

his ears, one bullet after another, wood chips flying, branches tumbling to earth, the stench of gunpowder choking his throat, a voice screaming something wordless and shrill over and over again, not even stopping when the only sound in the forest was the dull clicking of the metal trigger, and when all finally went quiet and he looked at the marines crouching in the dirt, staring at him with open mouths, all he could do was slowly lower the smoking weapon still clutched numbly in his hand. When Surgeon General White sent him word the next day that they had found a body in the woods, lying by the remains of a fire, Arthur knew the time had come. But when he walked back into the bush, alone, the air humid and dank, as though despite the brightness of the day and the sharpness of the saw-toothed countryside he was really struggling his way through the intestines of the well, what he saw instead was that there were two corpses. One of them a small lump of a thing, covered in Miss Shaw's apron, blurry lines of old grease stains along the pleats. Nearby, the Indian that Arthur had shot was covered in bark, as Bennelong's people did with their dead. An arch-shaped tree branch stripped white was placed nearby. But Arthur walked past the body of the Indian and kneeled first next to the smaller corpse. He pulled aside Miss Shaw's apron. His hands began trembling. The wreckage of the dog's face looked somberly back at him, the skull trashed into the pieces, the bullet having flown through the brain like a chair through the window of a shop.

Somehow, Arthur thought, it was worse that when the animal had finally died – as the colony's friendship with Bennelong would now die – it had been nothing more than a silly accident.

He tried not to clutch his burning spear wound. He began stripping the grass around the body, dropping it upon the motionless eyes. Later he would cover it in bark

and place a stripped tree branch nearby. He would give a Goblin burial to a creature which he now knew that no matter how heavy the saucepan, how sure the swing Miss Shaw's arm, would never have been beaten into understanding that its punishment was for its own good.

He would get a hold on himself. He would forbid Goblins from entering Sydney. Wasting so much energy writing letters for someone who would never read them, it had caused him to misread Bennelong and his people who were so much worse than Goblins, and this was something that drove a sharp barb through his chest.

He would tell Surgeon General White that any Indians who came to the Hospital shivering with smallpox would be refused admittance. He would tell his steward Harry Rhys that from now on Bennelong was to be refused entry to the Government House. He would tell Lieutenant Tench that from now on no boat could leave the cove unless it carried armed guards. His orders would go on and on for awhile. It was important to keep his attention on giving orders, and requesting a soon-as-possible reprieve from Prime Minister Tench, and not think about Miss Shaw, or himself, because Miss Shaw belonged to this country, and he did not, because he was Commodore Arthur Phillip who spoke French and Latin, and she was Miss Shaw who buried smuggled gold beneath the white sands of Devon, and because he had gone willingly into exile, while she had been forced into it, and because he realized she could not learn to read his letters and never would. That was why when he returned to the Government House and it was empty and silent, his footsteps echoing rudely against the walls, he knew right away what had happened, almost as if he'd read it on a page. Miss Shaw, her stomach churning when she saw the slim, dead, dainty Indian, starfish-shaped bullet wounds all across his body, the puppy, its tall pointed ears now all turned to useless bloody crud. Miss Shaw,



dropping her apron over the dog, leaving the Goblins to do with their dead whatever Goblins had to do, Miss Shaw, backing away, her head dizzy, her blood pounding, walking, running, swallowed into the bush. You and your colony and your dog, Arthur. You are hateful. When he sat down in his study and took out a quill and a sheet of parchment and began writing, he did not stop until he had scrawled inky swirling words that spilled from the blank whiteness of the page over the piles of court martials and ship logs and correspondence with Sir Joseph Banks and then over the wooden surface of his desk and and chair, smothering the arm left stumpy from Bennelong's hatchet with blot-thick letters, he wrote on the floor and the walls and the ceiling, the red brick gone black from scribbles dipping and swerving as thick as the eye could see, and when there was no more room in the study he took off his jacket and began writing on himself, the quill tip digging lightly into his skin, the ink slipping and sliding and gathering in a little pool in the hollow spear-scar on his chest. Many years later, long after Arthur Phillip had returned to England and had become Arthur Phillip Chief Inspector of Sea Fencibles instead of Arthur Phillip Governor of Sydney, he would sit in a chair and rub his arthritic knuckles and watch another paler, younger hand than his own drag an inky quill across one sheet of parchment after another. *I hope you have written down everything as I have dictated it to you*, he says now. *What kind of a history will this be, if you do not listen to dictation?*

A true one, it is hoped.

## What Goblins disliked was

What Bennelong the Changeling King and his Goblin-people liked about the colonists was partly a matter of military rank and partly whimsy, Arthur noted in a letter to Miss Shaw.

They liked Surgeon General White because he gave away bandages for toenails ripped away by thorn bushes, because they had seen him perform surgery on a man's jaw, inserting a flattened plate of nickel where the bone had been bludgeoned away by a whiskey bottle, because when the ladies flirted with him he flirted back, because he had taken in fourteen year old Nanya when her family died from smallpox, and during her own struggle with the disease he'd given her a vanilla bean every morning as she lay shivering and silent in her hospital bed.

They liked First Lieutenant Watkin Tench, because when he laughed with his face so unguarded and open they couldn't help but do the same, because he never stopped pointing and asking questions and scribbling the answers in his journal, how's it going friend, so what do those squiggly little marks on your spear mean, because when a person had Tench's full attention the day suddenly felt sunny and warm, and when he ignored you all felt grey and cold. Tench had this effect on almost everyone except Miss Shaw, from the very first moment she'd met him onboard the *Charlotte* just as the ship was rounding Tenerife, and he made a joke when she walked past him on deck – hey princess, do you know what the whale said when he was invited to dinner with the King? She stopped and stared at him, and he started making whale noises – eeeeeee, eeeeeee, eeeeeee. She let him go on for five minutes until he was turning blue around the lips, and then she turned and shuffled away, shackles clinking around her ankles. Even if she'd scowled

or rolled her eyes Tench would have been satisfied, but soon as it was clear that she had no reaction towards him whatsoever, then that was that, and from then on even Arthur understood that there was something of an arrangement between them, like so many officers had with girls trying to maneuver their way out of the women's camp and into the marines'.

But never mind Tench or Surgeon General White, Arthur wrote to Miss Shaw, because even those two would agree that the Indians liked Arthur best, hey there, Bennana, Father, how's it going, Bennelong would say, limbs banded in orange and white war-paint. They liked him because just like the best of their warriors he was missing his front tooth, from when he'd stumbled and fell *bump-bump-bump* down the stairwell of his Lyndhurst estate, in a dazed distraction after his wife had told him minutes before that she wanted a divorce. They liked Arthur for the Government House and its commanding brick, for Miss Shaw and the wary way she served them oatcakes, although now she was gone, just like the dog was now gone, and – as Arthur had made very clear with the marine units that now patrolled the beaches daily, their muskets sneezing occasional warning shots into the empty sky – just like Arthur wanted Bennelong gone. They liked him best, and this, he now realized, as he dumped the dog's bloody remains in the brick kiln to burn, as he wandered through the empty hallways of the house with his boots smacking hollowly against the wooden floorboards, was the reason why they also hated him most.



Could it be moles? Arthur said to his steward.

Doubt it, Your Excellency, said Harry Rhys. They stood and looked at the patch of farmland that stretched south from the Government House hillock towards the

dewless and bristling edges of the bush. When Arthur had woken up that morning, he saw that while he had been sleeping something had come in the middle of the night and overturned the soil, the flat brown furrows that once nestled his frail turnip seeds now raked and ripped apart, as though overnight a sharp knife had sliced through the ground and the earth's intestines had come tumbling out.

Arthur kicked at a clump of dirt that crumbled into sand. Some kind of earthquake then, he said. Was there an earthquake last night, Mr. Rhys? I was drafting a letter to Prime Minister Pitt, you see, and my concentration might have been such that I wouldn't have noticed anything unusual.

What we could be looking at here, Your Excellency, is pixies again.

Arthur frowned. Bah! he said. Get rid of them!

Not that simple, Your Excellency. They say salt-sprinkling is the way to go, in general, but these little bastards have been running around all crazy-like in Indian-lands for the past few months. Who knows what nasty savage habits they've picked up by now.

Rhys rubbed his sunburnt nose, so red it looked melted into his face, wagged his square shovel-shaped beard. Even this, he said, pointing at the remains of Arthur's farmland. I think they've gone a bit deranged, Your Excellency, being in such a funny country and all. Like Major Ross, you know, when all he did was take his boat out into the harbor and row it around and around in circles. Or Miss Shaw, running away into the forest like that.

It doesn't matter, Arthur said sharply. How does the salt-sprinkling work?

Couldn't really say, Your Excellency. I think it's supposed to bring them up to the surface, and then you can catch them and bludgeon them over the head. But you

have to know where to throw it. Can't go tossing it around willy nilly. Rhys cleared his throat. Can I ask you something, Your Excellency?

You may, Mr. Rhys.

You're really asking Prime Minister Pitt, to be relieved? We're going back to England?

Arthur gazed at the wall of gum trees standing over the mashed remains of his farmland. Yes, he said. And then: I wonder if Mrs. Phillip is still alive.

Rhys tugged at the grey hair sprouting out of his ears but said nothing. He knew more about Arthur than anyone else in the colony, and the man was still a mystery to him, solitary and sealed, his true thoughts on any subject as unreachable as a bird trapped inside a church. It was very strange, the way Rhys had watched him and Mrs. Phillip drift apart over the years, but even stranger were the little, more nagging questions that seemed to have no easy explanation whatever way they were looked at. The way Arthur allowed the Jewish convicts from Soho to erect a synagogue – no more than a tent made of several sealskins stitched together, but still – right across from Reverend Johnson's chapel, still half finished after all this time, because Arthur had interrupted the construction so that the convict-builders could erect Bennelong's hut, half a mile down the coastline. Ah, Rhys had thought to himself when he overheard the gossip in the garrison. This is a man who grew up without religion in the family, but there was someone – his mother? father? – who kissed a menorah in secret all the same. Or was that wrong, and had it been Arthur who'd grown up speaking and praying in some language other than English?

I would like you to start with the salt-sprinkling tomorrow, Mr. Rhys.

I will try, sir.

You are convinced then, this was committed by – English hands, so to speak? As you are aware, we have taken a much more aggressive stance against the naturals starting this past week. I am only concerned that –

But then his voice stopped, and for a second Rhys thought that a pixie had risen out of the wild ridges of soil and bit him on the inside of his bandy legs, but then a breeze whisked over their heads like cool watery runoff after a day of rain, and when Rhys turned and followed His Excellency's gaze across the garden, he saw the Banshee for himself – wandering in a drunken gait at the edges of the bush, her clothes grey smudges over her blistered thorn-scratched limbs, her hair dead and mangled on her head, her stare baleful and heavy, her eyes red as dye-stains running from a marine's coat.

Mr. Rhys, said Arthur, in a tone that sent a quiver down Rhys' arteries.

Yes, Your Excellency?

Go tell Miss Shaw that she can expect to hear the time and date of her court summoning by tomorrow.

Yes, Your Excellency, said Rhys, but really he was thinking: you cold Jew bastard. If that's really who you are.



Bennelong the Changeling King liked Arthur depending on the kinds of missions that Arthur was trying to carry out.

Sometimes the missions were no more than weekend survey trips into mountains, and all between them would be friendly and pleasant. Bennelong would pop out of nowhere, perhaps just as Arthur and the marines were trekking through a slate quarry, and Bennelong would show them how to find knots of eels, burramatta,

wriggling in the briny riverwater, how to imitate the calls of the rainbow-colored lorikeets, which flashed above them in the sparse treetops. It was easy then, to think that everything would end up fine between them.

Sometimes, however, the missions involved more of what Tench called unpleasant business. After yet another convict had stumbled back into camp with a stingray-barbed spear between the shoulders, Arthur would head across the bay with beads and hatchets, ready for a Goblin-parley. Bennelong would be waiting for him. There would be ten of his Eora warriors for every one of Arthur's marines, spread across the beach with spears pointed at the sky. Arthur would outstretch his hand with a fishhook resting in the palm, a dull ache pounding in his old spear wound. After a long wait, Bennelong would nudge one of his warriors forward, who would mime how the speared convict had provoked the attack by throwing an ax at his crotch. Arthur would apologize, and then he and Bennelong could relax and breathe again and look one another in the eye. Bennelong would laugh and ask Arthur for a swig of wine, so that he could raise the glass and toast *to the King!* the way Arthur had taught him, even though the camaraderie of such a gesture made more than a few of Arthur's marines and Bennelong's warriors shift their weapons uncomfortably. It was easy then, for Arthur to think, he is nothing like a Changeling, inhuman and cold. They are nothing like Goblins. It is easy to think everything in the colony was going to turn out fine.



I'll cut him in half, Bennelong muttered to the dusk. I swear by King George.  
Crunch. Swish. Just like that.

I've heard that one before, said Lieutenant Tench.

What kind of Governor does he think he is? Yemmi is killed, for taking potatoes.

Our potatoes.

What about our oysters? Our fishing nets? Our land?

It was robbery.

It was justice.

All right, said Tench. No more of that. He sat at the table in his hut and poured Bennelong another tippler of brandy, which the Indian downed in one swig as he paced the tiny room, glancing out the front door which Tench kept open in place of a window. Outside they could see Miss Shaw, kneeling over a tub of sudsy grey water, scrubbing at Tench's linens, her movements stiff and painful. A few small patches of red soaked through the back of her dress, where blood from her scabbed-over whipping scars still seeped through the bandages.

She works for you now? Bennelong said, flicking his head in Miss Shaw's direction.

Something like that, Tench said vaguely. He did not want to go into the details about the hows and whys behind Miss Shaw's lashing. The whole business made him uncomfortable, and when things made Tench uncomfortable, he ignored them. She's staying here until her back heals, he added.

Your Be-anna does this to his women. Not even able to give them a hitting they deserve with his own fists. Your Be-anna does this to poor Yemmi –

His Excellency doesn't like violence, Tench said. You know that.

But didn't you see it? Bennelong said. The shock spirits, the mawm, were hovering so thick around the body you could smell them til your Holy Kingdom come –

Tench laughed. Sorry friend, he said. I don't know anything about any mawm. That's a good new word though. Did you give to Sergeant Dawes, for his dictionary?



My wife is giving me a son soon, said Bennelong. You know, I was going to ask Be-anna – he paused as though he was wrestling with the words that Tench couldn't understand anyway, forcing them to come out one by one – I was going to ask Be-anna if she could have the baby at his house.

Say that again, said Tench, a sinking feeling in his stomach that told him the language barrier was about to turn into a problem.

Bennelong pointed out the door towards the distant hillock where the Government House stood in stiff salute over the colony. That should be ours, he said. If you people are never going to leave, all right then, I know how to make a battle-truce when I need to. Your Be-anna and I. Two Fathers together. Doesn't that sound nice? Isn't that – possible?

His Excellency doesn't have any children, Tench said gamely. Word on the street is his marriage is kind of a sham, if you know what I mean.

But you don't understand, there are spirits that – Bennelong stopped. You know what, he said. Forget about it. I don't care. Just fucking forget about it.

He walked out of Tench's house. He walked out of colony. If he could have, he would have walked out of the pages of this history, if such a thing were possible. As a final gesture, he stopped at the wheelwright shop, took an iron hatchet, then disappeared into the bush. Typical, typical of Goblins, Arthur would think later, when he heard about the theft. Tench tried writing about the conversation in his journal, but then he thought to himself, you know what, just fucking forget about it, and he ripped out the entry and used the spare paper to wipe up some spilled port, and many years later when his memoirs of the settlement of Port Jackson were published to great commercial and

critical acclaim back in England, all he mentioned about the day was that there was cloudy weather and north-east sea breezes.



When English whalers and French frigates had stopped by the bay, blown off course on their way to the Dutch East Indies, the convicts liked Arthur for allowing them to mingle and trade with the sailors, this here Indian bangle for a shot of gin, this here clump of speargrass for a pair of dice. Mostly, however, the convicts disliked Arthur. They disliked him for the same behavior that Rhys found so odd, that synagogue tent for the Soho Jews, that marriage that everyone had heard was a sham but no one could explain why. They disliked him for the hanging tree, for the forced brick making, for dysentery, for withered cabbages, for their gum-rush thatched huts, for Bennelong's stone house, for Bennelong, for hunger, for leaving documentation of the exact length of their prison sentences back in England, for the bush, for the lack of grog, for His Majesty's Anthem, and much more. They disliked him because when his Indian dog went and ripped out the throat of yet another fluttering pixie, Arthur still slept with the animal at the foot his bed. They disliked him because Bennelong had speared him in the chest, and had been forgiven. They disliked him because he gave Karubarabulu the best bed in the hospital, and she left without a thank you. Although the convicts didn't know it, they even shared some of their reasons for disliking Arthur with the Goblins. All disliked the idea of Arthur toasting wine glasses with Bennelong – *to the King!* Which King was that? None of the convicts even knew whether back in the England their King was alive, dead or still going mad – bad luck, toasting to a mad King.



Arthur only had one dream reliving Miss Shaw's whipping. It had been easy to do, really. His signature on the piece of paper, her tied to a tree, limp and closed-eyed, the whip tumbling ten times across her back until a shiny red mantle appeared on her shoulders, that memory of Arthur passing his walking stick to Bennelong which the Changeling King would swing across Karubarabulu's face, here, beat her with that, if you must. But in his dream, Miss Shaw had not stood there so still and silent, not even wincing as the blows fell upon her again and again. Instead she stood there smiling, and it was like her teeth were a bloody tear in her face, and the last time before the whip hit her she turned around and caught the cat-tails one-handed and wrapped them around her wrist. She'd walked up to Arthur and offered him the other end, which he'd taken, his movements heavy and slow as melting butter, and then she led him like a dog on a leash down the coastline, over hills littered with cabbage palms and quartz rock and empty oyster shells. When they reached a sandstone plateau overlooking the blue of the harbor, she'd started laughing, in a ragged, clotted up voice that no human could laugh with, and when she kneeled down and picked up a shard of shell and made a quick, violent gash across her womb, and instead of shining guts what came tumbling out was a long coil of green, sinewy tree-vine, and that was when Arthur thought to himself, Changelings, there have been Changelings in the colony all along, there have been people trying to pass themselves off as what they are not.

He woke up in bed filmed over with a sour-tasting sweat, his blankets tangled in knots around his feet. He went out into the garden clutching a cup of chamomile tea he'd clumsily tried to brew himself, taking deep breaths of the night air, the sweet and gummy smells of the dark clinging to him like netting. That was when he saw the shape,

slim and hunched, crouching over something in what had once been his potato patch. His pulse thudded in his ears.

You! he shouted wildly. He ran forward with heavy loping steps, until he felt something break with a crunch beneath his thin slippers. He looked down with a furrowed squint. The pixie wing had broken in shards under his heel, the pieces translucent and glossy as glass. A few inches away lay the remains of the little body, already almost unrecognizable from the salt, shriveled and wrinkled and brown as a discarded glove. Rhys was wrong, Arthur thought. The salt is enough to get rid of them. You do not need to bludgeon them over the head, when they rise from the earth. When he looked up again he saw Miss Shaw frozen in a half-stoop, her apron carrying a heap of white glittering powder, a few tiny grains still trickling from her outstretched fingers.

Well, said Arthur. His eyes had adjusted to the blackness now, and when he gazed around the field, he could see tiny pixie-shapes littering the rolling furrows of earth, the wings torn from the body, catching the watery glimmer of the moonlight with the sharpness of a dream. Miss Shaw stood there waiting, kneeling in shadow. There was no way of seeing what kind of expression she wore.

Carry on, Miss Shaw, Arthur said finally. Then he turned around and went back to bed. That was when he knew he would not bother training a new housekeeper. There was really no time in the colony for that. Certainly, if it had been any other set of circumstances, Arthur only would have hired a girl with a proper set of references in the first place, not someone he knew for a fact had been tried and sentenced in England for God knows what kind of activity. But this was a desperate kind of history that was being written. Arthur could afford to make desperate decisions.



There was nothing desperate about the reasons both Indians and convicts had for disliking Arthur. They disliked his German chin. They disliked him writing letter after letter to Prime Minister Pitt, asking for a reprieve, because if he could no longer bear being here where did that leave them? They disliked his bitten fingernails, his silences, his Latin and French dictionaries that were no good to anyone here, his dog that used to follow strangers down the street nipping at their ankles, the bronze-colored shadows under his eyes, his unreadable signature. They disliked that just like them, he could not help but become covered in Sydney, a gritty straw-golden dust that covered their hands and lips and eyelashes. If they'd known about it, they would have disliked that he left his dying, divorced wife back in England. They would have disliked her accent and her bloody cough and expensive fans and gloves and bills she was deliberately racking up in his absence, so that he'd be forced to pay them off for the rest of his life after she died. They would have disliked his stepfather. The Torah scroll his stepfather had kept locked in his desk drawer, they disliked it just as Arthur did when he broke into his stepfather's study and discovered the truth, the hunched Hebrew Arthur could not read, nor was meant to, the unnatural passion his stepfather showed for Christmases, the unnatural discomfort his stepfather showed for pork, all of this, both convicts and Indians disliked this secretiveness in so open a country. Every time the convicts saw the sun come up, they could remember another time and another place where spotting pixies would have been a common thing, but this was new land for them, new spirits, and if the next best thing to Goblins here was Bennelong's people, well, then this was a country where they would gladly give their own children away in exchange for Changelings, to give them a chance to grow up far, far away from Arthur and his colony that was running itself into the ground. But Arthur could have told them a thing or two about switching children.

The slow, plodding realization over the years that your father was not your own, nor was he quite the man he said he was, that you'd been lied to, how it could strike you dumb remembering standing on the deck of a ship in Portuguese heat, the effort to not think about it, how it made blood throb stupidly through the brain, loading and unloading pistols, striking soldiers' salutes, your ship cutting to Portsmouth to Minorca to Havana back to Lyndhurst to get married, then quick as you could off again to Lisbon then across the Atlantic and then toil towards Rio de Janeiro, then back to Lyndhurst for divorce, then up and at them and back to Portsmouth you go, one stop at the Canaries then another at Cape Town then another, final stop, a bay he described to Prime Minister Pitt as the finest harbor in the world, but there was no final stop, because even here on clean soil, a clean slate, he was distracted by thoughts he didn't want to be thinking, and running a colony had become all about remaining secretive, remote, unreadable to everyone, while trying to think of Bennelong's language and laws and people as even more remote than his own. If he thought of the Indians as Goblins, it was only because he increasingly thought of himself as a ghost. The convicts remained frighteningly human. They didn't care if it was a hut or an opera house built on Bennelong's point. They didn't want anything there. They didn't want themselves there. They used London and Irish slang for which Arthur had no dictionary for, they didn't care that he didn't, they kicked over jars of flour when they couldn't steal it for themselves, sometimes they hoed the squash growing in their garden plots but more often not even bothering and just sitting dumbly in front of their huts sweating in the brutal heat, because they knew all the hoeing in the world wasn't bringing back Changelings, or Goblins, or pixies, or England. They disliked what they had let their lives come to. They were helping England become enormous. Meanwhile their peas wouldn't

grow and their pants wouldn't fit anymore and the few of them who had managed to smuggle over leprechauns who'd been in the family for years were heartbroken when the creatures abandoned them, catching the next French frigate back to familiar territory.



Bennelong was not seen again until he came back to Tench's hut, asking that he attend the funeral for his first, favorite wife.

The Governor wanted to invite many, but I told him no, Bennelong said. Will you come? He was pale around the edges of his lips now, which made his pox-scars stand out more than ever; he had wine on his breath (from where?) and where muscles had once rippled under his mud-flat skin there was only flesh so thin it was almost threadbare.

Tench thought about it. He sighed.

There's one thing for certain, Bennelong said. Your Be-anna, he isn't well. If he comes to the funeral, I'll be surprised if he's even able to stand for the whole thing – you know that cramped little walk he has – it's not your everyday case of old war wounds flaring up (and do I know a thing or two about that) – is he still working eighteen hours a day? The man needs to go home.

Don't we all, Tench said.

In any case, he'll be leaving soon, won't he?

Mum's the word.

When he does, Bennelong said, I will go with him. I will take Karabarabulu with me.

Tench laughed. Bennelong did not reply. From the open door of his hut, Tench could see the sky gone red above the ocean as though it had been disemboweled, the

traceries of clouds shiny gleaming innards. As the silence dragged on, it became clear to him that Bennelong was serious.

Supposing you do, Tench said finally. Whatever for?

Why, said Bennelong in the language Tench did not understand. For the King.

That's a good Indian. For the King.

Bennelong rubbed one mud caked foot on the back of his leg. Tench could tell that he wanted to say more, as though to make sure Tench wouldn't get it wrong when writing down the translation, but instead he went out into Tench's garden and started poking around for dry branches that would make a good pillow for his dead first and favorite wife. The neat rows of squash and peas in Tench's garden looked tight-lipped and aloof. Scrabbling in the grass, Bennelong tried to think about Karubarabulu, but then he was back to remembering how fast his first and favorite wife died. It was like the baby was a spear coming out of her, Crunch, Swish. He couldn't feel anything about it except bewildered. It wasn't like him. He had lovers who'd betrayed him before, and usually there were emotions to be felt like great and raging anger, but it had been several years since Arthur and his people had arrived and now the best Bennelong could manage was bewilderment. But he was happy to be alive. He liked hearing the yellow balsam trees in the wind. Even when he was sick and exhausted and scared of the future, things were fine, he had Karubarabulu, he had scars all over his body, some only just stiffening into scabs, some prickly with age. He was covered with the language of death and he could read about such things simply by running a finger down his arm. Picking up dry branches, Bennelong admired himself, a walking history of wounds. He wanted to share all his stories with his wife, he wanted to leave her with her own scars, the skin knotty as unpronounceable syllables. But when he looked at the dry branches in his hands, all he



could remember was the unspeakable, Crunch. Swish. Then he could only think that as alive as he was, with dry leaves curling around his hands and the rippling bush nearby and the smell of Tench's English in his journal, ever since Arthur and his people had arrived Bennelong was more bewildered than happy, and just as he knew that he and Arthur were inextricably connected, two fathers to a people, two fathers to a country, he knew neither he nor the Governor could stay in these lands any longer.

Tench was about to put his journal away in his jacket pocket, but then he paused. He flipped back a few pages, lips moving unconsciously as he read.

Would you mind repeating that? he called out the door to Bennelong, bent over in the garden. You want to leave with us? To England? Why?

Forget it.

No, tell me, tell me again. What good is a quiet Indian?



Long before the possibility of Sydney was discussed in Parliament, people were already complaining of how crowded England was becoming. Crowds of pick-pockets were a problem, but then there were the Goblins, the druid-ghosts decked in holly garlands, the kelpies, the Robin Goodfellows, the grendels who'd wandered over from the North-lands. It was the burden of five thousand years of myth in too small of a space. Clumsily, the convicts reassembled themselves on the shores of Sydney, where any local spirits or ghosts were not theirs to believe in anymore. No matter how hard they scrubbed their eyes, the fog was only fog. The sacredness of the burial grounds was not theirs to understand. When enough time had gone by, someone tried an old sprite-summoning spell but couldn't remember the exact words, and what was the point of asking someone else for help when they would only laugh, because it was hard to

remember why there had ever been a point to believing in such things. Sometimes the convicts would pause during their work and squint into the pungent green-and-tannin-colored bush, and for a few moments, perhaps, the noise of the colony would fall away. Someone would light a stolen tobacco pipe, the birds would freeze mid-flight between one tree and another. Everyone would inhale at once. Then, for half a second, a Dreaming line would flash between the trees, a green and sinewy vine, tracing five thousand years of myth in too large of a space. There were spirits aplenty around Sydney, if Arthur and his people had known how to see them. But then the Captain on duty would confiscate the stolen pipe and someone else would flick an eyebrow and say, these cocksucker trees, they're not good enough for firewood, let alone houses. Then the convicts would go back to work. The Dreaming lines in this country, the myths and gods and spirits, were not yet theirs to see.



Arthur had never seen Bennelong so pale and shaken as he was during his first wife's funeral. Miss Shaw wrapped the body in the best of the fuzzy quilts she had sewn herself, and they burned it in a shallow grave filled with sticks and bushes behind the Government House. Bennelong had dug the pyre, five inches deep, placed the body inside and surrounded it logs and branches. He even asked Miss Shaw to help him drag several heavy boulders close to the pyre, so that Arthur with his old spear wound and his new case of gout could sit and watch the fire until the body had disappeared completely. Arthur ordered that all the marine captains attend, but Bennelong took him aside at the last minute and said he would really prefer if it was only Lieutenant Tench and Surgeon General White. They were his favorites among the marines, just as they were the favorites among his people. Miss Shaw carried the baby girl, Dibloong, wrapped in soft

bark, and murmured soft things into her ear. Just as the fire had burned down, Bennelong, his eyes twitching with grief like black flies, rose from the boulder where he had been sitting and took the baby and placed her in the grave with her mother. He breathed heavily through his nostrils and gave Arthur and Tench and the Surgeon General a long hard stare. They all flinched as though burned. Then before any of them could do anything, Bennelong picked up the boulder and threw it down into the grave. Tench had to pull Miss Shaw away and force her to drink hot whiskey until she passed out, to stop her from screaming.

You want my opinion about it? Bennelong said to Arthur. I don't have an opinion. It's law.

Arthur put his hand on the cold boulder, unwarmed by the dying fire. He was quiet for some time, looking at the ashes, pulsing red.

There was no one to nurse her, Bennelong told him. So many of our women died in the beach caves last summer, from the same sickness that left your housekeeper's face marked so. Should I have let her starve? What kind of dying would that be?

A breeze from the bay scattered the ashes, as though someone had kicked them with a heavy boot. Arthur sighed heavily, patted the boulder and straightened up. He thought about it.

Well, he said. And if I said it is the type of law that only an inhuman race, a Goblin race – yes, take that expression off your face, I know you know what that word means – would practice? If I said I cannot see any law in it?

But you can, Arthur.

Arthur swore, because it was true.



The convicts all had stories about Changelings to tell.

There was a lightness to their voices when telling such things, to distract from the darkness of their fear. Only thing to do is ignore em til they go away, they would say. Little pesty brutes. Goblins trying to pass off English. They were pale-eyed, mute imitations of what was human, like clay figures baked in an oven that had emerged deformed. They couldn't keep journals, or answer letters that were addressed to them, or initiate conversations. They kicked over milk buckets. They pinched babies. They wrote rude words in lichen on gravestones. They had no stories of their own to tell, no laws to follow.

Don't interfere in laws that aren't yours to interfere with, said the Changeling King, tossing the baby into the grave, swinging the walking stick over Karabarabulu's face. Same goes to you, said Arthur, signing one order for a convict's hanging with a flourish, another order for Miss Shaw's whipping.

Changelings were dangerous.

They disliked the messy emotions that had brought many of the convicts to Sydney in the first place. Desperation, fear, greed, hatred – they lacked the vocabulary for it, the way Arthur lacked the vocabulary to tell Bennelong, please, do not follow me to England. Shame was what stumped Changelings the most. They disliked this common feeling that kept convicts and Indians apart, kept them from trading with one another more often, from dancing and singing and making jokes. Changelings, lacking education in their letters, could not understand that for which there are no letters to describe. They disliked friendship. They disliked England's greatest shame, which was her fear of the untranslatable. Convicts killed Indians, and marines killed convicts, because everyone was afraid of how meaningless their jokes, their love letters, their pleas

for help sounded in another language. It was easier to be cruel than funny. It was easier to be the Changeling King than Bennelong. It was easier to be Goblin than human.



The morning that he left Sydney, Commodore Arthur Phillip dug a small pyre in the ground, piled it with dry twigs and leaves and chips of firewood, and burned his letters to Miss Shaw. He didn't write anything in his journal or anything in a letter to Sir Joseph Banks about that day. The New South Wales Corps gathered before the Government House and fired some canons, sounded some drums, sang an anthem, and dipped their colors. It was a clear day with sea breezes coming in from the west. Arthur tried to inhale the charcoal smoke from his small fire, but far off in the bush Bennelong's people were burning shrublands again and the smell of far-off frying eucalyptus was all that filled the air. He picked up a heavy stone and threw it on top of the fire.

He wondered what Bennelong and Karubarabulu would think when they crossed the equator. I must go over the numbers for Prime Minister Pitt, he thought. 1,012 acres in cultivation. 3,470 acres cleared. 105 sheep. 15 cows. 43 hogs.

Killing Bennelong's dog was almost necessary, he wrote to Miss Shaw, almost a stage rehearsal, for what Arthur would now do to Bennelong. Will I have to beat Bennelong with a saucepan, he wrote, to get him to wear trousers every day, make him forget he is in a strange country in a first place, to raise his tippler of brandy and toast, *To the King!*

Even now, with Miss Shaw unable even to spell her own name, Arthur could see her response in his mind, see her tight, even handwriting. Personally I think

Karubarabulu will die from the rain, Miss Shaw wrote to him. It rains too much in England.

Arthur kicked some dirt over the fire, straightened his uniform, and went to board his ship.

I wonder what Bennelong and Karubarabulu will think of the Atlantic, he thought.

Enough of that, Miss Shaw wrote in her letter. You need to take care of yourself now. You're uninvolved. She wrote the final paragraph in German, and explained to him all the ways that things would turn out all right in the end, except Arthur did not read German.

The sails that would take him to England were blindingly white and crisp. The tight blue sky and the ship and the bush and the grey houses of Sydney had never seemed so far apart from one another.

It was just another colony, in the end.

Arthur sat in his quarters below deck and looked over his maps and his notes. He rubbed a finger back and forth over the sinews on his hand. Sydney to Cape Horn, then to Rio de Janeiro, then to the Canary Islands, Portsmouth, London, then finally to the King of England. By the time the ship would dock it would be that same old English summer, and there would be primroses. He thought Bennelong and Karubarabulu would like primroses. He thought they would like wearing shoes and crossing the Atlantic and toasting wine. Maybe it would be different for Goblins. Maybe they would forget about what was left behind, and would like everything that they hadn't even known was there was to like.

He kept his thoughts straight. There was a new numbness to his old spear wound.

No more paying attention to things that aren't worth your time, he thought.

By the time that he would arrive at the King's court, the only piece of writing related to Miss Shaw would be her prison sentence, locked and lost in some London office. He would stop writing that which could only be misread. England was not New South Wales, it was a place that needed no translation, where people no longer worth believing in were sent across oceans. Bennelong was right. It was better to destroy what you loved quickly, Crunch, Swish.

Arthur looked through the porthole in his quarters and saw Miss Shaw's handwriting, scrawled across the waves, in the wispy clouds.

It was easy to read.

It was no good, he thought. Everything that people found worth disliking. Everything that people didn't find worth risking.

He almost stood up to see if he could catch sight of the Government House, but he looked down at his maps instead. They would have to celebrate the crossing of the Equator with the usual ceremonies, although Bennelong and Karubarabulu would probably become alarmed at the shifting constellations. A copy of Miss Shaw's letter would have assured them that Arthur wouldn't let anything bad like dying happen to them until they reached the Thames. There Bennelong would go from being the Changeling King to the Cannibal King, as the Royal Court would dub him. Arthur would go from being His Excellency Governor Arthur Phillip of the Sydney Experiment to Arthur Phillip Inspector of Sea Fencibles on half-pay, paying off his dead, divorced wife's bills, awaiting another commission in the wars against the French, or at the very

least a government appointment. Karubarabulu would die of pneumonia of the chest, as Miss Shaw's letter had predicated. She would be buried in sacred ground filled with ghosts, in an Essex churchyard, but it was not the kind of sacred ground that either Karubarabulu or Bennelong could understand, not the kind of ghosts that either of them could recognize. The last time Arthur would see either of them would be when he caught sight of Bennelong, staring into a shop window on St. James' Street, coughing blood into a handkerchief. Arthur would back away, stumbling over a pile of horse dung, then duck behind a lamppost. It was one of the many things he did not think he was capable of doing, until he went and did it, which, in his later years, was all ever he said when asked to describe Commodore Arthur Phillip's service in Sydney, for the sake of the historical record, which, as a result of his refusal to say anything more, was left incomplete.



## A Complete Account

One month after Trafalgar, Captain Watkin Tench ran into Inspector of the Sea Fencibles Arthur Phillip in an inn near the Scottish border, and to hide the surprise and the awkwardness each man bought tipplers of sherry and refused the cigar that the other offered and discussed “that raggedy-ass” Napoleon as Tench called him, and Lady Hamilton who was out on the streets now although Lord Nelson’s will had said otherwise, had Arthur heard? Arthur had heard. Tench was on his way to Edinburgh to do a reading of his new book for Mrs. Clarissa Borrodaile’s salon, had Arthur heard that Tench had been published again? No, he had not. Tench pushed a copy across the table and Arthur leaned over to flip through the pages, incredibly soft and white. French Letters, Arthur said, reading the title. It’s a real page turner, Tench said. I was a prisoner of war aboard *La Purcellle* for three months, then another three months in Temple Prison. I was only a few cells down from where the King of France himself had stayed. He shrugged, his smile still elastic as ever, eyes blue as though they were dye-stained into his face. Well, Arthur said. Oh dear. Met some real interesting characters, Tench said, but you’ll have to buy a copy to find out. Arthur smiled uncomfortably.

The pause that followed was so long and so painfully filled with nothing but clanking ale mugs from the inn kitchen and bored laughter coming from the next table that after a while Arthur massaged his temples and said to Tench, this is something like a follow-up to your first book, correct?

Correct.

The first book being concerned with a complete account of the settlement at Port Jackson, correct?

Correct.

Or, should we say, *incomplete*?

Tench straightened in his seat, pulled at his jacket cuffs, his smile stiff. Before he could say anything Arthur asked him, his voice quieter than ever, if Tench understood why it was hard for Arthur to forgive him, for that which he hadn't written in his book.

You mean – *that*? Tench said.

That, said Arthur.

Tench looked at him, looked down at the empty tippler of sherry, reached out a hand and dragged "French Letters" back across the table.

*That* wasn't something that was going to go away very quickly, he said.

Arthur couldn't pick between saying something horrible or polite so he just nodded his head.

After that, it seemed like a good idea to buy more sherry. Although neither of them were the angry type of drunk (Arthur would usually just fall asleep, chin on chest, shining sliver of drool between lips, Tench only laughed harder and flirted more) the alcohol didn't improve the mood as they hoped, and instead they found themselves arguing about Tench's book. The precise wording of the orders that Arthur had given Tench, after the spearing on the beach. The way Arabanoo, the first translator of the colony, had vomited an orange stream into the dirt, after witnessing his first flogging. What had happened to Major Ross, on Norfolk Island. By ten o'clock they were both flustered and a little sweaty under the collar, and that was when Tench asked whether Arthur had heard anything about Bennelong since the Indian had returned to Sydney.

It is difficult to record the exact words Tench used when asking the question, the right tone of nonchalance. Criticism was later received from Tench, who, when reading this section of the account, objected at the non-attempt to phrase the sentence with all possible accuracy. *Are you a recorder, or are you a writer of fairy tales?* he said. *When you applied to record our histories, did you or did you not include An Excellent Memory as one of your skills?*

But that is not necessary to answer now.

For now, all that must be recorded is Arthur's reaction to Tench's question. Here is how Arthur reacted: he didn't, at first, but eventually he reached into his coat pocket and drew out a folded letter. Tench caught a glimpse of handwriting scrawled two sizes too big, letters hunched with the weight of ink, the tails of the gs and ys wobbly with effort.

Funny you should ask, Arthur said. I recently received news of his condition.

Tench frowned. Maybe Governor Macquarie wrote him the letter after too long a night of laudanum sniffing, he thought. But while that might have explained the crude handwriting, Tench didn't think that Arthur would ever keep a letter from a Governor of Sydney there in his coat pocket, so close to his heart.

I bet he was glad to get home, Tench said.

Well, said Arthur. He kept the letter half-folded in his hand so that Tench couldn't make out the words. He looked across the inn with his mouth looking thinner than ever and the wrinkles so deep they looked branded on his forehead, and he said, well, Bennelong's dead.

It'd been a challenge, at first, coming back to England, Arthur said. When he finally docked at Portsmouth, the first thing he heard was that his first wife had died, just as the ship had been rounding the Cape. Oh, Tench didn't need to get out of his chair.

Arthur had remarried: a Ms. Isabella Whitehead, had Tench heard? No, he hadn't. Big family in the cotton and linen business. But the real surprise had been that in her will, Arthur's first wife said that it was all right, all was forgiven, Arthur did not have to repay the debts and bills that she'd rung up on their Lyndhurst estate in his absence. Her own family would have to take care of it. Arthur was released. He was not her family. Arthur was in Bath for nine months, while Bennelong and Karubarabulu were in London paying their respects to the King, did Tench understand? Arthur was not well. He was shitting blood. It was a miracle that his first wife had left him the money for doctors and saunas and sea air at Bath. Who knows what would have happened otherwise. Once he did make his way up to London, it was in order to complain in person to the Admiralty, because after months of sending them pleading letters, they'd finally given him another ship to command, a ninety-gunner in disrepair but still better than nothing, and he made it all the way down to Portsmouth, his coach bumping along ice and mud rutted highways, before finding out at the docks that there'd been some kind of mix-up, someone had received the wrong letter, Arthur shouldn't be there, Arthur was a mistake. So he went to London to complain. They couldn't do this to him. He'd been the Governor of Sydney. Had they forgotten? It was in London that he'd caught a glimpse of Bennelong on St. James' Street, staring at a top-hat display through a window, but they did not speak to one another. Bennelong was coughing and snuffling into a handkerchief and wiping the mess on his trousers. As Arthur slid sideways to hide behind a lamppost, he thought for a second that Bennelong had caught a glimpse of him, but the Indian's eyes remained black and fixed on the shop-glass. There's things I'm capable of that I'll never know until I do them, Arthur thought, resting his forehead against the cool iron pressure of the lamppost. But he didn't tell Tench this.

I heard Governor Hunter himself asked Bennelong be sent home, said Tench. He did, said Arthur. He got him on board the Reliance but it didn't sail until well into the following year.

He didn't say that Karubarabulu had already died of pneumonia by then. Buried in an Essex churchyard. By the time Bennelong finally arrived at Sydney, the letter-writer had told Arthur, he looked like one of the little holes in crumb bread. He was a creature that wasn't there anymore. If you tried to pat him on the shoulder your hand would pass through as though it were mist. He'd gone from being solid and grinning as a gum tree to being the shade cast upon the ground. The letter-writer tried to take Bennelong in, tried to hustle him away from his squat hut still standing at Tubowgulle Point, away from whiskey and port-wine, away from Willemering and the third wife Arthur had forgotten had existed, all whom had turned their backs to him. What good could a shade possibly be for his people anymore? His third wife tried to lie with him but it was like begging love from a cloud. Willemering tried to engage him in spear-rituals but the spears passed through him bloodlessly as pins in a doll. He could walk through the walls that the New South Wales Corps had built around the barracks and the liquor storages. He even walked through the walls of the Government House once, but Lieutenant-Governor Hunter ordered him ejected immediately. Once it was clear that bullets passed through him as they would through a fog, Hunter told the soldiers to save their ammunition. Most foods passed through him as well. If he ate fruit or fish the food simply dropped from his throat down to his feet with a damp clump. Heavier, English foods had more staying power. The same went for wine. It made me grow cold to see him, the letter writer told Arthur, leaning against a stranger's barn with half the red stains on his shirt from wine and the other half from the blood he kept coughing up. By the time you are

reading this, the letter writer said, give or take, he won't be solid enough for the ground. He will sink quietly, thinly into the paved road that they were building from Rose Hill to the docks, the earth itself a sieve. I don't think he ever understood that those kinds of things could happen to people, could happen to *him*, the letter writer said to Arthur.

What kinds of things?

You know. Forgetting.

I don't understand it either.

But you do, Arthur. You've forgotten me.

Oh. You mean *that* kind of forgetting.

But Arthur did not tell Tench everything that the letter-writer had told him, and now, sitting together at a table in an inn near the Scottish border, all Tench did was shake his head.

Sounds like a damned shame, he said. You know, I always considered him a friend.

Arthur said that he need to wake up early in the morning, he had twelve miles to go before he reached the coast. Both men pushed back their chairs. Inspecting the coves in case that raggedy-ass Napoleon decides to make another run at the island, eh? said Tench, as they walked from the eatery.

Chief Inspector of Sea Fencibles Arthur Phillip shrugged. I wrote and wrote to the Admiralty asking for a ship, he said. This was the only position they had open for me, for the time being.

Ah, Tench said, embarrassed again.

That was the last conversation they would ever have.

When informed that this encounter would be documented, Chief Inspector of Sea Fencibles Arthur Phillip respectfully submitted the following critiques. *Don't make me come off so dour and dull next to Tench, he says. I know he's the bright eyed and bushy tailed type, but still. Please emphasize that I am dogged, hard-working and honest. Underappreciated and so on.* He hesitates, watching the brisk hand scrawl black ink across the page. *In order for this to be a complete account, you know, I really think it is necessary that you mention –*

It was not necessary.

## Running Water

Choosing the right Recorder to compile a complete account of the settlement at Port Jackson wasn't only about neat penmanship and a good memory. It was about making connections when there are none. Forcing names and dates and times to pull together, like magnets that refuse to attract.

For instance: the connection between Governor Arthur Phillip's secretary, Harry Rhys, and his housekeeper, Lily Shaw.

When informed that such an account was being compiled, Harry Rhys made a particular effort to describe the pyrate colonies of the Mosquito Shore, where he lived for some time, many years before he was Arthur's employee. He described the careful rules that the pyrates had for work rotations, whose turn it was to hop ship and set off to raid Kingston, Cartagena, St. Croix. He was particularly taken by the rules for cow slaughtering the first Sunday of every other month. Each pyrate work gang would cut up their cow into roughly equal pieces, Rhys explained. Then the pyrates would cut a hole through their piece, just big enough to slither their head through the bloody pink guts. Then, wearing the meat cozy as a jacket, they would walk home and cook it for dinner. If the weight made their shoulders ache too much, they cut some of the fat away and threw it in the bushes, for the ocelots.

*I always wished I'd the nerve to suggest that kind of thing to His Excellency, for maybe the convicts to do with kangaroos,* Rhys says.

He clucks his tongue at himself and shakes his head.

*But I know His Excellency,* he says. *He would have got all flustered and started asking questions. 'Pyrates? What? You? When? How? Describe.'*



*It would have been a description, he sighs, not worth getting into.*

It would have been a description of why Arthur should resist the temptation to surround himself with people like Harry Rhys or Lily Shaw. People like himself, who lacked the nerve to live without secrets. It is impossible for such people to be swept away by history: they are blurry, slippery, they dribble away like a raindrop across a pane of glass.

That is the job of the Recorder. To mop up the dribbling. To do the sweeping for those who refuse to be swept.

Governor Arthur Phillip described the first time his housekeeper saw one of Bennelong's people. He was working in his study inside the Government House, while Miss Shaw was in the garden, picking the fleas from Arthur's dog. Arthur liked the dog to keep his feet warm in bed at night, but couldn't stand the itching beneath his socks during the day. Greene, the ten-year-old ship boy with a pegleg, was sitting on the fence, pestering Miss Shaw for a rice-cake. Please, he kept saying, it's been a long week.

Hop off, Miss Shaw kept telling him.

He whinged. Just a rice-cake for a one legged boy. Shot off by a cannonball it was.

The ship must have sunk before it could take the rest of you, Miss Shaw told him. Neither of them realized that the old man was in the garden with them until the dog pressed its ears back and made a gurgling noise in its throat. They never learned his name – naked and black, salt-and-pepper colored beard, limbs shiny with fish oil. The three of them stood frozen in the garden, staring at one another. All had wary, flint-hard and hungry eyes. Just beyond the fence surrounding the Government House's garden the

bush trees stretched their wrinkly elbows, tracing thin strips of dry black shadow against the ground while everything else soaked in sunshine. Inside the house at his desk, Arthur had just finished signing an order for a hanging when he glanced out the window and saw what happened next. Miss Shaw placed her hands on the ship-boy's shoulders and pushed him forward. The young boy and the old man eyed each other, blinking. Miss Shaw's thin pale wrists, bleached from loads of dishes and laundry, the bones curved and sharp like the hilt of a knife, carefully slipped down the ship-boy's chest, undid two of his brass buttons, opening his shirt. Then, she took another step towards the old man, still pushing Greene along, his bare concaved chest a splash of eggshell white. The crickets wheezing in the bush needed tuning, same as a battered violin. Even watching the scene from his study, Arthur thought that the old man was worse than hideously ugly – Goblin ugly, he said to himself. However, then there was a sparkle in the old man's eye, and very gently he put his hand upon Greene's floppy brown hair. He rubbed the thin shirt fabric between his fingers, muttering to himself in a froggy voice.

Gerrof, Greene said, squirming as the old man lightly ran his fingers across his white skin. He stinks.

Don't offend him, Miss Shaw told him.

Then, just as quickly as he appeared, the Indian ducked away from the garden and disappeared into the coarse jumbles of bramble and ferns, backing away with feet that seemed to slip easily through the grass as though it were ice.

The whole scene gave Arthur a tingle at the back of his neck. He put the order for the hanging aside and took out a fresh sheet of paper. Dear Miss Shaw, he wrote at the top.

Often writing this account is like making a fist around running water. It is grabbing hold of damp splotches of light, a stream of middles and ends without a beginning, a shape without a depth. But that comes with the job.

Tench described playing catch with Bennelong and Greene the ship boy at dusk when the sun was a red yawn over the ocean. For a ball, Tench used a dried Indian head, which came from some island somewhere in the South Seas. *I made a trade for it with a whaler in Nantucket*, Tench says, watching the quill scrawl his words with all possible accuracy upon a white piece of parchment. *Back when I was being held prisoner on board a ship near Cape Cod, during the American War. I forget what the whaler wanted in return.*

The head was so withered and dried-up you could hardly tell it had worn a human expression once – the ears and nose had long since disappeared into crackled grey skin. It lifted and fell in lean and easy arcs between the three of them, Tench, merry, alert, periwinkle-eyed, Greene swearing when his pegleg slipped on the sand, Bennelong with his clump of a greasy beard, arrogant and grinning and diving to make one-handed catches. The air was hot and restful, the texture of wool. It was an easy and familiar pattern. Often Lily Shaw and sometimes even Harry Rhys would leave their chores unfinished so that they could watch. The shrunken head dropping into Tench's cupped palms, then Bennelong's, then Greene's, then Tench's. Again and again. There was nothing jumbled about it. You could forget there had been a beginning, or that there would ever be an end. It was just circles, going around and around and around. It was hardly worth description. It was hardly worth a memory even, which is why none of them remembered, and none of it was ever described. But that too comes with the job of a Recorder.

Lily Shaw is old and putting ginger extract in her eyes for her cataracts, only turning her head now and again to watch the handwriting (thin and dainty like handwriting she's never seen before) pick its way across the page like an Indian walking across hot sand. *I have laundry to do, you know*, she says. She is the most uncooperative of them all. She does not care if there is no room for her in a complete account. She refuses to speak. Her one good eye strives at the paper as though she could almost read the past. Like she could see Bennelong and his mob of warriors bellowing outside the Government House. Or the Governor's dog, with its head in pieces on the ground. For a moment, it almost looks as though she approves of how smooth and neat and readable it all looks, written on expensive parchment. Bennelong shakes his fist at her. The Governor's dog crouches against the house in the noon heat, its expression morose and disappointed. Then Lily shouts *bark, damn you, why don't you ever bark*, then her saucepan comes down and the dog's expression soars in pieces across the grass. *It's a damned shame*, Tench sighs about Bennelong, about the dog. Lily agrees. Everything that was a damned shame kept tossing from one side of her head to the other in circles and circles and circles. There was nothing jumbled about a description of a damned shame. There was no beginning or end to them. The damned shames were hardly worth including, even for the sake of completion.

It is the Recorder's job to sweep these descriptions together, to keep history from spinning in place. Keep it moving. Make it fit. Unfortunately, people only ever want to describe the moments that don't.

Such as:

Governor Arthur Phillip described the way Lily Shaw kept pestering Reverend Johnson for more and more religious pamphlets. I like looking at the pictures on Sunday, she said. It touched both the Reverend and Arthur very much. Arthur even asked her about the pamphlets in one of his letters to her. How did she think the illustrations in Dr. James Stonehouse's Admonitions against Sabbath-breaking compare with those in Most Important Duties of Christianity? After Arthur realized what was going on between Miss Shaw and Lieutenant Tench, he was too polite to ask her opinion on William Burkitt's An Exhortation to Chastity. More pamphlets today, Miss Shaw? the Reverend Johnson would ask her when they passed each other on the street. Yes please, Reverend, Miss Shaw would say. Neither Arthur or the Reverend ever found out that she would cut up pamphlets and turn them into playing cards. Dr. James Stonehouse's head for the Jokers. The heads of the Sabbath breakers for the Jacks. Soon there wasn't a convict hut in the colony that hadn't traded sewing needles, whiskey, a blunt harpoon, for a set of Lily Shaw's playing cards. She knew how to keep her secrets.

Such as:

Surgeon General White described how Yarramnundi, the local shaman, healed one of Bennelong's old spear wounds by spitting water on his chest. *It made the hair on the back of my neck stand up*, White said with a shudder, because all of a sudden, he remembered how years ago, back when he was stationed in Rio de Janeiro, where just like the sky in Sydney the clouds were no more than pale see-through stains against the sky, a local mango-hawker had cured him of his leg twitching. It was White's first week

in Brazil. Maybe it was the sun that made him slobber sweat, or the acid sting of the spider bite on his ankle that no amount of Spanish Fly ointment would soothe, but he'd gone over one hundred hours without sleeping. No matter how much he tried to lie immobile in his bed, his left leg keep twitching like grease in a pan. During his one hundredth hour of insomnia, of numb drowsy wandering around the reeking docks, a Brazilian mango-hawker, knitted with wrinkles, stooped over his mango baskets, asked him what was wrong. White tried to explain, pointing at his leg.

*I was at the point where I was thinking about taking one of my saws and just cutting it off,* White says, picking up a spare quill on a spare piece of parchment and imitating a sawing motion. *Anything to make it stop.*

The mango-hawker nodded. Here is something that will heal anything, he said. What? said White. The mango-hawker then took a sip of water from the leather flask on his belt, leaned forward and spat on White's shin. White hit him in the face with his revolver butt. He slept as still and as motionless as a bag of potatoes that night.

When Governor Arthur Phillip was speared in the chest, Surgeon General White stood over his bed, looking at the way the spear-head fit neat and tight as a nail in his collarbone. The Governor was panting and sweating, but had long since blacked out from the laudanum and from the shock of having Bennelong turn on him so inexplicably. White rubbed his jaw, hesitated, went outside and took a sip of from a rainwater puddle beneath the front porch, came back and spat the contents on the pink, angry wound. When he turned around, Miss Shaw was in the doorframe, staring at him. There were actually tears of horror in her eyes.

It's just – Surgeon General White said.

Oh hell, he said. Never speak of this. To anyone.

Lily Shaw sits now, putting ginger extract in her eye for her cataracts. *I can tell you a banging good story about how our Surgeon used to spit on his patients*, she says. She looks disappointed when informed that it is not necessary. It is the first time she volunteers any information, and so it is unfortunate that the offer must be turned down.

All the best Recorders of histories these days receive their training from the National Impressionist Institute, just outside Whitby. It used to be a one room shack with rotting boards, but then Cook came back from one of his voyages and put forth the money needed for building a real National Institute with Greek columns and all. There is even a statue of Minerva above the front door. It is a tedious training process. The Philosophy of Mind Reading. The Biology of the Footnote. The best professor was an old water-nymph, who'd lived on land for so long his head actually grew real hair instead of kelp. It was whispered in the hallways that he'd been picked as the official recorder for a biography of the Sea Lords. However, Calisto disagreed with a few key facts in the Introduction, and thus he had been exiled to dry land, where he quickly became a don of the College. His lectures were popular – brisk, entertaining, yet informative. But then, a textile factory was built a few miles away, and the machine reverberations that were inaudible to his students made his hands so twitchy that one morning he simply disappeared. His students waited for an hour in the lecture hall, before gradually withdrawing one by one to meet with their tutors, to catch up on their studying in the library. It was said that he threw himself into a creek, just to stop his hands from twitching, but his gills didn't work properly anymore and his nymph-body shriveled up into silt. He was one of the first of his kind to leave, but not the last. Universities across the country began having trouble finding Elf-scholars to teach History of Runes.

Eventually the study was dropped all together. That was around the time when coal mines began disturbing dragon nesting caves deep under the ground. Mass migrations blocked out the sky, as the gull-sized lizards headed north. Hundreds of blacksmiths and seamstresses and shoemakers and clerks put down their work and headed outside, cricking up their necks, staring at the dark shapes flying impossibly high above the earth, wondering at it all. A century was ending and turning itself upside down and inside out. What was a Recorder of histories to do?

At its peak, the Institute had to field thirty to forty requests a year. Families from York who wanted a genealogy done, to check for Viking or warlock blood. The last sad stragglers from the Cantiaci and Icenii tribes, requesting a complete account of their warrior-queen Bouddicci's siege on Londinium, to be written in the Celtic they were forgetting as they spoke it. There were barely enough graduates to cope with them all.

This past year, the Institute received two requests – the first from a leprechaun who'd been in the McCourt family for decades, and accompanied young Dobey McCourt to Botany Bay, after Dobey was sentenced twelve years for goose poaching. It took less than a month for the creature to change its mind and catch the next French frigate back to Cork. But it wasn't the same country that had been left behind. Clots of black smoke from the cotton mills hung in the sky.

The creature filed an appeal at the National Impressionist Institute. *I wish to give a complete description of the ancient city of Cuthlain*, it read. *Because at the rate things are going, no one's going to care about keeping those kind of records anymore.*

The request was turned down. Nobody cares about keeping those kinds of records anymore.



The second commission was for a complete account of the settlement at Port Jackson. Although: it wasn't a request, really, because none of those who agreed to collaborate – Arthur, Tench, Rhys and so on – ever asked that such a project be completed in the first place.

Nevertheless: it will be completed.

In all honesty, it is hard for a Recorder to find work these days. Writing is about grasping at icicles now, not at running water. The facts are cold, sharp, unmistakable. There's always a point. There is a shape which the eye can follow. There are edges in which the descriptions are contained. The professors at the National Institute say the Curriculum must be rethought. It isn't the same for a Recorder out there these days, they say. Recorders must be taught clerk-skills in case they should ever have to take up a desk position, you know, to pay the rent until their services are requested again. They are right. Clerking is a useful profession. What is the point in grasping at the liquid streams of Lily Shaw's story, the droplets scattering this way and that, the figments, the fragments, the flotsam of a past that is only hers to tell. This is a profession that does not wash the hands clean. It dirties them with the dried-up smears of improbable ink. That is the difficulty in choosing the right kind of Recorder. All that dirty work.

But Recorders shouldn't complain. They have been taught their craft by an underwater creature. Recorders know of grasping at running liquid, of drinking from underwater stories.

This is a description of someone falling underwater:

There was a prisoner sailing on the Third Fleet, sentenced to twenty years of hard labor in Botany Bay. His description has been documented in this account, for the sake of completion. The sun warped the air. The other prisoners in the hulk huddled against the rotting timber, clinging to whatever knick-knack they'd managed to smuggle onboard. A cracked mirror, a wooden comb, a rusted snuff tin. Air, the prisoner thought, I need some fresh air. His skinny ankles slipped easily from the manacles that had been a perfect fit a few weeks ago. He walked across the ship deck with his arms straight at his sides, shoeless, his shirt a greasy rag. When he went overboard and hit the ocean water, it was indescribable. So: it will not be described. He was fished out, whipped for attempting to escape, soaked and scrubbed in salt-brine, then put back into irons. But I was only trying to get away from the heat, the prisoner wanted to say. I only wanted to cool off. I had to get away. The flogging left him dead soon afterwards, even though he wouldn't have minded living.

*That's what you get, for not having the nerve to stay awhile.*

That was what Rhys said, when the previous description was read to him. Feedback was welcome, but Rhys said he really didn't think there was anything else he could add. *I wasn't on board that ship that day, he says. Everything I've had to say about the prisoners, whether they came on the First Fleet or the Second or the Third, well, I've said it.*

Discussion followed. Motions were made, waving the quill dipped in ink about in the air.

*All right, Rhys says at last, maybe there is a thing or two that I could add. That prisoner who jumped – he was a pyrate through and through. He was content as anything, walking around in the pyrate colony on the Mosquito Coast, wearing a slab of dead cow around his neck.*

He paused. He thought. *That sounds about right*, he said.

It did.

That is the tricky thing about recording. The quill-tip is stunted and the words are just inky shadows that don't say anything, and the truth of it is glittering just beyond the peripheral vision. But then the truth of it is rearranged. Then, even though Rhys already said everything there was to say about the prisoners of the First and Second and Third Fleets, there is still a beginning and an end that is missing, that will now be added. It is a peaceful feeling then, to write what is accurate.

There are other things that must be described, accurately.

Such as:

Lily Shaw picking out fleas from the Governor's dog with Greene the ship boy sitting on the fence banging his pegleg against the wooden board.

That's a funny looking dog, Greene said.

It's all right, said Lily Shaw. The only thing that's funny about it is it won't bark. Won't say a thing. I don't think I've ever heard it give a squeak. What kind of animal doesn't have anything to say? Greene shrugged. Lily Shaw put a flea in a cloth pouch around her neck. She looked at the dog. Sometimes – she said, and shook her head. Sometimes, she said, I swear. Why don't you bark, damn you? Why so quiet?

Such as:

Lily Shaw dropping the saucepan, backing away from the dog after its head had leapt in pieces across the ground. She started running. Stay, stay, the Governor cried after her. Stay awhile. Stay awhile. Stay awhile.

Such as:

Arthur feeding the dog milk-soaked rice from his palm, sleeping with the dog at the foot of his bed, even though it was a funny looking dog that never barked, not even when his housekeeper had a strange turn and beat it to death and then ran away. Is that what happened? Lily Shaw, putting ginger extract in her eyes for her cataracts, why so quiet?

There are these things that must be described as well.

The moist, grey tongue of a vacant body swinging from the hanging tree.

The sweet scent of gum trees that clung to jackets like cobwebs when it rained.

The fleas Miss Shaw removed from Commodore Arthur Phillip's dog, which she would then put in a cloth pouch and empty on Lieutenant Tench's pillow.

The shafts of light between the sawtooth tree branches that cut up the frail hot sky, as Miss Shaw walked through the bush away from the colony – heading where? – bent and bowing under the heat.

The purple highways of scabs that the flogging left on her back.

Miss Shaw saying, but I wouldn't mind dying! then living.

The prisoner of the Third Fleet saying, but I wouldn't mind living! then dying.

The others who came on the First, Second, Third Fleet not saying much of anything at all. Although there were others who argued that they said far too much. Everything there was to say in fact. The nerve.

Lily Shaw is old and half-blind now, watching a hand scrawl words on fancy paper. It will be a complete account of the settlement at Port Jackson. It will be so inclusive that it will hurt. It will cover her like water. It will cover her like a word, drowning in an ink blot on the page, becoming something readable.

## Walk to Dublin

We've been walking to China for three days now. We walk past spindly tree branches that rake across our faces. We walk over roots attached to grey hunched-over trunks, all dead from having been struck by electrical storms long ago. Sometimes Widget lags behind, scrabbling in the rocky graves of dried-up streambeds on his hands and knees. He was always so comfortable with jobs that involved crawling, was born to scour a ship deck with a hunk of sandstone. He picks out pebbles that look good for sucking and hands them to us one by one. He gives me one with a tiny fly fossil in the middle. I say: I don't want a bug in my mouth, he says: but you know, things are that desperate. I put it under my tongue. It's cool and round, but sucking on it doesn't make my tongue feel any less furry or my spit taste any less awful. We walk on through the bush. I keep looking at the greenish underbelly of the storm clouds peeking in between the tree branches. What kind of a country is this, I think. Even the sky looks as bruised as my insides.

When the oldest of the Irishmen finally drops dead, crumpling like a rope cut loose from a mizzen sail, no one remembers if it's still the third day of walking or if somehow we're still dragging behind in the second. Oh Jesus, says Strunk, let's set him on fire. Aint no time to dig a fucking hole in the ground. His breath is acid in my face like sulphur. A fire? A fire, here? I say, pointing at the dried-up thicket all around us. You want everybody burnt alive? Everyone stares with blank expressions at their feet when I keep on talking. I know my voice cracks with every other word but still I can't stop

myself. He was afraid of dying without a burial, I say. He was terrified of banshees taking his fingerbones to use for pipes. Indian dogs eating his guts.

This isn't true. I don't even know if the old man had a name. All I know is he had a slunking walk, and a T-shaped tattoo under his chin that slowly turned into an I as his skin shrunk away. In the end, we kick some leaves over the corpse's face and leave it as is. I wait behind an acacia tree pretending to massage my hunger cramps until the others have moved on ahead. Then I kneel down next to the body and I check his raggy pants for pockets, and finding those, for items, not because I think I'll find anything useful but because well, you never know. All of a sudden Strunk jumps out from behind a green leafy bush, a drop of sweat rolling off his beaky nose, crying Ha ha. You think you're so clever Lily Shaw. Be my guest, I say, and step back. When Strunk sees there isn't anything to be found, he scowls, but then his face brightens and he hooks a finger into the old Irishman's gummy mouth, fishing around until he finds the pebble that the old man was sucking on, and he pops it into his mouth like it was Christmas candy.

Now I don't have to waste no time no energy no breath trying to find two pebbles, he says. But *you* do! I stare at the shredded strips of the trouser cuffs around his ankles when he walks away, hooting like a schoolboy. I spit the bug pebble out of my own mouth and leave it lightly on the old dead Irishman's lips, because I didn't really want it anyway. Then I put another few leaves over his face, and then I check his pockets one more time. What kind of a person doesn't even carry a tealeaf on him. I tell you.

Parrots scream and chatter in the branches as we keep on going, bark hanging from the trees like shredded skin. I wouldn't try to guess how the others are doing just now. I don't know any of them too well. Strunk and Widget and all the others didn't even know I'd be joining them for the journey, until they found me wandering around

the saplings at border of the marines' camp, waiting for them to finally appear, as I'd been told they would, at sundown. While I'd been waiting I even buried a few butterflies in the ground with their wings still twitching, then arranged a few eucalyptus sticks on top of them in an old rune shape. This is what you're supposed to do in Devon before you set out across the moors, trying to run away from someone who doesn't want you to go. I don't know why I thought it would help. We all left the colony with cheekbones gone gill-like from hunger, a yellow tint creeping across our eyeballs. Myself, I've reached the point where I have to keep reminding myself my heart wants to keep on moving even though my feet don't. Every step forward is a new chapter. Every new breath is a happy ending. I am not just a tired and stupid and automatic moving thing. My mind has a history to record, this history of my walk to China. Someone needs to tell it to someone. I may as well tell it to myself, here, now, as long as I'm in the sweet aching middle of living it.

Caroline is the only other woman in the group. She likes to make me wince by banging on her pregnant belly with a balled up fist, like she enjoys how much I think she can't take it. She has blonde hair and a flat hard face that reminds me of a grim-faced angel tattoo on a sailor's back, with pink circles of ringworm on her scalp for her halo. The sun glowing through the clouds already did its dirty work on her. Now she's chanting countryside songs to herself. Sometimes she shouts the choruses at the treetops like she's beer-stupid. She grabs my hand, and then Widget's, swinging them back and forth. She keeps talking about all the kindnesses waiting for us in China.

Just like the officers say, Lily, she says. Her voice is limping worse than her bare and blistered feet. You and your inn-keeping, you think you know how to welcome a



traveler? Wait til you see those Chinamen. Wait til you see them come running up waving those feathery fans at you.

Wish Dublin was only a short walk away, says Widget. He goes back to singing, heaving his way through thorn bushes, curled shavings of maroon bark snapping beneath his footsteps. In Dublin's. Fair City. Where the girls – he winks at us. Are so pre-tty –

Dublin! Caroline says. Wish I could walk right past that tree and be back in Piccadilly. Nobody back there trying to turn me into some kind of dairy maid.

She bellows out the ballad lyrics so loud she almost drowns out the parrots in the treetops. Alive. Alive, OH-oh. Alive. Alive, OH-oh.

In China, I bet the old Irishman would've been able to pick his own plot of land. It would've been good land too, the kind that almost ploughs itself. I try to think of other things the old Irishman might have dreamt of. Potatoes, maybe, bulging up from the ground by the armfuls, none of them stained with the purple warts of parasites. Dryad women, perhaps, stepping shyly out of elm-trunks with their brown pointed hands. Nothing like the trees in this country, all gummy and peeling and still.

Don't worry about the Governor, Lily, no need to worry none, Caroline keeps saying to me. How much time has passed? We are walking forward, always, crushing the withered brown skeletons of leaves beneath us, panting slightly. My tongue is so dry and swollen it knocks hard against the insides of my teeth like it was turning into a nub of bone. We stop by a cabbage tree to look for worms, in the cracks of dark soil between the swollen tree roots. Widget drops the thick pink bodies greedily into his mouth while Caroline keeps up her wild talk. In China I won't have to work for no Governor no more if I don't feel like it. When we get there – we'll have to swim across the river of

course but the current won't be anything strong – you'll see those Chinamen princes. Lily. You won't have to beat any of their nasty savage Indian dogs, no, nothing like those nasty chores back there for *that* Governor. Them Chinamen, they got houses full of ivory and jewelry and you'll get something like two – three! – guineas a month just for polishing those palace floors.

I nod. I don't want to talk about the Governor. Instead, I take a worm, and bite down it, hard. My mouth fills with its juice. I walk. I try not to think of all those times that I slipped into the Governor's study whenever he was out, surveying land or parleying with Indians or whatever it was he spent his time doing. Piled across his desk I would see thin sheets of paper with even thinner scribbles of ink. Sometimes there would even be maps. I'd crane my head to the side and touch them lightly with my fingertips. I'd wonder in which jagged corner was Botany Bay; wonder which river separated me from the Chinamen who were waiting for me to arrive. If I tried, I could almost see the laugh lines wrinkling round their eyes when they smiled at me in greeting.

China, gettin closer to China, Caroline and Widget chant, swinging hands back and forth. I chew on my worm. I walk.



Let's say it's been three days now since I ran away from the colony. That's three days that the Governor has spent without me, without anyone to toast his bread the way he likes best, black around the crusts and soft white in the middle. That's three months since Strunk and Widget and Caroline and the rest started talking about making a run to China, three months since Caroline tried to get me to join in, can you organize something for us Lily, some dried beef, a compass, I know you can. That's three years since I spent my first night shivering on the urine-soaked floor of a Fleet Prison cell. But

that last number isn't really anyone's business to think about. Not even mine, even if this is my history and nobody else's. The other numbers deserve to be documented, I guess, maybe even described, recorded, explained, whatever you want to call it, so long as I need a reason to keep forcing one foot after the other through these crackling layers of bush.

When it comes to thinking about my decision to leave the Governor, I keep coming back to why things with the Governor's dog turned out the way they did. Our first day on shore, we all arrived half-starved, homesick and dogless. It didn't take me more than a minute of standing on the beach, feeling the oven-hot winds blasting in my face, looking inland at the wall of white trunked gums and scrappy khaki bushes before I thought to myself, I bet even the dogs in this country are as mean-looking. Harry Rhys told me how much it pained the Governor, forcing the officers to leave their hunting hounds behind in Portsmouth before the ships set sail. You would never guess, solitary bastard that he is, said Rhys. But since his divorce he does prefer keeping a pet around. Still, he can't be feeding dirty dogs *and* dirty lags, can he?

We were setting up a fire pit on the beach, to roast a leg of lamb specially brought in a barrel from England for the Commencement Day dinner. I'd never worked with Rhys before, but he needed someone with clean fingernails and a clean mouth, and I guess Lieutenant Tench put in a good word for me. Tench had this idea that the arrangement we'd made between us while sailing on the *Charlotte* was going to continue on indefinitely, even after we had come ashore. But I knew he was still keeping one eye open for better living options. Just like I was.

Major Ross sure wasn't too happy about leaving behind those prize-winning beagles of his, I tell you, said Rhys, turning the heavy gutted lamb on the spit. But else could His Excellency do?

That meat's gone wormy, I said.

His Excellency probably figured he was already bringing enough bitches along with him. Ha ha.

I sighed, then went and poked along the edges of the bush, the ferns and grass pale as straw, but a few wizened berry bushes here and there all the same. I made a little pile of fruit in my apron, making a note of how thin and grey the soil looked draped over the stones. I can tell you that an innkeeper's girl doesn't do much farming, besides planting foxgloves to keep gremlins away from the barn, or burying crates full of opium in her uncle's potato patch. Still, I had a feeling that if this Governor of ours was picturing rippling fields of barley in his colony, then he was in for a surprise.

When I came back Rhys was shouting red-faced at Mary Higgins who kept trying to feed logs into the fire like he told her to, but there was something funny with the wood and instead of burning it kept crumbling into sand. What kind of a country is this? I thought. Mary kept crying and Rhys kept yelling as I took the cauldron meant for the lamb-gravy and filled it with the berries instead and placed it over the fire. There's nothing like a tart berry sauce, to cover the taste of wormy meat.

Like most of the others, I saw the Governor up close for the first time during his Commencement Day speech. He had a Jewish looking chin and sad serious eyes, was my first impression. He sat at a folding table with Major Ross on one side of him with Reverend Johnson and Surgeon General White on the other. We sat on the beach while he was giving his speech, hundreds of us, shoeless and lean with our clothes stripping

from our arms like ragged petals. While he was talking Caroline moulded a penis out of the sand, then put on little strips of eucalyptus bark for the hairs. Those who do earn their food will not eat it, the Governor told us. I forget the rest. He had a distant way of speaking that made it sound like there was a gap the size of an ocean between what he was saying and what he was really thinking. The marines stood in a circle around us, and every now and then when the Governor paused they rattled some drums and blew on a wheezy fife that hurt my ears. I entertained myself by looking up and down the cove and calculating good hiding areas for boxes of tea, barrels of wine. Old habit of mine – even though I had a feeling I wasn't going to be doing any tea smuggling anytime soon. Those days were gone. I was gone. I didn't really understand where yet, or how I would ever find myself again. What kind of person was Lily Shaw going to be, in this new world of ours? What would she do with herself, without the dirty work that kept her so busy back in Devon?

Finally the marines started firing volleys into the sky as though they'd just seen a dragon herd whizzing overhead, and then Rhys came for me and Mary Higgins and herded us away to the Governor's tent, to help serve the dinner. The officers tramped in as we were laying out the last of the silverware, chatting and already a little drunk on port. You know if it hadn't been for Bunker Hill, Major Ross was complaining, we wouldn't even be here in the first place. We would not have lost the penal settlements in Georgia. Whatever that meant, it started up an argument that involved plenty of table banging. I decided it was time I took my payment, so I went up to the table and slipped a fork into my apron pocket, then pretended I didn't notice when Rhys stared at me with an evil look in his eye. Melted silver from a fork could get me a gin flask from Strunk. A gin flask could get me a sack of dried peas from Lieutenant Bradley-King. A sack of dried

peas could get me a pouch full of tobacco from Caroline. And on and on and on. It never mattered to me, how a trade would end, how big a pile of goods I could hoard for myself. What excited me was the movement of it all – the passing of items from one hand to another. The fibbing and arguing and sneaking that went into a bargain done well. That was what had been so hard to explain to the Judge, back in England. But where did you bury the money, you lying little cunt, he kept saying over and over again, his wig slipping down his forehead. But there is no money, I kept repeating. Don't you see? That was why rum-running pirates and vampires looking to sneak themselves into London always took the same route from the Bude coastline to Mr. Shaw's Hawksheade Inn on Bodwin moor. Because Lily Shaw did not smuggle for money. It was the secrecy, and the scheming, and the lying that she enjoyed. And now, that was what would be hard to give up.

To the King, to the King, the junior officers at the end of the table chanted, swilling port in their glasses.

Mary Higgins and Rhys moved to and fro, setting down plates with a slab of brown lamb in the center. I looked at the one they placed before the Governor, and sucked in my breath when I saw the flickering tail-end of a maggot.

We don't even know if the King is alive or not, complained Major Ross. How are we supposed to know anything about anyone at all, here, at the bottom of the world of all places?

All reports at Cape Town assured us the King is alive and well, Major Ross, the Governor said in his grave, patient voice from the head of the table. For now, let us say grace.

There was something about the expression on his face then that struck me, when he sat there frozen with his mouth full of wormy meat, watching his officers spit and gag the first bite of their victory dinner on the tablecloth. It gave me a funny twist in the chest for some reason I can't explain. He just looked so tired and sad, but dignified too, even with his cheeks puffed full of maggoty lamb, as though he couldn't help hoping things would turn out all right, even though it was clear they had long since turned hopeless. Rhys was groaning and rubbing a hand over his forehead, trying to back away into the farthest corner of the tent.

What now, what now, he muttered. I tell you if this was the Mosquito Coast – I left the berry sauce in the cauldron by the fire pit, I told him.

What?

The berry sauce. By the fire pit. You should go get it.

He stared at me with his mouth slightly open, pulling at the spade-shaped beard on his chin. Then he shook himself and ran out of the tent. All the officers were arguing about the food now, and I decided it wasn't likely that I could get close enough to the table to pocket a dessertspoon. Just as I was leaving I could hear Rhys clanging a ladle against the cauldron, when he was pouring the berry sauce thick and red and steaming over the Governor's lamb.

You prepared this, Mr. Rhys? the Governor said in that voice of his, that same calm and cold tone he used for everyone. That indeed shows some unusual foresight and planning.

I paused mid-step outside the tent. No one could see me, except for my shadow stretched against the coarse canvas.

No, said Rhys after a long pause. Then, reluctantly, as though he could already see everything that would now follow: Miss Shaw did.



I didn't know what to think, when Rhys sent me word that the Governor wanted to talk to me about my experience with running a household. By then the first rickety clay huts of the colony had already been built, the first mile of gums trees cleared away, their bark oozing trails of bloody sap when chopped at, like there really were Dryad-women hiding in there somewhere shedding tears. Caroline and I were put to work in the lime-kiln, and spent the days walking up and down the coast gathering oyster shells in our aprons. Once, washed up on the sand, I found a shell that I recognized as the same kind that hawkers sell in the Bude dockyards. Its pearly smooth inside was inscribed with flowing script, and I didn't need Tench to tell me what it said: A Presente Frome The Sea Side. It gave me a dry aching feeling in my throat, running my fingers over the sloping letters. I threw it into the lime-kiln and watch it spit and burn with the rest of the oysters. I knew I should have kept it. But I didn't want any more memories of Devon. I had left that far, far behind me now. Besides, memories are for histories, and until I started with this one, I didn't do histories. Just business.

The lime was used in making the bricks for the Governor's house, the first two-storied building of the colony and the only one with real windowpanes. When I first came into his study, I couldn't help staring at the walls, wondering if my little wonder shell was in there somewhere, smashed into the mortar. No one will ever read it now, I thought. The Governor sat there at his desk, making marks on a sheet of paper, and didn't acknowledge me for the longest time. I stood there, trying best I could to appear like I was staring respectfully at the floorboards when really I was giving the study an



eye-over, calculating where I would have placed the fake walls, the hidden safes, the dummy floorboards. Old habit of mine. You just never know.

You are acquainted with Lieutenant Tench, Miss Shaw, the Governor said finally, scrawling a signature on a piece of parchment.

It was an impersonal question, but for some reason it made my insides wobble. I felt like I was ten years old again and my uncle had caught me holding hands with the thresher boy inside a haystack. I hadn't been to Tench's tent for about a week now, but still. Officers don't tell everything to their Governors, do they?

I know him, sir, I said.

He's spoken very well of you since disembarkation. He said that the washing and mending of the high-ranking officers' uniforms was all conceived, organized and performed under your supervision, our second week upon shore.

Yes sir, I said.

It was true – me and Caroline and some girls put a little laundry unit together. My idea. We organize some cloths washing, I told Caroline and company. We tell the officers: hands off for now, until we get better settled in. This is what we ask for: three slabs of cheese for trousers, two cupfuls of lamp oil for shirts. That's what I do. I organize things. Old habit of mine. But the Governor didn't know that about me yet. Some things about me, nobody needs to know. Not even me.

Tench also spoke of – the Governor took another scrap of parchment, glanced at it, and crumpled it into a ball while still talking – how for our Commencement Day dinner, you attempted to remedy the celebratory mutton by preparing a sauce made of local berries.

Yes sir.

Inform me of your previous household experience in England, Miss Shaw.

I used to work in an officer's household, sir, I hazarded.

It is a pity that I cannot receive any letters of recommendation from your former employer then. What was the family's name?

I slid my eyes towards the study wall, looking at the grey mortar stuffed between the bricks. This is a new country, I thought. There is only room here for new memories. The family name, I said. Was Mortarson.

Hmmm, the governor said. An officer, you say?

From Devon, sir, near Bude. They had a son in the oyster business, I added, on a whim.

The Governor's damp eyes studied my clasped hands, my knuckles speckled with fleabites and pink patches from fading scabs. Another silence followed and I tried the best I could to keep from fidgeting. Then his stiff face relaxed a little, in a way I had not yet seen when he asked – And, Miss Shaw, what kind of experience do you have, disciplining dogs?

I could only look at him with a stupid expression.

He fiddled with the buttons on his dinner coat. He knew he'd taken me by surprise, and it was strange how embarrassed he looked. As though by revealing even the smallest bit of information about himself, he'd confessed something dirty and secret. Here was a man so distant and formal it was impossible to imagine him liking much of anything. Maybe popping ink-bubbles in his ink well, or giving speeches that nobody listened to or cared about. But now he was telling me that he was actually a man who liked dogs. Rhys had been right: it was hard to believe, but it was true.

We have been in contact with the naturals of this country, you understand, since the third day of disembarkation, he said. He started picking at the loose wrinkly skin between his knuckles, and I realized: he is nervous, talking to me. He has been rehearsing this conversation in his head, for the longest time, because he feels he is revealing the most intimate of secrets. What kind of other secrets was he keeping, if it pained him so much to confess, I like dogs?

It is difficult to say now, he went on. But I believe one of their chiefs is eager to barter with us, and I am interested in trading for one of their puppies.

He looked out the window. They have very fine dogs in this country. Albeit, somewhat savage ones.

The only other remarks I remember from his Commencement Day speech were the closing ones. He made a special announcement: any idlers would be exported to the islands of the Maori, where the cannibals would find better use for them. Your fingerbones will be used as toothpicks, he told us. It was same cold and calm tone of voice that he used for congratulating Lieutenant Tench for his salutes. A little less style next time, Lieutenant.

I tried to picture this Governor of ours lying awake at night feeling heartsick from the lack of a furry animal curled at his feet. I won't lie: it was hard.

Dogs don't trouble me, sir, I finally said.

I hope you are ready to take many pains in domesticating one, he said. He sounded relieved that the question was out of the way. You seem capable of hard work. And have good sound morals. He coughed. Exactly the type of citizen on whom the glory of this venture depends, he added.

Was I? The lines etched deeply on the sides of his mouth, which before had always seemed to me as heartless as the bush trees that refused to be cut down, suddenly seemed softer when I looked at them again.

It is a shame that Mrs. Brooks, the housekeeper who served my wife and I back on our estate in Lyndhurst, is not here to instruct you.

Yes sir.

Rhys will do his best. He has his own plot of land to take care of now, but he will inform you of the work expected inside the kitchen and with the laundry.

Yes sir.

I will instruct you personally on the matters concerning the dog, of course. He looked down at his desk. I do not have children, Miss Shaw, he said, his voice so formal it was an icicle. I frantically glued my eyes on the floorboards again.

Still, he said. I'm sure the disciplining of a small child is not half as rewarding as the domestication of an especially insolent wild beast.

Yes sir.

He began fumbling with his piles of parchment. Go inform Mr. Rhys of your assignment, Miss Shaw. Tell him to take particular care in the instruction of the making of toast.

I curtsied and left quickly. I knew right away what kind of luck it took, to be offered that kind of job in that kind of household. If you'd asked me at that moment, I couldn't have ever imagined leaving the colony for a Chinaman prince. When I walked out of that study, I had that same familiar rush in the tips of my toes again, like I was ready to get back to work, rushing around a kitchen throwing mutton bones in the Governor's favorite stew, tapping on the floorboards trying to find a hollow large

enough to hide the Madeira bottles that I would sneak from his cellar. It'd been a long time since my limbs had felt so full of motion. Not since that long cold night, when I had laid so sick and still in that urine soaked cell in Fleet Prison. But that's nobody's business to record in a history. Not even mine.



It took a long time for the puppy to arrive. Every morning I left a plate of milk outside the Government House, another stupid habit, I guess, for the Fairies which I knew were no use to me here. I would place it by the front door, rub the sweat out of my eyes and look down the hill at the city that was forming below. At night I grew used to sleeping through the shrieks of the bush birds, my fingers firmly jammed in my ears no matter how loudly they shook the tree branches. They'd scream with such banshee-wails that it used to make the Governor's quill slip across his parchment when he was writing his magisterial reports. He'd groan so loudly that I could hear him from behind his study door when I was kneading bread in the kitchen.

I also learned that the Governor was a man who worked eighteen hours a day, who hated the idea of going after the Indians with gunfire (we have troubles as it is, Major Ross, I heard him say, my ear pressed against the cool cedar of the closed study door), who assigned two hundred lashings to Widget, caught trading squirrel meat for rum, who kept himself so private and secret and solitary, not even his own officers could've imagined him wanting a dog to keep his feet warm in bed at night. It was hard even for me to believe it, most of the time.

I also learned that Mary Higgins – she who usually kept herself busy by slipping forged coins to the French sailors whose ships sometimes passed through the bay – also busied herself with gossip. Lily Shaw, the Governor's girl, lies in bed until nine every morning and eats a suet pudding every night. If she'd gone through the trouble to ask

me personally, I would've told her the truth: I was just as overworked and underfed as anyone else, trying to remember as quickly as I could all the tricks for hoeing gardens and ironing linens that I hadn't thought of in ages, not since I'd been Lily Shaw of Mr. Shaw's Hawkeshead Inn on Bodmin moor. But now I was Lily Shaw, the Governor's girl, and there was new work for me to do in New South Wales. There was the making of the Governor's candles so that he could continue writing letters to Prime Minister Pitt past midnight. There was experimental pie-making with wild bushes of spinach that grew under the gum trees. There was making his chamomile tea twice a day and washing his socks. And sometimes – now and again – there was burying hatchets in his garden before smuggling them across the creek to the men's camp. There was sewing a double layer of pockets inside his dinner jacket, so that I could fill the secret pouches with tobacco leaves before innocently carting them over to the women's camp, to do laundry. Was that kind of work too dirty for a new country? For a clean slate? If you'd asked me, I couldn't have answered. I don't know what the Governor would have done, if he ever found out the kinds of things I was doing right under his own nose. But it was like I couldn't help myself. It was like everything around me was so strange and different, there was a part of me I couldn't help from staying the same – even though there were times I made desperate vows to stop with the smuggling, start acting like the kind of housekeeper the Governor wanted in his colony, honest, simple, open – it was almost as though I couldn't stop. I couldn't help it.

The dog finally arrived as part of what I knew in my bones was a bad bargain – the Indian chief, Bennelong, had given him in exchange for a few pounds of fresh fish and one cup of crusty sugar – but I wasn't sure yet who would be coming off the worse for it. The Governor and I stood in the kitchen together and watched the animal gobble

down its first meal of pork rinds and fish guts. Besides the cockatoos and the kangas that always hopped through the barley field at dawn, it was the first Indian animal I'd seen up close. It had a body too stocky for its head, the way most puppies do, and ears that needed at least another three months to grow into. I watched it sneeze, a gobbet of fish meat dangling from its gleaming black nose, a sly expression beneath its brown eyelashes. It was a look that seemed oddly familiar to me, and one that I didn't much take to.

What a splendid good looking fellow he is, the Governor said. I'd never heard him sound so thrilled. For a second I could almost picture him eleven years old and boarding his first ship. Look at those ears. Have you ever seen such tall pointed ears in a dog, Miss Shaw?

He's a good looking animal, sir, I said. He really was. He had a yellow coat with white markings under its chin and on its chest, like the bunches of lace that highwaymen always wear at their throats in old country ballads. Already I could see how the deep purple shadows beneath the Governor's eyes were lightening up, just at the sight of an Indian animal he was going to turn proper, just like he was going to turn the wild bushlands into proper, furrowed wheat fields, just like he was going to turn us lags into proper, smiling English citizens. He is a simple man, after all, I thought. There is not much he is hiding. He's just a man who works too hard and doesn't realize how fast he falls in love with strange animals. That's all there is to him. The Governor reached out and scratched the puppy between its bat-huge ears, then jerked backwards when the jaws suddenly shone with drool, snapped at his wrist.

Can't have that sir, I said quickly. You'll have to let me beat some sense into him when he tries such things.

Of course, the Governor said, shaking his wrist, still staring at the puppy with a stupid little grin peeking at the corners of his mouth. You must discipline with as much severity as necessary. He came from savages, after all. But we'll make an upstanding animal of him yet.

As soon as I said it I knew I was stuck with it. Isn't that always the way I end up with jobs I don't like and don't want to do: I feel badly about someone else getting their fingers bitten off. Old habit of mine, but not especially a good one. Looking at the puppy, it made depressed just thinking about it: that white patch of chest fur sprinkled with blood drops, the muzzle bruised and dented. I organize things, true – and sometimes that involved organizing playing cards by cutting up Reverend Johnson's religious pamphlets, or organizing counterfeit coins by melting the Governor's spare belt buckle over the stove – but there's nothing organized about beating small animals. But still – watching those shifty eyes, the strange gurgling growl in the back of the throat – there was no avoiding it. The dog was going to have to feel the back of a saucepan one of these days. It takes one to know one: I knew there were too many sly, secret thoughts inside that puppy head that didn't need any sharing. Remember your new beginning, Lily, I told myself. Time for new jobs – ones you don't even know you're capable of doing, until you do them.

Do take note, Miss Shaw, the Governor said. It ate the raw scraps with much gusto but refused to touch the dressed meat.

I'll remember, sir.

Isn't that so very Indian of him? We will have to teach him otherwise, won't we.

He kept on watching the puppy with solemn, shining eyes, and the grin lingering on his sunburnt lips. I watched him.





The monsoon season came with a strange shift in the weather. The hot blasts of wind that rattled our door suddenly turned cold and wet, so wet that it washed away all the blood marks from the whipping post, Caroline told me, she who never missed a lashing if she could help it. I wouldn't know. Even though the Governor encouraged many as possible to attend the lashings that seemed to happen weekly as our food stores shrank, I always found a new reason each time not to go: the dog had just killed the last of our roosters, Private Bradshaw wanted me to organize a case of whiskey for him in return for a new saucepan. I knew the Governor signed all of the whipping orders himself, and it made me uncomfortable to think of him that way, for some reason. Meanwhile, Major Ross sent news from Norfolk island that our store-ship from England had crashed and sunk against a reef, which meant we now had to go through the next year living only on what we grew or hunted ourselves. I only had to look at the Governor's yellowing vegetable patch and feel my stomach moan in protest. Soon the number of Irishmen receiving lashings per week for potato-stealing was increased three-fold. The loaves I baked shrank into smaller and smaller hunks until they became fist sized. The Governor dealt with it by increasing his work hours from eighteen to nineteen hours a day, writing furious letters to who knows who, fingers shaky and ink stained. I could tell that it was becoming a struggle for him, picturing his colony in twenty year's time. More and more, his expression looked as helpless and bewildered as his dog, which I alternatively beat across the head with either a boot, saucepan or block of firewood, according to the Governor's orders. Someday the Governor will smile like a young boy again, I would think while my arm thrashed the dog with automatic, unfeeling movements. Someday I will stop with the smuggling and the secrets and the lying, and I

will become just a housekeeper, plain and simple, and I will be happy with myself and the honest work I do, the honest history that I will live.

It was around this time, when it was becoming clear that things in the colony were turning desperate, that the Governor began talking about kidnapping an Indian. Intercultural exchange, Tench called it, a joke I didn't even try to understand. You know I believe guns are useless, when dealing with Bennelong and his kind, the Governor told his officers in his study, while I pressed my ear against the cool cedar of the locked door. We will prove to them that our intentions are good. But first, we must be able to speak with them. We must make them understand we want only to survive, and teach them the benefits of our ways, and no more. We will take an Indian. We will make him learn our language. We will make him our friend.

I kept thinking about what the Governor said, my arm moving mechanically as I stood in the garden and brought a saucepan over his Indian dog's head, again and again and again. I will make you understand. I will make you learn. This is for your own good. But it seemed like every other day the dog left another mangled bloody chicken on the front steps of the Government House. Didn't he realize that even the marines had their flour and pork rations slashed in half? Thinking about it made me swing the saucepan that much harder, with a strength I usually saved for when the dog left pixie bodies scattered in the garden, their see-through feathers all torn apart, their glassy wings crunched to bits. You will learn, I told the dog. You will stop. But I can't stop, he seemed to reply, shrinking against the ground, blood streaming from his muzzle. I can't help it. I can't change it. You will, you will, you will.

When my arm began to cramp, I put the saucepan aside and tried nudging the cowering dog with my foot. It's over now, I told him. Go on. The dog lay there panting

on the thick grass, lumps already swelling beneath its handsome yellow fur, watching me. When I sighed and made to move away, that was when he charged, zooming in between my legs, knocking me to the ground with a heavy crash, smearing my dress pleats with glistening blood. Bastard, bastard, I shouted after him, staring up at the sky. But after laying there for awhile, I couldn't help laughing. I could always recognize something I would have done myself. I stood up, brushed spare bits of grass off my bloody dress and walked around to the front of the Government House. That was when I saw Surgeon General White, standing in the doorway, his long straight mouth mean-looking beneath his brimming eyes.

His Excellency has been speared, he said.

What? I said stupidly.

Where have you been?

Then he saw the red splotches on my dress, the way the bloody trail seemed to drape between my legs, and an expression I'd never seen before came over his face. It was almost as though he wanted to spit on me. The way he drew himself up in the doorway, it reminded me of a ship's cat, lashing its tail back and forth.

I knew it, he said excitedly. I knew it when you gained all that weight. From the flushes across your face. From what Lieutenant Tench has told me.

Get out of the way, I told him, annoyed.

Did the Governor know? he said.

What?

That you are pregnant. Were pregnant, that is. I suppose that's over now?

What kind of a thing to say was that? All I could do was gape at him, then push him aside with my elbow and head up the stairwell to the Governor's bedroom. I wanted

to laugh it off at first, but there was something in his tone of his voice that made me queasy, and while I climbed the stairs I couldn't stop myself from rubbing my belly. Whose business was it anyway, if such a thing were true? Not White's. Maybe not even mine. I peered into the sickroom, where the Governor lay grey-faced and unconscious from the laudanum, a crust of scaly drool down his cheek. I walked over to his side and folded down the edge of a bandage sticking up on his chest. It could not have been true. But if it was – if it had been, at some point –

Can there be secrets about yourself, that you don't even know?

I think about all that now, walking through this fang-toothed countryside, Widget no longer singing ballads but moving silently, sucking the old rope burn scars on his fingers, memories from the days when he used to jump ship in the Indies. Caroline is somewhere behind me, lugging her pregnant belly, thorn scratches across her cheeks like clumsily applied war paint. We are in hilly country, drenched and shrub covered. I can still feel lizard tails from our breakfast writhing in my stomach, like the way the words of this history are writhing through my head, as I am scrabbling hands-and-knees up this mountain. It rained this morning, I think, and now the ground is steaming, mists rising up from the bushes, the heat and the sweat and our hoarse breaths turning the air into mud like the ground. I keep wondering to myself even now, the same stale questions that used to go through my mind back when I used to bring the blows down against dog's muzzle, no sound except the hissing of my wrist through the air, so easy for me, when had such a job become so easy for me? Lily Shaw, what is this country doing to you? What kind of dirty work are you doing now? I can't stop the thoughts from whirling in useless circles around my brain, there must be a way to get away from it all, all of it, to

get away from yourself, is it not enough to go a thousand miles across an ocean to escape—

This history is harder to think through than I thought. I guess that's why they usually hire professionals, for this kind of thing.



On the day that the dog tore the throat out of his first leprechaun, Tench's patrol finally came back with the colony's first translator. A quick and painless kidnapping, I heard it was. I had just finished dragging the leprechaun's remains out to the privy, trying not to feel sick every time I accidentally looked at the freckles spread across its nose, a dull maroon where they should have been a sparkling orange. Only very old families in England still keep leprechauns anymore – in some cases, the adoption took place thousands of years ago, back when Celts were still raising druid-stones in the holly bushes instead of churches. Looking at the thing with its throat red and gone to pieces, I couldn't blame the creature for following its family to Sydney. Still – when I stared down at its legs folded inwards like broken fenceposts, still wearing those emerald-colored trousers that all leprechauns keep obsessively clean, I felt that same fit of hot trembling come over me, like what happened every time I found the dog with a pixie clenched between its jaws. The Governor asked me about it once, whether I thought magical populations would ever set up settlements of their own outside Sydney. What I didn't tell him is that I dreamed of it so often that it made me ache. I had fantasies of the pixies thriving in the hot blasting wind, multiplying like a thick swarm of sparrows across the sky, driving away the screeching parrots and cockatoos from the tree branches for good. We could bring some pieces of England with us, couldn't we? Not everything had to suffer the same fate as wonder-oyster with the rolling script, A Presente Frome The

Seaside. Instead, the dog hunted the pixes down, one by one, and when he was done with them, he started with the leprechauns. And I knew that if there was any other Faerie-folk who'd smuggled themselves successfully to Sydney, the best thing for them to do was catch the next French frigate heading north, as far away from us as possible. We were not building the kind of city here, where they would want to stay. I ripped up handfuls of grass and dropped it over the leprechaun's bloated face, and that was when I heard the fife blowing and the pounding drum. I stood up and stared down the hill towards the parade ground, and that was when I saw Arabanoo, his iron fetters clanking around his ankles, marching with Tench at the front of the armed column. My memory could be wrong, but I think the closest thing to an Indian that I had seen up until then was – well – the dog, who hardly counts. But now – there was Arabanoo. I almost had to rub my eyes to take him in. I don't know if this history of mine will do him justice. The red ochre rubbed on his back, his shoulders ramrod straight with resentment, his steps bold and purposeful despite the chains. I can't say how he appeared to others, but to me, from the very first moment, I was dumbstruck. I've seen my share of strange creatures in my day, and met more than my share of stranger people, but nothing and no one had ever made my eyes widen so large, my breath crumple so fast in my lungs. There was nothing secretive in the way he carried himself. There were no questions or uncertainty. It seemed to me that he walked with the kind of feet that caressed the dirt while kicking it arrogantly back into place, below him, it was like all the world could fall below him in awe. When was the last time I had walked like that, no secrets burdening me down? I watched him slowly clink his way down our dusty street, the armed marines trailing behind. Some of the work gangs had dropped their garden hoes and hatchets and left the

barley fields to stand by the road and watch and hoot and holler, more out of boredom than curiosity, blackie, blackie, look this way, look at me.

But then, over the ruckus, another cry: Lily, Lily. Caroline came running clump-footed up the hill, clasping her skirts. I kicked some leaves over the leprechaun's grey dead lips and vowed to beat the dog extra hard with the firewood that evening, then moved to offer Caroline a hand. Her cheeks were cleaving across her face, she was so thin, even though her pregnant belly had never looked more heaving. Your Governor's new pet, she said, panting, jerking her head at Arabanoo. Looks like they roughed him up a little, dragging him into the boat. He's a sulky looking one, don't you think so?

No, I said, surprised. No, he does not appear to me that way at all.

Maybe not to you, she laughed, sores shining at the corner of her lips, bearing her hard eyes down on me. What's the old man going to do with a savage, I wonder?

Teach him English? I said. Delouse him?

Wonder who'll get that job, she said, looking at me, grinning, her teeth all pushed apart like a doll's. I smiled wryly, because I knew she was right, and that was when she leaned in and began speaking to me of the plans for China.

Widget told me, she said. Her voice was a hush against my ear. China, just across the river, just a few miles up north. He's been talking to Strunk and so many more, Lily, you wouldn't believe how many of us there are. We're going to make a run for it.

I stared at the marine unit making their way up the winding path towards the Government House, their boots leaving clear scars in the worn dusty earth. I watched our future translator study the rosy bricks, peer upwards and then let loose a peel of startled laughter. I followed his gaze. The Governor stood there, framed by second-storey window, his spear wound just healed enough for him to hobble in small steps

around the sickroom. The Indian has never seen a building before, I realized with a jolt. He must think the Governor is floating in thin air.

You know, those Indians aren't going to be nice forever, Caroline said, watching me closely. Doesn't matter what the Governor of yours says. They already come this close to killing him. What's going to stop them from coming after all of us? And I don't blame them. This aint my country. I don't want to be here, doing some old Governor's dirty work, scratching at some potatoes that aint ever gonna grow. Lily. Is that what you want? Lily. She pressed her wiry fingers on my arm. This place is running itself into the ground. We're all going to waste away if we don't try to make a run for it while we can. Get to a place where they'll actually give us food instead of just beatings.

Both the Governor and future translator studied one another interestedly through the second-story window. I tore my eyes away from them, whirled around, stared at Caroline. I would tell her – I would – that the Governor was a man who liked dogs. He would never allow his colony to waste away. We would train a translator. We would speak the language in the end. We would learn the right pathways to walk towards hidden wells. The Governor would teach the Indians the advantages of bootstraps and boiling water. I would teach their dogs the advantages of not killing our Faerie-people. And then the Indians would teach us, maybe, how we could finally make our seeds grow green and strong from the earth without withering, how at last to stop their miserable pets from earning themselves beatings they didn't even understand was for their own good.

We're not going to starve, I said finally. The Governor won't let it happen.

Maybe not to you, Caroline said.

What's that supposed to mean?



Caroline pressed her lips together and stared at me. Her sores glistened rawly at the corners of her mouth. Some of us can't depend on our bread that easy, was all she said.

I thought of China then. I thought about me dropping the saucepan I used for beatings, the gin and tobacco I couldn't stop smuggling, Caroline and Widget dropping their gardening tools, all of us walking with callused feet past the officers, never mind their screamed threats of two hundred, three hundred, four hundred lashes. We would pick a new beginning, a new country for ourselves this time. The river only a short day's stroll through the bush, shimmering in the dusk, tiny Chinese dogs with their tails wagging delicately –

That evening, when I was bringing the Governor his evening cup of chamomile tea, I blurted it out. Sir – where's China?

The governor blinked with a grandfatherly slowness and rubbed the spear wound on his chest. China? he repeated in a grey scratchy voice. He rummaged around the papers on his desk, pushed a thin sheet of parchment towards me. He pointed at the map with a finger.

There is Botany Bay, he said. There is Sydney. This is Hong Kong. There is Peking. That is China.

I studied the pictures with a frown.

How long does take for a ship to get there? I said finally.

To cross the ocean? the Governor said. At least three months. He spoke in an far-away voice, too distracted with his own worries, his aching spearwound, to spend time thinking about strange questions coming from a housekeeper.

I didn't say anything after that.



The day I ran away from the Governor into the grayness of the bush had been the day of the floggings. The hot weather had come back that week, and with it, the Governor's rashes, and I had to tie his hands with ribbons at night so that he could resist temptation to scratch. Rations were cut back to three pounds each of rice, flour and pork per week. I started sneaking my own slices of bread onto the Governor's plate, but afterwards, I would always find the same crusts (and a bit more) smuggled back into my own dinner. Having killed off or driven away both the leprechauns and pixies, the dog moved on to sheep, leaving the bodies scattered across the marines' camp; the gnawed remains of hoof by the blacksmith's, a fly-covered head near the old lime-kiln. I went on with the beatings as usual, but the air was so hot I could never go over a few minutes without finishing drenched with sweat and feeling near seasick.

The Governor wasn't doing much better. Mostly, I saw him when he came into the kitchen with strained lines cutting into his lips, and he would ask me in a faint voice for another pot of chamomile tea, eyes far away and staring. What did he think was going to happen to us now? I wanted to ask him. He brought us here. Now what? Tench and his marine unit drilled barefoot across the parade grounds, their boots having fallen apart long ago into useless flaps of leather. Arabanoo spent most of time in Lieutenant Dawes' observatory tower, working on a dictionary of Indian words, and I did not see him often, except for when he took shuffling walks across the camp with Tench, the fetters clinking round his ankles, his fists clenching the coat-tails that Arthur made him wear at all times. Like most of the other lags, Caroline and Widget gave up working on their shriveled gardens and sat outside their huts, making fishing lines from the stringy tree bark. Always, when I walked through the men's camp on my suspicious patrols for

the dog's latest victim, Caroline would raise an eyebrow at me, and then her hands, fingers counting down the days remaining until the escape. Seven fingers. Three fingers. The day of the floggings: one finger, pointing erectly towards the sky.

That afternoon, when I saw Caroline raise that last, lonely finger, I won't lie: it made me pause. The back of my throat tightened. My feet stopped mid-step. I stared down at my knuckles. It seemed like they were always swollen now from punching the dog's muzzle, when it was too frustrating to keep at it with the saucepan. Nothing like the white creamy Chinawomen hands which the Irishmen were expecting to feel down their trousers tomorrow. Nor like the fat clean English hands, waving merrily in welcome, that the Governor had dreamed up for his colony. Caroline had seen me hesitate. She threw her fishing line into Widget's lap then waddled over to me, pregnant belly bulging mountain-like through her dress.

Let's go see Paddy get his whipping, was all she said. She grabbed me by the arm before I could open my mouth, and started dragging me towards the men's camp. It would be the first flogging I had seen since I had come to the Government House, I realized. Since the Governor had told me to turn the puppy into a proper English citizen, because I was a proper English housekeeper, wasn't I, capable of any orders he gave me.

Large groups always gathered to watch the floggings, even back when the wind was so chill that it gnawed to the bone. This one drew even more of a crowd than usual, despite the whiteness of the broiling sky, the sweat already shining in wet bands across the officers' foreheads. Paddy Innett, tried by jury and found guilty of pilfering potatoes from Tench's garden; his sentence: 300 lashes. I knew that the Governor had pushed the jury into arriving at the exact numbers. The Governor could be very particular about

numbers when it came to sentencing. I was aware of it, but it wasn't a part of his character that I felt comfortable thinking about.

I remember how the crowd shifted on their feet and slapped at gadflies while Paddy stood there, hands chained to the whipping post, ribs poking through his skin as clearly as a white bone used to hang from Arabanoo's nose, before the Governor ordered him to throw it away and wear only a dinner hat above the neck. The first time the whip snapped against Paddy's back, Caroline had leaned forward and whispered in my ear. Tomorrow, Lily. Tomorrow. Twenty of us, we'll be taking a little stroll away from these parts.

Caroline, I whispered. I asked the Governor, right? And he tells me, there's isn't a China.

Caroline's flat and yellowing eyes stared back at me.

Well, there is, kind of, I said. But it's across an ocean.

This was Caroline, who made me laugh until I was almost sick at the way she gave Reverend Johnson the scare of his life, back when we were both sailing on board the *Charlotte* and Reverend Johnson came up to her with some of his religious pamphlets, and she responded by pulling her skirts over her head. Looking at her, I felt a sudden tide of helplessness wash over me. The whip crackling in my ears, I knew that even if I shoved the Governor's map in front of her, traced her finger across the papery ocean stretching between Hong Kong and Sydney, there still only would have been China swallowing up her visions. The dream of leaving had covered up her eyes, thick and impenetrable as the bush that surrounded us.

I'm telling you, Lily Shaw, she said. Spit flew from her teeth and slapped my eyelids. Widge heard it from one of the officers. Today at sunset it's going to be China for us. No more worrying about –

She flicked her head at Paddy. His mouth was gridlocked and grimacing, whimpers leaking from between his teeth like squeaks from a razor blade. It made me queasy, thinking about how those little whimpers was more noise I'd ever heard from the dog. There was a polished shine to the rivets of blood streaming down his legs and spilling on the sparse dead grass. The crowd sighed in rhythm with each rise and fall of the whip. Paddy finally started moaning like a cow when the leather bit into his shoulders for the hundredth time, or maybe it was one hundred and ten, in which case Tench would have lost three shillings and a candle wick to Surgeon General White, in one of those bets that the officers always made when it came to lashings. By one hundred and fifteen his shoulders were red and pulpy, and we all leaned forward, squinting, at the patches of skin where we could make out the white hardness of bone. All I could think was that my feet were aching. This was the Governor's colony? I remember looking around at our gaunt and stupid curious faces and wondering what did they do to potato thieves in China. I could feel a hard squeezing tightness in my chest, thinking about it. Even now, as this is history is being recorded, as this history is being documented, as this history is being lived, I can feel that squeezing. The air with its brittle alien hotness. Paddy moaned and the whip hissed and I stood there with my feet still and directionless, trying to swallow against the pressure in my chest. It was like everything, the sky and the houses and cabbage trees fringing the edges of the colony, was all pressing down on me. I couldn't walk away. I couldn't stop it. I couldn't help it.

He cut through us like our store-ship had cut through the reef at Norfolk island. Arabanoo's legs pumping determinedly forward, with the rest of us standing there with the sun burning the backs of our necks. Before any of us really knew what to think, he had knocked down the officer brandishing the whip, as cleanly as the dog had made me tumble to the ground, so long ago. Then he jumped back, chest heaving, mouth panting. I swallowed hard at the sight of his shoulders, so straight and unmistakable, the way the rigid line of the Devon horizon looks when there are pirates just out of sight, coming with a boat full of treasures towards the lighthouse. There was a heavy chunk of firewood gripped in his hand. Arabanoo stood there, breathing hoarse and sweaty breaths. He raised the firewood in the air. He managed to bring it down once on the officer's head, with a hollow echo, before several soldiers jumped forward and twisted his arms back.

Ohhhhhhhh, Caroline said. I thought Indians were used to blood.

I watched Arabanoo's nostrils warp around the force of each breath. The sharp buds of his teeth glimmered in the heat, his sad brown eyes staring wide and bewildered, it seemed, at me alone. I hardly realized that I had pushed my way through the crowd until I found myself walking past the parade ground and the Hospital, down the road towards the Government House. When I looked up at the sky, I saw the whitest and hottest part was smudged with black smoke. No doubt, Arabanoo's friends were nearby, burning through the bush again, driving out kangaroos from their hiding places. Parakeets were already dropping out of the sky, choking on the ash, landing with sick flat plops on the ground, against the thatched roofs of the marines' houses. I remember thinking to myself, in an hour or two, I'll have to go out on the streets, and help Caroline and the other women rake up the tiny feathered bodies into scattered piles.

It was like the dog was waiting for me in the garden. He crouched at the side of the house, the yellow fur in the insides of his ears shining more brightly than the hair on my own head. I could almost picture him with the Governor's thin graying eyebrows, raised in expectation as I approached. I walked towards him with slow, certain steps, lugging the hunk of firewood in both hands.

I didn't think of anything when his muzzle splintered into bloody shards after the second blow to his head. I didn't think of anything when one of his eyeballs popped out and rolled away lost among the dead lettuce leaves of our good-for-nothing garden. My arms pumped and flailed. They went up and down, beating again and again with a strength I could barely remember ever having. Despite the sun, no sweat broke out on my forehead. Even my scalp felt cold and numb.

Bark, dammit, I screamed, the skull mashed into globs of hair and brain, the one last eye still gazing up at me, questioning, confused. Make like a regular dog, you bastard, and bark.

The wood finally fell out of my hand. My wrist was aching. I took a few steps away from the mess I'd made, turned around, than saw the Governor. He stared at me from the doorframe. All the lines on his face were crisscrossing into one another, like they were burned there with a flaming rod of iron.

It was too much to bear. I ran through the garden. My heel slipped against little bloody pieces of dog flesh. The streets were dotted with the little green corpses of wild parrots, the last few cracklings of the whip whistling distantly behind me. I chose the bush instead. I walked in circles among the saplings at the edge of the marines' camp, just close enough to see the buildings clenched like fists against the ground, just far away

enough to remain hidden behind the mask of thicket. When dusk came and Caroline's Chinese travelers slipped across the stream, coming towards me, I was waiting for them.

Now there are shrubs snagging greedily at my skirts. The tree bark is covered in fissures and spinning about in circles. Caroline is screaming her bar songs, almost sounding like the cockatoos wailing somewhere in the branches above. Widget has been gone for a long time now. I can't say when or where exactly he fell behind. The other Irishmen are groaning and lurching alongside me, and somewhere Strunk is staggering along with an armful of spears rising from his back like the wooden crosses of a poorman's graveyard.

I have been walking to China for so long now.

My feet inch forward through rows of brown weeds. Maybe there really is China ahead of us somewhere, people waiting for me across the river with bowlfuls of steaming rice in their hands, gentle smiles on their faces. But if there really is a new country for me to find out there, a new beginning, I haven't found it yet, Governor, and I hope you believe me when I tell you, I tried so hard to find it.



## **Back in England, a don of the College makes a suggestion**

The recording sessions for “The Settlement of New Albion: A Courageous Account That Strives For Completion” began last December, at the suggestion of the old water nymph who used to hold one of the highest professorships at St. Scholastica’s National Institute of Historical Recording, before he lost his mind. In one rumor, he threw himself into a creek and disintegrated into silt; in other version, it is the punting canal that circles the Institute in a watery green ring, built in imitation of Cambridge. It is hoped that neither story is true, and that whatever happened to him, it involved some kind of peaceful retirement.

A few weeks before his final disappearance, mid-way through the Spring term, an appointment was made to meet in the old nymph’s office, in order to discuss certain theoretical concerns raised by Professor Loki’s lecture the previous week on Social Disorganization of the Bibliography. However, all the old nymph wanted to talk about was how impossible it was for Recorders to find meaningful commissions these days. Why, less than twenty years ago, he said, you had alumni trekking around Calanais compiling timelines and detailed family histories for each and every one of the Standing Stones. Nowadays a graduate is lucky if a degree buys him a Writership in the East India Company.

Not only that, he went on, pressing his scaly fingers together, but did you know the Institute is discontinuing the GoTo Medal for Progress in the Studies of Hearsay and Bias?

It was not known. It was a disappointment. The application essay had already been drafted weeks ahead of the deadline.

The old nymph sighed and shook his head. No more funds for the prize money, you see. Have you secured a research project for the end of the term?

It had not been secured.

Not your fault, the old nymph said, banging a webbed fist on the desk. Nobody's hiring. There's no interest in this business anymore. It's all about sums and signatures, dates and dénouements, speeches as they *were* spoken and not as they *should* have been. No one has the time for anything but accuracy. But it's not just alumni having trouble. We have first year students dropping out and transferring to King Edward IV Chapel – following the footsteps of Lord Nelson himself, they fancy! We have dons at the College who can't summon the energy to get out of bed in their morning – they can't see the point in delivering their own lectures.

You see, he said, leaning across his desk, his watery nymph eyes clear as jellyfish, there's only demand for forward-thinking these days. There's no place anymore for those who think sideways, or in-between, or upside-down-and-inside-out, like you and I. You think most students, they make an effort like you did, to seek out their tutors in their free time? Absolutely not. They're down at the racetracks betting their last guinea on greyhounds. They're frantically writing to any cousins or in-laws they might have in Bengal, begging them for a job as a salt-agent. They can sense it coming. The whole business is dying. Students who know what's good for them are looking for a way out while they still can. Here.

He tossed a clipping from The Whitby Gazette across his desk. Maybe this is yours, he said.

The clipping was read, pinched between hesitant fingers. It said, Major-Generale Watkine Tenche, Ware Heroe, Diariste, Wille Be Givinge A Readeing Tomorrowe At St. Scholastica's Nationale Institute fore Historicale Recordinge, A Sectione of Frenche Letteres, Hise Newe Booke.

Tench's reading was not attended in person, as a result of an especially intense study session in the Senior Common Room in preparation for a Geography of the Underworld exam scheduled for the next day. A few more weeks past, and the Gazette clipping was forgotten, as was the don of the College's suggestion. However, interest in Tench was renewed after the old water nymph disappeared, his office cleared out within days and transformed into a storage closet for the Institute's moth-eaten collection of stuffed phoenixes. "French Letters" was read, without much attention. Then, "A Complete Account of the Settlement at Port Jackson." It was not quite known what to think, or to feel, upon finishing this particular memoir. Many confusing sensations and whirling thoughts were experienced. One long hazy night at the end of the term, mind spinning after taking notes on 1,523 pages of *King Togidbnus: An Encyclopedia*, heart raging at the thought of spending yet another summer clerking for the Commissioner of Chatham instead of working on one's own research, because not *everybody* at St. Scholastica's has a family with the money or connections to send one to London or Paris for the summer – Finally, in a fit of passion, a chair was drawn at the desk, paper was summoned, a quill was dipped in ink, a letter was drafted. It asked Tench if he'd ever heard of St. Scholastica's, if he was willing to collaborate on a complete account – a *truly* complete account this time – of all that had happened during Port Jackson's settlement. A few other questions of a more personal, pressing nature were also posed, which will not be shared here. The letter was posted to the mailroom even before the sun had risen.

Although Tench's exact reply cannot be reproduced here, in his own words, attached below is a rough estimate of what he wrote back, give or take a few words:

I don't know about this – I'll collaborate as much I can, but pretty much everything I have to say is already in the book. It's not that I don't trust your experience in these matters, although I'm afraid I'm not familiar with the publications that you cited. I'm not a big reader of academic pamphlets, let's call them. But maybe that's the difference between soldiers and scholars, right? [...] The only other major concern I have is a question of distribution. Who is the audience for this type of project, exactly? There's been a flood of publications about this particular subject in the last few years alone – I really suggest you look at John White's "Journal of a Voyage to New South Wales," get the edition that includes 10 extra plates of local bird life, in color, if you can. But your letter implied that the only kind of history you deal with is – well, I don't know how to describe it really, but it's the kind of history that no one really bothers to write anymore, isn't it?

Also, I'm sorry but I can't attach a face to any of the names that you gave me. I'm not the best person to ask if you have those kinds of questions. I suggest you contact Lincoln Castle Gaol directly, where they might keep those kinds of records. If it's indeed a family matter, then I suggest you try –

That's enough. As Lily Shaw would say, *history or no history, there are some things that aren't anybody's business to know about, not even your own*. For now, attention should be directed to a second letter, attached below, written by Director of Sea Fencibles Sir Arthur Phillip, after he'd been informed by the Institute that such a project was being completed. He wrote back quickly, much faster than it had taken Tench to reply, and asked to see a draft of what had been completed thus far. Subsequently, many pages of research notes and timelines and interview transcripts were recopied in careful handwriting, placed in an envelope and bound St. Scholastica's red wax seal and mailed promptly to His Excellency's address. It took him six months to reply this time:

I have thought about this matter a great deal, for a long time. Now, I think I am prepared to say to you, yes, I am interested in collaborating with you further. First, however, my suggestions are as follows: go to Sydney and see for yourself. Perhaps you've heard that Governor Macquarie is currently proposing a bill that will ban goats from grazing in Hyde Park, or glass-blowers from bathing themselves naked at the wharf in between their factory shifts. Yes, it is progress

– although I must say, I am still deeply concerned that he does nothing about the brothels, or the horse-racing, or the Chinese coolies that presently threaten the city with a descent into total decay. How things have changed since my time!

[...]

I received a letter myself, a few years ago, which contained a great deal of edifying information in regards to the latest happenings in Sydney, especially in regards to – and I thought this might be useful to you – what happened to Bennelong, when he returned from England. I am afraid that I cannot send you a copy. I admit I was at first hesitant about even sending you the letter's return address, but I have included it in the postscript all the same, perhaps against my better instincts, but on one condition. If you do go to Sydney, if you do manage to trace the address to a house which is still standing – and who knows, with all the talk of gold in Melbourne these days, it is very common these days for people to abandon their homes on a whim and head westwards with nothing more than a pair of mules – I ask you, when discussing that part of your draft that deals with the “walkers to China,” as you call them, please do not mention that –

*Why did you have to go and mention that?* Lily Shaw demands, bringing a callused fist down on the tabletop with a bang. What a blind and beastly woman she can be. She does not care about the havoc she is wrecking on this account, by refusing to answer even the simplest of questions. She does not care if there are entire sections of the draft where she is cited as a primary source, but that is a lie, really it is only the most skillful of hearsay and conjecture –

*Read me the draft, she orders. All of it. Now. And don't leave out any parts about Arabanoo or these “Chinese walkers,” as you call them.*

Grudgingly, her request is complied with.

*But where is it all? she cried. Where is the smallpox? Where is Nanya? Where is Arabanoo and the beach caves?*

It's coming along. It's coming. As the old water nymph used to complain, *no one has time for anything these days but accuracy.* But some of us, Lily Shaw, have all the time in the world.

## Good Intentions

Arabanoo, the first of the translators, was kidnapped the same morning that Arthur Phillip's dog left a leprechaun with its neck chewed up like old newspapers on the front steps of the Government House. Lily Shaw spent an hour searching the banks of the streambed for the dead creature's pot of trinkets, not because she was greedy, but because she wanted to do the proper thing that they did back in Cornwall whenever leprechauns were killed by horse-carts or so on, which was return the treasures to the creature's adopted family, in this case, Dimber Wollet, sentenced ten years, for setting fire to a textile mill in Newport. When Miss Shaw first opened the front door and saw the creature's bluish face frozen in a shocked expression, her first thought was, well, this is unpleasant business. Tench wrote the same thing about Arabanoo's kidnapping in his journal. More than unpleasant. It was nasty. It was necessary. It was duty, thought Tench as the fetters clinked shut around Arabanoo's ankles, thought Lily Shaw as she handed the scraps of gold to a teary Dimber Wollet, who cried, And to think that he'd been in the family for so many years, and to think that he followed me all this way.

You know I believe guns are useless, when dealing with these kinds of people, Governor Arthur Phillip wrote in a letter to Lord Joseph Banks. We need to show them that our intentions are good. We need to show them how willing we are to learn about the land. But first, we need to speak to them. We need a friend who will learn how to speak. And there is no other way of finding such a friend except through force. He put down his quill and reread what he had written. He sighed.

It happened fast; it was over too slowly. On Arthur's orders, Tench's regiment took a boat over to investigate a campfire spotted at Manly Cove earlier that morning. There they found Arabanoo and a friend on a log on a beach, sucking clams out of the shells, the sun a pale yellow stain against the northernmost point of sky, bubbles of foam winking on the sand as waves drifted back and forth. The two Indians sat on their log and squinted at Tench's dinghy, bobbing in the water. The marines waved and beckoned and made as though they had come for trading and nothing else – lavender scented ribbons in their hands, fistfuls of nails pried out of the armory, Private Bradshaw's spare glass eyeball glittering there between Tench's fingers, since the marines had already traded away every other spare bit of glass their first week onshore and this was the only shiny that Tench could scrounge together in time for the kidnapping. You've really got to have shinies when you're trading with Indians, Tench would tell his enthralled audience many years later, in the crowded London salons where he would read from his most recently published memoir. It was after Arabanoo and his friend buried their spare clams in the ground and waded through the shallows towards the boat that Tench said, Now. The English lunged. It went back and forth for a while. Arabanoo was the first to go limp, arms pinned behind his back, eyes staring bleakly upwards, having made no sound at all during the tussle. His friend had cylinder shaped muscles rolling across his shoulders and fought harder. He moaned and shrieked, twisted and spat, thrashed and jerked. Eventually Private Bradshaw grabbed the flailing black arm, tattooed with thin white lines sharp as the edges of a ravine, and bit down just above the elbow. Bradshaw had the kind of jaw that could crunch an ox bone. Even after Tench yelled and swore at him to stop he kept on biting down, hard. Whatever kind of effect he hoped to have, it didn't work. The fight turned even more frenzied. Arabanoo lay placidly in the boat,

looking with melancholy eyes at the fetters around his ankles, which Tench had clicked shut with a tinny snap. The boat rocked back and forth. Private Bradshaw lost his grip and slipped and cut his chin against an oar. Even Tench stumbled, and the glass eyeball rolled out of his pocket and skidded across the boards and bounced off Private Bradshaw's lower lip. They watched Arabanoo's friend somersault over the side of the boat into the ocean, slashing his way through the waves, flinging his way towards the dry shore. Arabanoo raised his head and watched his friend scrambling through the water. Only then did he make a faint hoarse sound. It was then that they all knew it was over. If Arabanoo had wailed or shrieked or earned a biting from Private Bradshaw as his runaway friend had, maybe Tench would have felt better about the whole thing, but instead the only noise was that little moan when Arabanoo saw his friend scrambling to the beach, not even looking back over his shoulder, and then all the marines realized they could not look one another in the eye, stared instead at their knuckles. Private Bradshaw pressed a handkerchief against his bleeding chin. Tench tried to offer their new translator a nail, then the glass eyeball, in case the poor guy wanted to rub something, he would later explain to his fan-fluttering audiences in the London salons, you know, to calm his nerves. Arabanoo only lay there curled at the bottom of the boat, staring up at the sky. He was scrunching his mouth grimly, but looked strangely satisfied. It was as though he'd always expected as though some day the worst would happen to him, and now it finally had.

It took a week before he finally told them his name. Soon he became a familiar sight shuffling down the streets, ankle fetters clinking, tugging unhappily at his coattails, as though terrified they would catch on something horrible if he didn't constantly clench them in his fists. It became clear early on that it wasn't only the fetters that made him so



wistful. If he had spoken English, he'd have been the type who would've collected all the grim tidbits of news, the first to tell you if someone's cow had died of hoof fever, or if someone's baby had vomited worms the night before. That was why it was so strange how badly Tench wanted to be friends with him. If it had been any other set of circumstances, they would have never been able to get through a five minute conversation without one throwing a glass of port in the other's face. Everything about Tench was light and skittering, while Arabanoo was all glumness and heavily lidded eyes, vomiting an orange stream into the dirt when he witnessed his first flogging, face only brightening at the sight of far-off forest fires that marked where his people burned through the bush, or when he realized, with a tentative cough, that he was about to come down with a bad cold. Whenever the regiments practiced marching drills back and forth the parade grounds, Tench's arms swung so easily he was the only one who looked like he was strolling confidentially across a ballroom. No one was ever surprised when they learned that his parents owned a dancing academy in Nottingham. Almost everyone in the colony loved Tench. They loved him because he could never tell a joke right, because he always burst out laughing halfway through the punchline, which only made it funnier; loved him because he was good looking and gossipy and on track for a promotion and he knew it. But there was something in his head that went funny when it became clear that Arabanoo wasn't interested in making friends with him. It was nothing personal – Arabanoo spent most of his time with Lieutenant Dawes anyway, who was compiling a dictionary of Indian language, teaching him the Indian words for bad thing, very bad thing, worst thing, worse-than-worst, and on and on until Dawes began running out of synonyms. Mostly, Arabanoo sat in a chair on front steps of the Government House, shuddering with horror every time the small bell hanging above the vice-regal door

chimed whenever Lily Shaw stepped outside with a tub of laundry, squinting across the bay until he thought he could make out the distant smudge of a far-off campfire burning, then sighing heavily, looking around to make sure others heard him. It was hard to imagine him making friends even among his own people – in any case, none of them ever came to the colony looking for him. Still, Tench began taking extra care to laugh twice as loudly in Arabanoo's presence, back-slap twice as hard, clown twice as stupidly. He asked Arabanoo over and over again to show him some steps to a native dance, even demonstrated a jig and a waltz on the porch. Arabanoo only stared off to the side and pretended not to hear the questions, sucking on the insides of his cheek, looking pained. It was almost like what had happened with Lily Shaw, when Tench told her hey princess when she walked by, just for a laugh, and she was the first woman who didn't scowl or giggle or mime something lewd in response, only kept on going as though she hadn't even heard. That had been the beginning of when Tench took an interest in Lily Shaw. Soon enough it was as though there was no end to his interest in Arabanoo. He started volunteering to take Arabanoo on trips back to Manly Cove, to leave bark-baskets full of fish there so that the other Indians would realize that Arabanoo hadn't been killed or eaten by the English or worse. He started walking alongside Arabanoo during the Indian's endless shufflings from one side of the men's camp to the other, Tench pointing at things, speaking in monosyllables like a three-year-old reciting all the words he knows. House, Tench said, finger outstretched and commanding like a conductor's baton. Goat. Scotsman. Arabanoo would only look at the rope handcuff hanging from his left wrist and smile that grim, satisfied smile to himself. After about a week of this, Tench's laughter became strained, his joking, wild. He went back and reread his journal entry about Arabanoo's kidnapping over and over again. Arabanoo had to understand

that Tench thought the whole thing was unpleasant business, but necessary nonetheless, Tench would say to himself. That's what the whole colony was about: there were good intentions everywhere. Just because they weren't acted upon didn't mean they didn't exist. Marines and convicts and women and sailors were forcing each other into friendships every day. Hadn't Tench offered Arabanoo nails and the glass eyeball to rub, to calm his nerves? Tench would roll out of bed in the middle of the night and reread the journal entry he had written about the kidnapping – yes, he most definitely had. After reaching the punchline of a joke he would clap Arabanoo on the shoulder, hard enough to leave behind a bruise. When the two of them went shuffling through the men's camp, he would stop midsentence and start dancing a jig in the middle of the street, his feet jumping skittishly across the ground, staring at Arabanoo, panting, asking him – is this how you dance? Is this how? Do you people know what dancing is? Arabanoo would stare and clench his coattails in his fists and carefully back away. One evening Tench went up to Private Bradshaw and threw a mug of beer in his face. What was that for? Bradshaw shouted, spitting foam, his glass eyeball oily and gleaming. Next time I tell you to stop biting Indians, you stop, Tench said. What kind of impression do you think we've left with Arabanoo now? We're the kind of men who fight by biting? He shook his head. What kind of place do you think we're running here? he asked. He walked away without waiting for an answer.

Soon after, it was as though he lost the ability to tell when his jokes stopped being friendly. He took Greene the ship-boy's pegleg and gave it to the Governor's dog, who chewed it into splinters. When the Governor gave orders that all letters from the men's camp should be inspected before delivery to England, Tench would read them aloud over dinner in a fake Cockney accent, laughing hysterically at the spelling errors

and the drawn-out lovelorn goodbyes, while the other officers stared at the sour beef speared through their forks, only occasionally glancing at one another with quick, nervous eyes. He teased Lily Shaw about her pregnancy – which ended just as quickly as it had arrived – until she walked over to his bed and threw up on his pillow. Things just went on and on, and all the time Arabanoo would sit in his chair on the front steps of the Government House, picking at loose threads on his trousers with a deep wrinkled frown, staring out across the bay, heaving heavy sighs when he thought enough people were listening.

One night, Tench rolled out of bed as usual, but this time instead of rereading the journal entry about the kidnapping, he put on his uniform and headed to the Government House. Arabanoo was sprawled asleep in his chair as usual, fists still giving his coattails an occasional worried squeeze now and again, the fetters around his ankles silver like bared teeth. Tench woke him up by thumping him on the shoulder with his musket butt. They made their way to the patrol boats, Tench with his face flat and rigid, Arabanoo with his cautious shuffle, clinking iron. Tench rowed them out to Manly Cove, breathing heavily with each stroke as the oars locked into and lifted from the water, Arabanoo peering at the curls of bubbles that trailed in their wake, sometimes tugging at the rope handcuff hanging from his wrist and muttering something to himself. When they were about twenty feet from the shore where Arabanoo had last sat on a log and buried clamshells with his friend, Tench let the oars hang limp. He took a key from his coat pocket, kneeled, and unlocked the irons from Arabanoo's feet.

Go, he told Arabanoo.

Arabanoo stared. He clenched his coattails and drew them to his chest. Not even when the fetters had first bound around his feet had he ever looked so nervous.

Tench pointed at the beach. Go the fuck back! he said. Then he turned away and put his face in his hands. He stayed that way, motionless.

Arabadoo eyed him. He sucked at the inside of his cheek. Then he stood up, looked at the strip of sand across the bay gone grey and waxy in the darkness, inky waves groping towards the log where he had once sat weeks ago eating clams. Without a second glance at Tench he dove headfirst in the water. Tench looked at the narrow gaps of moonlight that he could see through his fingers. He did not look up when he heard the gagging and the splashing. It was only when Arabadoo let out a faint hoarse moan of bafflement that Tench finally raised his head. It was then he saw that Arabadoo had made it less than a few feet away from the boat. His head bobbed in between the swelling waves, every now and then plunging under, his boot-clad feet kicking the surface. But swimming with the weight of the sodden trousers and jacket clinging heavily, sucking at his limbs, had bewildered him. He swallowed one lungful of saltwater, then another. When he tried swimming the way he was used to doing, diving deep enough until his eardrums screamed, the alien feeling of the coat-tails billowing around him like coarse linen fluid would bring him flailing back to the surface. He tried ripping off the boots, then the jacket, but he had never really been able to get the hang of undressing on dry land, let alone bobbing in the water, and one mouthful after another of ocean rushed down his throat. He coughed, choked, spat, moaned, sank. Tench sat in the boat, watching. Then he gripped the oars and rowed over until he was close enough to pull the Indian by the armpits back on board. Arabadoo gagged and gasped and stared at Tench with his eyes rolling backwards from bewilderment. Tench shook his head at him. He hesitated; then fished around inside his jacket pocket, pulled out an old nail, and

handed it over. Arabanoo glared at him. But then his hand slowly made a fist around the iron.

The next morning, Arabanoo and Tench took a walk around the men's camp together, Tench pointing at things and speaking in monosyllables. Hospital, he said. Thatching. Irishman.

Irishman, Arabanoo would echo, his eyes drooping and melancholy, his ankle fetters clinking in the dry empty air.

The same morning, Governor Arthur Phillip wrote a letter to Lord Joseph Banks about the progress they were making. Soon, soon, he wrote. Soon we'll be able to speak to each other. They'll understand we are friendly. They'll understand we only want to survive, and teach them the benefits of our ways, and no more.

The same morning, Arthur's dog left another mangled leprechaun in the back garden. Lily Shaw shook her head when she saw its swollen purple face, and because several weeks had passed since the last one, and now she was hungrier and tired and didn't care if she felt bad about doing such a necessary thing, this time instead of giving the trinkets back to the creature's family she melted them down and recast them as counterfeit coins, which she traded for two dozen eggs and a case of gin. I know you had good intentions, following us all the way down here, she told the dead leprechaun before chucking the body into the ocean. But this isn't England, you know.

## Bad Intentions

When the Indians first started dying of smallpox, Tench blamed Surgeon General White, who kept a sample of the disease inside a small, unopened glass flask on his office shelf, next to a jar of mercury (for syphilis, just in case) and a pot of Amazonian Datura (for a dull, depressing Saturday evening, just in case). In a week, two bodies had been spotted – one floating in a canoe here, another cold and contracted by a streambed there. While progress on Sergeant Dawes’s dictionary was slow, Tench had already filled many a journal entry with his observations of Arabanoo. He wrote about the first time Arabanoo ate off a plate, which he threw out the window after sucking the last morsel of duck off the wing bone. He wrote about the fish dinners that Arabanoo would cook for Arthur, rubbing off the scales and eating them one by one like grapes. He wrote about the first time Arabanoo spotted Lily Shaw peering out the second-story window of the Government House, and then asked, Why is she standing on such a tall man’s shoulders? Once the bodies began to appear, more and more of Tench’s notes had to do with their translator’s health. Tonight Lily Shaw reported that Arabanoo ate three pounds of fish and two kanga-rats – appetite, diminishing. This morning Arabanoo was caught secretly eating lice from behind his ears – what he always does, when he’s having one of his moods again. After the third body was found by a fizzling campfire in the bush – the skin bruised and rotten with pox marks like a fruit skin gone rotten – Tench took Arabanoo to have a look. See that, Tench said, pointing. Arabanoo looked at the yawning sores across the corpse’s skin, the scabs gone copper-colored and glinting. He

looked back at Tench, his face quiet, empty, open. You see something like that, Tench told him. Don't go near. You've learned too much English at this point for us to lose you now. To Lily Shaw, he said: if the colony is forced to re-train another translator from scratch because of White, I'll duel him. Just wait and see. As far as Lily Shaw could tell, he meant it. The colony couldn't afford to lose time at this point, let alone translators.

Then in March, when Tench took a group of convicts on a grass-cutting expedition to cut roof-thatching, they saw the beach caves. Arabanoo stepped over the dark lumps, looking at the dead faces soiled with lesions, the bowels that had emptied while drawing one last breath, the open eyes still scorched with the heat of fever. Tench walked close behind, giving a little sideways hop every time he brushed too close against a body, as though snagging his ankle in a rabbit snare. Well, Arabanoo kept repeating over and over again. Well well. He'd learned the word from Sergeant Dawes, who had a habit of muttering worriedly to himself and chewing his quill tips until the feathers were damp clumpy rags. Arabanoo kept wandering in and out of the caves, crossing the beach and wading distractedly in the shallows, his boots making hissing noises against the soft waves, his hands calm at his sides instead of balled into fists, for the first time his coattails hanging loose and whipping behind him in the breeze like they were supposed to. Well well well, he kept repeating. There weren't even footprints to look at, the sand smooth and white as a sail gone taut in the wind. Tench thought of the pox marks that dotted Lily Shaw's jaw, how gritty they felt when he passed his mouth over them. He rubbed his own jaw. He tried to picture himself firing a pistol in Surgeon General White's face. It was easier to picture himself writing about it after it had happened than actually doing it. The rest of grass-cutting party wandered in and out of the caves, along



the beaches, looking at everything, their hatchets and jackknives left forgotten in the bushes. There really wasn't anything else to do.

They found the girl sitting outside the biggest of the caves, the one that had a chalk-colored sperm whale carved into the sandstone cliff-face. The girl – who couldn't have been more than fourteen – kept walking back and forth from the waves, filling a shell with water, sitting down again in front of the cave entrance and pouring the liquid over her head. Arabanoo patted her on the shoulder and gently pried the shell out of his fingers. He was always that way with children. He always gave away the juiciest pieces of his pork rations to Greene the ship-boy. It drove Lily Shaw wild. There he is, she said. The only one in the colony not getting his rations cut. And what does he do with the extras? Give them away. I could just hit him over the head. Tench couldn't tell if she meant it or not. There was a lot of things that many people couldn't tell, when it came to Lily Shaw. The girl and Arabanoo talked together in low voices for awhile, then went into the cave. Tench followed. His face was perfectly blank, looking like someone who raised his eyes after reading a horrible scene in a book, yet still kept his finger on the paragraph where he'd left off. One by one Arabanoo and the girl kneeled by the bodies piled inside the cave and rolled them over to look at the faces. Every time Arabanoo's expression gave a twitch, as though for a second he'd found someone who was still alive, but then he shook his head and gazed over his shoulder at Tench. All dead, he said, then gave a soft groan, and clutched the girl's shell to his chest. All dead.

Don't touch them, Tench said.

Arabanoo just stood there, motioning around the cave.

We have to go back now, Tench said. All right? Please. Let's just go.

Arabadoo didn't seem to hear. He took the girl by the elbow and led her outside. He kneeled and began digging a hole in the sand, his fingers clumsy. The girl watched him for a while, then went away to a sheltered side of a sand dune and began pulling up beach grass. When she had gathered an armful, she went back and dropped each blade one by one inside the hole. Then Arabadoo dragged a body by the armpits outside the cave and rolled it carefully into the hole, and then they covered that with grass too. There was nothing Tench could say or do to stop them.

Three weeks later Arabadoo was dead.

That French ship that docked here in January – could it have come from there? Tench said to Surgeon General White, just after the funeral. The Governor had insisted that Arabadoo be buried in the back yard of the Government House. Reverend Johnson gave a sermon. Marine units were present, and fired a few rounds into the sky. Miss Shaw served everyone oatcakes as refreshments. The girl with the shell, Nanya, was still in the hospital, sucking on the vanilla bean that White would give her as a treat every morning.

White shook his head. I went over notes with their surgeon, he said. Not a single case.

Ah, Tench said. Not from there then.

It's bizarre, isn't it? White said. Where did it come from? Nobody's come down sick in the colony – believe me, I would know. I kept a flask of the stuff with me, you know, in case we would ever need to inoculate, but I checked it again last night and sure enough it's still bound and sealed. Unless someone with bad intentions broke into my office –

Bound and sealed? said Tench. Are you sure?

Do you want to see for yourself?

Tench hesitated, then shook his head and took a step backwards. No, he said.

No, it's all right. I believe it.

Saying so seemed to convince him that it was true – there was nothing else that he could have done about any of it. All there was left to do was make a note of it in his journal. Arabanoo died, he wrote. I always considered him a friend.

Their second translator found a way to run back into the bush after only twenty days. No one really had the spirit to keep a close watch on him in the first place.

## Lieutenant Watkin Trench on the standards of memoir writing

This has been documented.

I was put under house arrest by this major in Sydney. His name was Major Robert Ross, but I called him dumbfuck.

What happened was this friend of mine who sailed over on the *Sirius* gets into this spat over this girl who sailed over on the *Scarborough*, and a week later I'm writing out the court martial, sorry friend, but stick with the ladies from your own ship next time. I tell him he can either publically apologize, nice and formal-like in front of the garrison, or else we can go standard procedure on lets-call-em cuckolding quarrels, which is 100 from the whip in case you don't know. What are you, crazy? says Major Ross. Then he tells me to go back and rewrite the sentence so that the guy doesn't have a choice – what kind of court is this, putting authority in the hands of the accused, he says. Never mind that that even the Governor pulls Ross aside and says, what are you doing? Don't you have rosters to update? The Governor was always doing stuff like that, putting jobs on Ross trying to get him to shut up, make him stop with the complaints that too many men listened to. Such as: why didn't the Governor meet with his officers more often? Such as: why did the Governor just up the punishment for potato stealing from twenty lashes to thirty five? Such as: why did the Governor think that these beggars, these horse thieves, these skimmers, these racket men could grow something more than a goddamn dandelion on this kind of soil, doesn't matter how many lashes they get for pocketing a potato they didn't even grow themselves in the first place?

Nothing wrong with this sentence, far as I can see, I write to Major Ross. He writes back that the sentence is inconsistent according to martial law and orders that we go back and review it again anyway. I write back and say sorry friend, but according to martial law, sentences can only get reviewed once, not twice. Then he puts me under house arrest. What kind of outfit do you think we're running here? he says. I don't know.

So then the Governor writes him, this great letter in the same tone of voice he uses for everybody, whether it's Indian chiefs or marines or dogs or small children, just real calm and cold. Ross almost has a heart attack just reading it. There's only four captains and twelve lieutenants in your unit, the Governor tells him, two of them holed up in the Hospice Tent with dysentery for the past month. We got people here eating turtles and sting rays, they're so hungry. There's Indians throwing spears at my gamekeeper every time he walks into the forest trying to shoot some kangaroos. Putting even one man under house arrest is going to affect our job. Why don't you and Lieutenant Tench try to work this out some other way? If there's one thing the Governor and Ross had in common, they didn't have much of a sense of humor. Like our first night we disembarked in Sydney, it was pouring with rain, and all the sailors and soldiers and girls were rolling around with other in the mud in between the tree roots, and then lightning came down from the sky and for a second everyone was lit up and white and smooth like Greek statues instead of scared and horny and dirty, and then the lightning went and killed Major Ross' sheep. After that I knew Sydney was going to be the funniest place in the world. Our first night and lightning had killed six sheep, two lambs and one pig, and all of them belonging to Major Ross. Neither he or the Governor had the right attitude about the colony sometimes. They always took things real serious and personal. Like on the King's Birthday, everyone gets assigned a half pint to celebrate,

so you can imagine how crazy things were, I notice this guy waddling down the beach, just walking real strange, and it turns out he's wearing six pairs of ladies' stockings, two petticoats, three jackets and a veil tied around his waist like a belt, cause he raided Sergeant Clarke's tent for clothes and couldn't figure out how to carry them all across the beach without looking suspicious. What kind of people are these, the Governor said, stealing on a National Holiday? It's true – we had more thefts on the King's Birthday than any other day that year. Still, I thought the Governor missed the real question. Which was: what was Sergeant Clarke doing with all those ladies' clothes?

Then Ross writes back to the Governor. This time he's even more serious, and a little sad. Ross lets it all out. He says: he loves his country. He says: it's tearing him up, watching the colony run itself into the ground. Discipline's falling apart, don't even get him started on morale. People are starving here. People are treating ladies who sailed on their ship like personal property. People who don't even know the first thing about farming are getting whipped for stealing potatoes. How's a guy supposed to learn about planting potatoes that way? He and the Governor are opposite sides of the same coin, he says. The Governor won't say a word to anyone when things are hopeless but Ross just can't stop talking. Isn't it better to get it all out there, just admit this place is going to fall into hopeless whoring and rum-running and Indian-slaughtering in the next five years? Flogging doesn't make farmers, Ross says. The Governor needs to put everyone back on the ships before we starve and sail up the coast. Then if we can't find some decent farmland there, head back to England and tell Parliament they better go back to the drawing board and start thinking about sending Picadilly's extra pickpockets to Barbados.

Are you hearing this?

The Governor writes back. He says maybe Major Ross would be happier running the unit farms on Norfolk Island. The dumbfuck just didn't get it.



When memoir writing, focus on documenting the point of the story, the moral, the climax, the ending that ties everything together, the punch line, the things that kind of happened the way you told them except you didn't tell it really. If you'd ever documented that kind of account, it wasn't in that tone of voice. If you'd ever documented that kind of account, it didn't have that kind of ending. But you never documented it, so it doesn't count. If your memoirs sound like you could've written them, then you've failed. If at the end of your memoirs you've depicted the way you really talk and think, or if you feel that you were faithful in recording everything that you honestly felt about that particular time in your life, then sorry friend, but you've been gyped by the oldest trick in the book. Your memoirs must be filled with what must not be told. Your memoirs must be filled without you. So, rule number one, when writing your memoirs, maintain absolute faithfulness to writing about you don't know in a voice infinitely far away from that voice in your head. Just listen to the Governor. Norfolk Island, he says. He does not say, dumbfuck. He does not say, I believe you, Major Ross, or, I am also afraid. He says, maybe you would be happier running the unit farms on Norfolk Island. Then it's back to writing his magisterial reports. Temperature today: 76 degrees. Winds from the South West. Five speared in Indian attack. Ten dead from starvation. He's a seaman through and through – these two years at Sydney is the longest he's been on dry land since he was eighteen – and he writes to Ross in stiff slanted handwriting and tells him, Norfolk Island, because the Governor loves his country too,

and because it's too hard not to take it personally: the colony is running itself into the ground.

You must only document what you see when it isn't enough. If you tell the whole story, then there's no punch line, there's no point; if you tell the story between the lines, then you're practically a historian.

Just listen to the Governor: I will ask you to oversee flax-production on Norfolk Island, Major Ross. With enough flax we will make our own linen and then England will no longer depend on France for sailcloth exports. He does not say, dumbfuck, don't you get it. Don't tell me what's going to happen to this place in five years. Don't tell me things I already know.



Once Ross was out of the picture, that meant the Governor came to me when he needed dead Indians. So what happened was back at the beginning of monsoon season, the Governor went and met with Bennelong and some of his guys down by Manly Cove. He was always trying to meet with Bennelong and talk to him about things like, cocksucker, why do you keep killing my colonists, that's my job, why do you keep stealing our stuff, you wouldn't know how to grow a turnip to save your life, give us back our shovels, cocksucker. Maybe not in so many words. The next thing the Governor knows, he's stumbling back into town groaning with a spear cutting a junction in the road between his left lung and rib bone.

I don't think I'd ever seen the Governor take something so personally. Besides the spearing, I can think of only one other example when I saw him get so upset with the Indians, and that was about a year later, long after his spear wound had closed up nice and clean, and what happened was he went out into his vegetable garden as usual one



morning and saw that Bennelong had killed his dog with a stolen hatchet. You could tell that Bennelong hadn't done it quickly either – he'd made sure that dog had felt it. The head was so beaten in, the mouth was lying on the wrong end of the muzzle. Chunks of meat and yellow brain, lying as casually on the ground as a letter slipped under a door. The Governor kneeled down and looked at the little ragged circle of gore that had once been his dog's head, and when he looked into what had once been the animal's eyes, giant and brown and glazed over, I guess something gave a little bit of a kick inside him. It was a funny dog that never barked, but then again the Governor was the type not much given to talking either. In any case, the Governor really liked that dog, and maybe it was for that reason that Bennelong had gone and killed it. Even his housekeeper must have sensed that trouble was about to follow, because she disappeared that very same day. You don't have to know much more than a housekeeper to guess that before the Governor got Bennelong, he was going to get the person who encouraged Bennelong to hang around the Government House so much in the first place, feeding him oatcakes. I couldn't help feeling a little bad for the housekeeper, though, when she finally turned up again, checking herself into White's rickety excuse for a hospital, her face all scratched up and sunburned and these orange red blisters all over her feet. I always feel a little sorry when it's the women who get whipped, which is what happened to the Governor's housekeeper, and then because it was no good having her take up space in the hospital, she came and worked for me a for a couple of weeks, until her back healed and the Governor would allow her back in the Government House. I really couldn't blame the Governor for not wanting to take in a new girl and re-train her from scratch – God knows, it was hard enough trying to re-train the colony's translator after the first one went and died from smallpox. Still, I knew it was the kind of thing that would've made

Major Ross gnash his teeth, what kind of outfit did we think we were running here? All I can say is while it was a damned shame what happened with the dog, I was almost a little annoyed when the housekeeper's back finally healed from the flogging and she had to go back to the Government House, just so the Governor could keep on getting his chamomile tea and his socks cleaned just the way he liked it. She was a pretty decent housekeeper. Kept to herself, mostly.

But that was all much later, after the Governor already had plenty of time to calm down and think things through clearly. But those first few weeks after Bennelong rammed a spear through his shoulder, it was all he could do not to think about dead Indians, and that was when I got involved. At the same time, I thought it was pretty typical of the Governor, that all he could do was take things real personal and not see the other side to them. It's like he understood that it was an awful and terrible thing that had happened to him, but he didn't get that it was also kind of funny, the way every time he tried to talk his lungs were so full of blood all he could make was this *burble burble* noise like he was blowing bubbles in his milk, but the funny part was the Governor was such a quiet and secretive guy he never much talked to anybody to begin with. The Governor thought the point was that Bennelong and all his Indian friends were impossible to deal with. He just didn't get it. The funniness is over, he thought. This is serious business now. Then he called me into his study and said, I need you to take your unit into the woods, kill the first two Indians you see and bring back their heads, then bring back ten more for hanging.

The funny thing is, when Indians used to come to town, I always used to play around with them and pretend like the only thing I wanted to do was trade an Indian head with them. My friend had this old shrunken head he got from some South Sea

Indians somewhere in the Pacific, this wrinkled hollow onion-sized thing. I used to pretend to shop it around and act like I really thought I could get a good trade for it. Excuse me, but can I get a spear for this head? It was light and yellow and had a texture like chicken skin, but I'd be really silly about it and when Indians asked questions I just acted really surprised. Why, it's my spare head, I said. Don't you see the resemblance? This is the head I put on for the Christmas ball. Don't you guys keep spare heads you put on when you want to look real pretty? I'd hold it up next to my face and scrunch up my mouth, imitating the expression. Everyone always ended up giggling. Once Bennelong and I played catch with it under the trees. I'd pretend like the head was whispering stuff into my ear, he says your girl has a real tight ass, and we'd giggle and run around and just have us some fun.

This has been documented, of course.

It's there in those memoirs I'm never going to write, the ones where I write about playing catch with Bennelong under those tall trees, parrots making soft gurgling noises up in the branches. The head left a papery smell on our fingers. The Indians had thin white scars all over their shoulders, bones through their noses, and I remember our shadows getting bigger across the grass as the sun went down across the bay. Sergeant Dawes standing around, looking sad and desperate trying to write things down in his dictionary faster than the Indians could speak. Bennelong and his pregnant wife and Yemmi pestering for pork and wine, and behind us against the grey-green backdrop of the bush were the ragged houses of the colony.

I was real quiet when the Governor was giving me my orders.

After a moment or two he started shuffling these letters from Major Ross on his desk. I could tell just from the whiny thinness of his handwriting that the letters were all

about how so-and-so many pigs had died already, how it was impossible to make flax from the pine trees on this island, the wood snapped easy like it was the bones of baby birds. Finally the Governor glanced up at me, just flickering his eyes while keeping his head still. After another minute I saluted and headed for the door.

It is difficult to document the conversation that did not follow.

Sir, I said, don't you think it's terrible but kind of goofy? You with a spear head in your chest trying to talk, *burble burble burble*, but in all honesty you never really talked that much to begin with.

The Governor makes a noise in agreement. Very true, I see it now, he said.

Those spears are terrible too but aren't they beautiful as well, the kind of beautiful that's almost funny? I said. Even when they're flying through the air and punching a hole through a stomach, doesn't it look almost pretty, the kind of pretty that could make you laugh about it all, with the trees and grass and white scars on the Indians and the sun coming down over the bay?

You're right, the Governor said, ten is too many to execute. Just bring back six, and we'll hang two and send the rest to Norfolk.

When writing your memoirs, keep track of the conversations that actually happen versus those that happen inside your own head versus those that happen inside heads of others. Sometimes you're both having the same conversation inside your head at the same time, and these unspoken, unacknowledged discussions can go on for hours, days. Weeks, even. The memoir writer must pick when to cut things short, who gets the final word, the last laugh. What about the heads? I did not ask the Governor, standing to attention in his study. Do I still have to bring back the heads?

Don't you know that I need a spare? he did not say. Don't you know that I'm losing my own? England needs spare heads, Tench.

When recording these unspoken conversations, things can get ugly if you get mixed up over whether the discussion took place in your head or someone else's or both at the same time. Sentences are cut off. Fine rhetoric is interrupted. Afterwards, the memoir writer must not be honest, must not record the conversation as it was actually not spoken, but must record the conversation that seemed like it needed speaking.



My old friend Sergeant Dawes shared with me a first-person account of the events he did not witness on Norfolk Island while Major Ross was stationed there. We'd just set off marching on our mission for Indian heads, the drum-major tapping out this tune I didn't recognize, the privates scratching at the heat rashes already forming under the leather stocks around their necks. I told Dawes to take notes on which trees had gashes, oozing dried pink gum, where Indians had sliced notches to help them climb to the top for possums and parrot eggs. We cut and slashed our way through ferns and thickets, heading west to Hawkesbury River. I wasn't in a very good mood, so I didn't mind hearing about Major Ross.

Are you hearing this? said Sergeant Dawes. So there's twenty five men and about, I don't know, twenty convicts on the island. The whole place is covered with these pine trees. Did you ever see those kinds of things in Virginia?

In Massachusetts.

Well, the ones on Norfolk are nothing like the kind in America, they're long and skinny and covered in vines and just real nasty smelling. Then there's all these

mushrooms growing between the roots that glow in the dark. Did you ever see merfolk off the coast of Newfoundland?

Near Greenland.

You know how bright they look in the water when the wind's dead and the sky's cloudy? That's how bright these mushrooms are. Like torches. First night on land, Major Ross hears this chomping and nibbling coming from the trees. First thing he thinks is, how nice. Rabbits. We got rabbits here on this island. Dawes shakes his head. It's rats. Big as greyhounds. That's the kind of place this is. No joke. Still, the soil there isn't like the soil here. It's thick, not grainy and sandy. You would think you could actually grow some cabbages and not have everything die on you. He shrugged. You get why the Governor thought we might stand a better chance over there?

He looked at me like he was expecting an answer. As always he was marching with his dictionary tucked under his arm for quick and easy access. I guess he thought it was in case he could get any new vocabulary from the Indians before we cut off their heads. The translation for *ouch*. For *aaaargh*. He kept lifting his hand and re-tucking his quill behind his ear with jerky, nervous fingers; the tip had left an ink stain by his sideburns that looked like an ugly mole I couldn't stop staring at.

So Ross lands on the island, they raise the flag, he gets his unit and the convicts together on the beach and all together they toast the King. Ross is all excited. In a year he's going to have the land all cleared off. Everything that died in our vegetable gardens over here, he's going to be growing on Norfolk, on that nice Norfolk soil. Never mind the rats and the mushrooms, he'll figure out a way to take care of those later.

He's got the prisoners divided up into units – families, he calls them – and each family has a pig they're responsible for. This is supposed to keep the morale up and cut

down on stealing, something like that. Everyone's going to be too busy taking care of their pig. They're not going to have time for gambling or smuggling or fighting or moping. That in turn will cut down on the flogging. Flogging doesn't make farmers, he keeps saying to his unit, over and over again. And that's what Norfolk Island is going to be. Ross is going to turn it into a regular Lancashire. They're going to have huge farms and flax-making factories by the end of the year, no mistake. Do you know where your pig is today? he's always asking. Do you know what your family is supposed to be working on? And to his unit, he tells them, remember, remember what I told you about making farmers.

So the families start chopping down the pines like there's no tomorrow. But they find out real quick that this wood isn't good enough to toss in a fireplace, let alone for spar or flax-making. You can snap it like a string bean. Then Ross realizes he doesn't even have any flax-workers on the island with him. He writes a letter to the Governor, then to Prime Minister Pitt, telling them, come on, throw him a bone, send him a flax-knitter. Nothing. He never hears back from them. Apparently, no one in this part of the world has any idea what they're supposed to do, flax-making. And all this time there's the heat, and the rats, and the mushrooms glowing in the dark that they can still see even if they put their hands over their eyes when they're trying to fall asleep, and the salt blowing off the ocean that crusts under their fingernails and in their eardrums. And Major Ross asking every day, do you know where your pig is? Do you know what your family is supposed to be working on?

Let me guess, I said. Then their crops started dying.

No, said Dawes. Their crops started moving away from them.

His eyes were tight and little as they stared at me in the sunlight. It was a humid morning and the sweat on his forehead glittered like shards of glass.

First it was the sand on the beach. Grain by grain skipping and hissing away. It headed to the water. When sand moves together like that it's like this blind, glittering mass of powder, just scraping and inching its way into the ocean, just – away from them. Then the pine tree branches start whispering and trembling together, shuddering and lying flat against the trunks, like they're these little animals flattening their ears against their heads. Then the stones on the beach started moving away too. Turning over one by one, thump, thump, thump. The lighter ones skip across the water and the bigger boulders shoulder their way against the waves. Once the boulders are gone all that's left are these deep holes scattered everywhere, like it's the face of the moon. Some guys go poking around looking for grass roots, you know, for the pigs, and one guy finds these pale pink spearheads buried in the dirt, another guy, this skull with three gold teeth and an earring, another guy, a fingerbone from when whales used to have hands. Pretty soon, when the families are working in their vegetable gardens, they can feel a humming under the ground. When they pull on their cabbage leaves, the plants pull the other way, or else try to spread their leaves flat against ground, like these little green carpets. Ross orders everyone to leave the gardens alone for awhile, so then the gardens just sit there, shaking, like it has a fever, even when there's no wind. And then they wake up in their tents one night and everything's gone inside out. They can't see the mushrooms glowing between the roots anymore, but instead everywhere there's this strange brown light, and this thick heavy smell, like when you wake up with your face buried in the earth. They sneeze and spit and stagger outside. The whole world is changing right before their very eyes. These clouds of soil and pine needles just whirling past them. Everywhere they look, these



brown roots are creeping up the rocks, over their tents. Even their own cabbages are ripping themselves out the gardens, rolling along the ground, bouncing off their ankles, knocking against the turnip tops, which are also pulling themselves out and slinking around in circles, just tangled and confused. Only a couple of weeds decide to stay right where they are. The trees are backing away from the shoreline, deeper into the island, higher up towards the cliff-faces inland. Ross and his guys, they shiver in the dark and watch the pine trees pull up their roots and step over their tents like they weren't anything more than stones. The soldiers' tents are still there, and each family's mud hut, and the pigs are still snuffling around looking for worms. But the forest had moved away from them. By the time it was dawn, it just wasn't there anymore. It headed to the highest rock-ridges on the island, never mind there's no soil there that a tree would be interested in. It just got up and left.

Dawes flipped through the pages of his dictionary like it was a deck of cards. He gave me this look, like he was trying to guess who in the story I was feeling sorry and sad for, and then he just kept on talking.

Then when it's morning, the pine timber that had already been cut down decided to follow. They were the ones who hurried most of all. Straining and inching and rolling against the ground. Made it up the cliff-faces in about half the time it took the pine forest to get there. Ross, he hasn't said a word this whole time. He walks back and forth, staring, watching their timber flip and flop and roll its way up the rocks. Now there's nothing left on the island except grey packed dirt, all scarred from the tree roots, and further inland there's these giant rock-cliffs, with the pines trees making a fringe around the top, wrapping their roots all desperate against the stones, trying to keep themselves from blowing away in the wind. Their branches keep rustling and tossing together, and

this sound of these thousands and thousands of pine needles scratching against each other, it's like anywhere Ross goes on the island he hears like a thousand pair of hands, just wringing together nervously, every hour, every day, every night he hears them. Just not shutting up. The first few weeks, the families live off gulls and rats. One guy tries feeding one of the glowy mushrooms to his family's pig and the pig dies rolling around screaming and scratching at its belly. Ross cuts the guy's rations in half for that. Might have been faster to just shoot him. But the island keeps on moving. Not all at once, like the night when the pines headed to the rocks, but slow and painful, so they almost don't notice it at first. It's like a shudder. It's like a tingle traveling down the backs of their necks. The tidepools suck themselves back into the sea, leaving these empty dark eyes behind. Even when fresh waves keep breaking in, the pools keep pushing them out again, so all Ross can see during high tide is this long fringe of white foam against the shoreline, where the island's pushing and pushing against the ocean, sending the water back, trying to keep it away. Then even the rats start running to the rocks, little bits of grey dirt hissing in the same direction under their little ratty paws. Up on the cliff-face, some the pine trees have lost their grip at this point and got snatched away in the wind, but most of them are clinging on, huddling together if you can picture that. Their needles are all blown away by now, but Ross can still hear the sound of them scratching together, like all these nervous wringing hands. The families look in the deep dirt holes left by the boulders and these long furrows left by the pines, you know, looking for roots and sticks to chew on. Except at the very top of the rocks, where the pines and the rats and the bushes and the stones are huddling and shaking together, everything else on Norfolk is grey and quiet. Like it was frozen. Then Ross realizes, the flax-makers aren't

ever going to come. The tide pools and the boulders and the pine trees aren't ever coming back either. They've been abandoned. They're on their own.

Ross doesn't say a word to anybody. He had absolutely nothing to say when he first saw those rocks creeping into the island. He can't think of anything to say about it now. He can't handle it. Something flips in his head. He lines up all the soldiers and all the families on the beach. He gives each of them a musket, or a strip of leather, the biggest guys, a whip. They march up the cliff-face, crawling on their knees when it's too steep to stand, grabbing at tiny cracks to keep their balance. They make it to the top and the wind's blowing so hard it's almost like fire. They look down at the rest of the island below them and even from that height, they can see places in the ground where the grey dirt and the tiny stones and the tidepools are still trying to creep away from them, either into the sea or inland towards the rocks. It's like the land below them is grey and flat as a sheet and they're watching tiny wrinkles move back and forth. There's really nothing to keep them from thinking, boy, nothing can stop this island from creeping away under our feet, dropping us into thin air, Norfolk creeping away from us across the ocean, until it slips over the side of the world like a crumb rolling off a table. Then Ross orders the guys with the muskets to start firing at the trees. He orders the guys with the strips of leather to start thwacking at the branches. And he orders the guys with the whips to start flogging. And you know, they beat that pine forest from the top of the rock-cliff back down to the shoreline where it belonged. The whole day they poured bullets into those trees. They beat them with the leather, with the cat-tails – some guys find out that with some trees it worked better using the whip-butt – until their faces are splattered with pine-juice. Everywhere there's these flayed pieces of bark tossing in the wind, the trunks looking all scorched like they had huge pieces of their sides eaten by cannonballs. They

whip them away from the ridges. They're all sweating and shooting and shouting and screaming. They make those trees feel it.

But one by one the trees start moving down. They make this faint groaning noise, when they're dragging their roots against the stones, and some of the smaller ones let out this howl if they lose their grip and fall and get lost in the wind, but mostly it's quiet. They inch and roll and groan and creep back down the rock cliffs, and Ross' guys are behind them, beating them with musket butts cause they ran out of ammo long time ago, all red faced and yelling, veins popping out of their foreheads. But the roots keep creeping along, moaning. Then, everything is actually settled back to where it used to be, right along the shoreline. Everything's absolutely still as it was before. It's like the whole place is covered in fog. There's nothing moving. The guys even got their timber to roll back down. They chop it up and build a huge fire and roast some pigs for dinner. Their shoulders are achy and a lot of them got blisters in their hands and they're a little nervous since they're out of ammo, but none of them are really worse for wear. Except for Ross. Cause when Ross looked around the island, at these naked trees with these deep ragged scratches and holes splintered into them, he can still see it. He can still see everything creeping away from him. He can see the trees dragging their roots along the ground, heading to the rocks.



We kept on walking. If you'd asked me then, I would've said: we sure could use some Indians to kill right about now. That's the kind of mood I was in, hearing Dawes talk to me about Major Ross. We passed tufts of sour grass and salt water lagoons. We passed spindly tree braches that scratched our faces. We passed gum trees shiny with slashes of dried pink sap. We pass roots attached to trees with grey hunched over trunks,

all dead from having been struck by electrical storms long ago. We probably even passed China, which you can reach in a shortcut right across the river, except I was too busy thinking about other things to notice exactly where. After Dawes finished talking, he took out some parchment and started taking notes on the local bird life, there it goes, one gold throated wattle, there it goes, two hooked hornbills. The whole time that he had been telling me about Major Ross, he kept flipping his finger through the pages of the Indian-English dictionary that he carried under his arm. He knew I would later make a point of documenting it all, and I think he was a little nervous, a little too cautious: it was his first time sharing a first-person account of events which he had not personally witnessed, and I think he was worried about getting some of the details too right, making it all sound too tidy and sad and worthy of describing.

We finally set up camp under some bracken trees, and while I was kneeling down sinking my fingers in the black mouldy soil, I was thinking about who would be the first Indian we would run into, how awkward it would be explaining what we were looking for, all the different facts and conversations I would have to forget before I could write them down properly. Sergeant Dawes came up to me and read to me some of his notes about the birds, then the marks on the gum trees. I could tell what he really wanted was to ask me how did he do, his first time ever telling a history, how would I change it when I wrote it down myself, was it worth maybe telling to a professional Recorder some day if there was ever any interest in such a project, back in England. But all he said was he was pretty sure that we would find an Indian village the next day. We would get us our heads.

This is one of those things where I can exactly see how it's going to turn out, he said. There's a happy ending in store for us. We've worked hard enough, right? We've

given Bennelong and those guys enough a chance. Well, this is it for them. We're not interested in what they have to say for themselves anymore. They spear our Governor – well, this is what happens.

He gave his dictionary a pat.

Actions speak louder than words, he said. They'll learn. We'll teach them.

Sure thing, I said.



In my understanding, years and years and years later, when Dawes heard that I would be working with you, putting together a complete account of everything that happened in Sydney, he got in touch with you about some of the finer details about his history of Major Ross. He told me that he had read what you had written about it. He came up to me after I finished giving a memoir-reading in a London salon. Everyone else had already risen from their leather chairs and were tugging at their starched jacket cuffs or rubbing their wrists on their necks to check that their perfume was still strong.

I got in touch with the Recorder, Dawes told me. Despite all the years that had gone by since Sydney, he looked pretty much the same. The ugly mole ink stain on his cheek was still there, with a grey hair growing in the middle. I don't know if you heard about it, Dawes said. What the Recorder has been working on.

Aha.

I looked over a copy of the draft, Dawes said, and a lot of details about what I told you about Major Ross – you remember Major Ross, right? There were some things that I think might have been added in.

Uh huh.

The tidepools trying to move away from the beach.

I don't remember that part.

Me neither. And in what I read, there was nothing about Ross kidnapping a flax-maker from New Zealand – you know, the Indians from New Zealand, Ross had heard from Lord Banks that they all wear flax loin clothes. So he decided, you know, he would kidnap an Indian from New Zealand, who would teach the families about flax-making.

How could that part get left out? That was the most important part.

I have no idea. He was one moody Indian, I heard. Always walking around sighing and holding his coat tails in his fists. When he saw Ross' guys beating the trees – he went crazy like you wouldn't believe it, even knocked one of the floggers down with a hunk of firewood and tried to beat his head in. But smallpox got him in the end. That's what I heard.

Dawes shrugged and smiled a crinkled smile at me. It was many years since we had left Sydney, and since then I had published some memoirs and he had published his dictionary. The salon guests milled around us, moving their hands like cutlery when they spoke.

Okay, I said. Are you sure that's what happened?

Kidnapping Indians. It never comes to a pretty end.

It's just that I thought – I said. The salon guests talked and laughed and stood on carpet thick as icing and clicked their tipplers of brandy together.

Never mind, I said. I'll talk to the Recorder about it. That's what they're supposed to do, right? Straighten this kind of thing out.

That was the last time I saw Sergeant Dawes.



So: I need to ask you, you with the hand moving an inky quill across parchment as I am speaking to you now, you who knows all about the standards of Recording, me who knows all about the standards of memoir writing. Your job has never been about straightening things out, has it? Your job isn't even about showing how everything is tangled together – all you do is tangle tangles into the tangles. With memoir writing, at least a person can read what I wrote and say, Lieutenant Tench did a good job making me feel like I don't know him. But you and your way of recording these histories, all I can say after reading this is, you did a good job making me feel like I don't know myself.

I read my memoirs and I know that's not my real voice, that's not what really happened – after all, I'm writing something that has punchlines, that has a shape, that has a point. But when I'm talking to you, trying to sneak my eyes over that piece of parchment of yours, trying to see if you're actually writing down what I'm actually saying with that inky quill – I don't trust that I'm the right person to be telling my own history anymore. But if I'm not, then who is?

Tench: you dumbfuck. You'll never get it, will you. We're busy writing history here. We don't have time for trusting. Trust is what you feel for the kind of fairytales where trees only ever stay in one place. Last time we checked, we weren't in the business of fairy tales.

Here is what I did not write in my memoirs about what happened, that day we marched west of Hawkesbury River, looking for Indian heads. We passed salt water lagoons. We passed cabbage trees. We passed China.

The first Indian we ran into was Yemmi. The very first thing he asked was if I had my spare head with me. He always did think the spare head thing was the greatest joke he'd ever seen. Not now, Yemmi, I told him. Not today. He picked up a stick from



the ground and play-acted like he wanted to fence with me. When I didn't respond, he turned on one of the eucalyptus trees, slashing the bark, filling the air with peppermint. I turned and looked at the soldiers in my unit, waiting in rows, muskets on their shoulders, hatchets at their belts, some of them carrying heavy burlap sacks in preparation for carrying the heads. Yemmi panted and giggled and clowned, parrying his stick around. I looked at my unit and jerked my chin to the side. Keep on moving, I told everyone.

Later in the day, we came across a patch of land that Bennelong's people had burned through. Some of the trees were still belching smoke from the top, like chimneys, other trees had snares placed in between their roots, to catch the wombats as they were running away from the fire. We were trying to pound our tent pegs into the parched ashy ground when Bennelong appeared out of nowhere, in that way of his. Hello, you shit-eater, he said to me. It was our usual greeting. Some of the guys in my unit picked up the burlap sacks without waiting for me to give an order. I gave them a look and they just stared back at me, before finally letting the sacks drop to the ground. I'll give him a new word, Bennelong said, pointing at Sergeant Dawes, if you've got some extra pork you wouldn't mind sharing.

I passed him an oatcake that the Governor's housekeeper had baked for me, but he tossed it from one hand to the other then handed it back.

How's Be-anna? he said. He meant the Governor.

Not too good. Someone put a spear through his chest.

Ah. Is that so.

You were the one who did it, dumbfuck.

Who says? I wouldn't trust them, if I were you.

I kicked at the dead grass and I glared at him. He moved away back into the trees, not even looking back at me, calling over his shoulder: tell Sergeant Dawes, naamora. This means: to see the way.

We ran into him again the next morning, sitting under the burnt trees with his first and favorite wife on the ashy ground, stroking her pregnant belly, smiling this airy smile at us as he watched us march towards them. They were sitting across a creek, sheltered by leafy gum branches. The creek only reached up to our ankles, and we splashed through the clear cold water easily, reaching them in less than a minute.

It is difficult to document what did not happen next: me withdrawing my pistol before anyone else could touch their muskets, taking careful aim, shooting Bennelong right through the foot. He opened his mouth but no noise came out. His wife, the first and favorite, was the one who started shrieking at us. She stopped when we cut her right through her pregnant belly. The air was humid and still itchy in our throats, from the smoke left over from when the Indians had burned through the trees. Soon enough Bennelong led us, hobbling, to one of his Indian villages. I didn't give him that much of a choice. It was time for action, not words. We surrounded them on all sides. Heads went sailing through the air, Bennelong's included. They made little hump shapes when we dropped them in the burlap sacks. We took out Bennelong's head and burned the stump with fire, to seal the bleeding. We played catch with it, all the way back to the beach. The head lifting and falling in easy arcs between me and Sergeant Dawes, over and over and over again. We ended the history the way it was supposed to.

You can be honest, Recorder – is it difficult to document this next version? Is this next one easier to trust, easier to believe? Or is it the other way round? We finally ran into Bennelong the next morning, sitting under the burnt trees with his first and

favorite wife on the ashy ground, smiling as he was stroking her pregnant belly. They were sitting across a creek from us, sheltered by leafy gum branches. Here we go, I said to myself. This is a serious business. But then – are you hearing this? The creek reached up to our chests, but not only that, it was filled with marsh mud so thick and salty and bog-fly ridden, we'd hardly gone two feet before we all realized that we were stuck. Nobody could believe it. We tried to wobble our way through the sucking grime, but it was like swimming through iron. No matter how hard we strained our legs forward, all we could see was a few light bubbles rise to the surface. We were encased in muck and filth. We were as jammed as tree roots in the soil. Some guys tried to stretch out their muskets, stab the bayonet into the dry earth and haul themselves out, but nobody's arms were quite long enough to reach. A few guys who'd stayed behind on the creek bank, keeping watch on Bennelong while the rest of us tried fording the water, we told them to start throwing anything and everything into the mud, to use as ropes. They ended up ripping the burlap sacks into long thin strips – that seemed to work the best. The air was filled with soldiers yelling and hollering and the thick gluey smell of salty creek mud making everybody sneeze. Bennelong and his wife sat on the other side and watched us. I really could not tell you what they were thinking. I stood there, up to my chest in mud, and all of a sudden I was just laughing and laughing and laughing at it all. I laughed like it was spurts of gunfire coming out of me.

You can write either of those down. I didn't really act the way I did, in either one. But you should pick up my memoir if you want to find out more. It's a real page turner, that whole scene. I know you've got a degree and all, National Institute of Recording and all that, but who says there isn't a thing or two you can learn from a

memoir writer. You really need to keep a sense of humor about these things. That's all I can say.

## Lily Shaw Offers an Opinion, of Sorts

One of Lily Shaw's grandchildren is interrupting her while she is trying to put ginger extract in her eyes for her cataracts, asking why is there someone sitting at their table writing such things in such fancy handwriting on such pressed white parchment. The grandchild has a reedy flutey voice, heavy black eyebrows pushing down on plush brown eyes that make him look years older than he really is. He does not know of his grandmother's prison sentence, which has led to his existence in the first place, he does not know of Recorders, he does not know of England. *Do you get paid to do this kind of thing?* he says. *Why do you get paid, if no one's going to read it?* It is a terrible moment. Still, an effort is made, the quill tip is waved around very importantly in the air, it is explained to the grandchild that Recorders practice an ancient and rapidly fading art, and their histories are not meant to sit on library shelves waiting for attention like cats on a warm lap. Secretly, however, it is hoped that such questions are never asked again. Such questions are currently being asked by grandchildren, by their parents, by their grandparents, all over Britain. It should be explained to Lily Shaw's grandchild, already old beyond his years, that it is now both fashionable and accepted within the academy to write histories only about what happened, only about what will be remembered. This is a new century, after all, with new colonies springing up across the world overnight like little mushrooms in the dark. There are new ways now of doing and describing things.

This is a description originally written in the Senior Common Room at St. Scholastica's National Institute of Historical Recording, a building currently in the process of demolition, to make room for a glass factory on the outskirts of Whitby:

Lily Shaw walked through the bush for a long time, walked over piles of stringy bruised bark, past the cracked tree trunks, past the shortcut that would have taken her through the brush to a small abandoned pagoda on the Chinese border, if she'd been able to see the way. She was afraid of what she had left behind. She was afraid of what would have happened, if she had stayed. When she stumbled back into the colony, it was by accident, and Arthur Phillip had her whipped before allowing her to return to the Government House, because he was too busy and too impatient with other things to worry about re-training a new housekeeper.

This is a description that was first read aloud to a fellow graduate of the Recording Institute, forced to find employment at Notting Hill's Ladbroke & Wardley in the Accounts Department, receiving payment for copying out receipts from sugar plantations in Antigua:

Lily Shaw hid her pregnancy from Arthur Phillip and from Tench and from herself for a good long time. However, as things worked out, it wasn't something that needed to be hidden for very long. The dog dying was just about the last straw. It didn't seem like it was anyone's fault, the way its head jerked apart like someone had pulled an invisible string and ripped away the seams that had kept its skull together. It was a hot day in which there had already been many floggings, signed into law by Arthur. The dog lay on the ground, his legs crooked, eyes two puffs of gore. Lily Shaw put an apron over the body before suddenly she couldn't take it anymore. She began to run.

It is asked of Lily Shaw, as she gives the grandchild a pat on the backside and tells him to get back to the pastures, if she has any bad feelings about anything. She frowns. That is, bad feelings about the time she spent in Arthur Phillip's employment, the time she spent living with Lieutenant Tench, while her back was healing from the flogging that she'd received.

Later, a description shall be added here, explaining how despite all the efforts made to encourage Lily Shaw's participation in the project, all she insisted on doing was talking about her opinions on the grandchild. How wretched it was, the way this generation did not remember a time when Changelings used to stand silent and staring in the corners of schoolrooms. The way this generation could not speak a sprite-summoning spell to save their lives, they could not follow the proper etiquette for when elf tutors stopped by for weekly lessons in rune reading. The grandchild did not know druid songs whispered by willow trees, or the Devon cliffs where pyrates ships ran against the reefs and were raided by coast-smugglers like his grandmother. All the grandchild knew was rumors of gold from Melbourne and Irishmen in grog-shops who lit their pipes with five pound notes they had made from cattle-running and fog-eyed blacks leaning against horse troughs, empty bottle in hand. *Things were not always that way*, Lily Shaw complains.

It does not really matter, then, all the grandchild knows and does not know, all that Lily knows and will not say, about herself, about her flogging, about her time spent employed by Lieutenant Tench waiting for her back to heal, about anything in the past, which, more and more, after every page, slips further and further away from us, back into a century that bends and winds into fog.

## Port Jackson Waltz

I didn't realize that my neck had turned into tree bark beneath my skin until I was standing in line for Rations and I tried to strain my head around, trying to get a better look at how the scabby gashes on my back were healing after my flogging. Caroline and Mary-with-the-pinkeye, who I think became afflicted because I prayed it to be so, were standing in front of me hissing through their teeth at the sight of this week's pork knuckles, brown and soggy and stinking of brine gone bad. I tried to budge my neck first to the left, then to the right. Instead, I was stuck, still, frozen, staring at the back of Mary-pinkeye's head, which was shaking in sad disapproval at the thought of tonight's dinner. I raised my fingers and traced the whorled lines of wrinkled bark, hard and unmistakable just beneath the thin sheath of skin. I drummed my fingers on my throat. It was a pleasantly hollow and wooden sound. I could make the same noise thudding my head against a gum tree.

Monday was Rations in the women's camp. We stood in line with pails and waited our turn. We groaned over the sun throbbing in the sky and gasped over whose baby threw up mouthfuls of tiny clotted white eels the night before, surely some more mischief caused by that banshee which followed Rackety Pip all the way from Cork. We watched Lieutenant Tench direct the drilling officers, their white feet showing where their leather boots flap apart. On one side of us was our clay-and-wattle houses squatting in the dirt. Then a little further on, our heat-flattened turnip gardens. Then even further, the beach and the ocean, both naked and windswept. To the other side of Rations line



was a lattice of grass and bush and sticks. Here and there were smears of red wildflowers like lipstick in between the hollows. The week when I tried running away, I ran straight for those flower patches, trampling them into the ground. After about a week Lieutenant Tench found me on patrol and brought me back to the colony sunburnt, babbling, crusty eyed with pollen.

Maybe the gashes beneath the bandages on my back are also stiffening into tree bark, I thought. I hope not the type of tree susceptible to maggots.

Widget's going to get a hatchet from the Indians, Caroline was saying when we all took one step forward. He got some nails, you know. Pried them out of the armory.

Clever, clever! cried Mary-with-the-pinkeye, whose affliction was possibly, maybe, perhaps be all my fault.

You've got to know what a good trade is with Indians, Caroline said, hands resting on her pregnant belly. If a ship comes round again, Widget and me, we'll be ready. Trade a Indian hatchet with a sailor – why, any sailor knows he can go back to England and sell the thing seven pounds in Penzance. An Indian hatchet'll get us all the way to Cape Town, you can mark that, mark it.

All the way to Cape Town, Mary repeated. She scratched her eyeballs with her knuckles. I tried turning my head away from her, but the bark held firm. I had to shuffle my whole body about, so that it was not only my face staring away to the side but also my jutting doorknobs hips, knees like rounded bruises showing through my dress, slopbucket of frizzed hair, colorless slanted mouth. My back was stinging beneath the bandages. There's probably little leather pieces of the whip left behind, I thought. Everyone took a step forward, and behind me Caroline growled with displeasure when I didn't move. We were standing in line, and everyone else was hungry and irritated as

usual, but I was sad and turning into a tree, and so I thought I would try to gather my energy for a moment, before taking another step.

Every Monday the women stood in line for Rations. Sometimes the lines got smaller, but more often it was the pork knuckles. Sometimes there would be some sighing over the latest soldier found by the creek bed with an Indian spear rising from his throat. Sometimes there would be some tutting over the latest whipping and some wondering whether Major Ross tried razoring the cattails this time so that they would cut more deeply into the shoulderbone, but maybe this time Lieutenant Tench caught him. Sometimes someone would say something like, Tench, I could eat that one on a wormy biscuit, mwah. Then there would be sniggers and glances in my direction. I would always just stare straight ahead. At some point, we would each reach the front of the line, and hold out our pails, and Harry Rhys would slop them half full with three ladlefuls of pork knuckles. Then we would hold out our potato sacks that have been empty and weevily for six months now, and he would pour in one pound of flour. Some of the women would eat it all at once, hands shining in greasy fistfuls as their lips become rimmed in white powder. They would beg and steal until next Monday came around.

Forward, forward, forward! Caroline said, poking me in the ribs. What you looking that way for?

Tench's drilling, Elizabeth Flayton said. Look at him go!

Look at those pants! someone else yelled. They giggled and looked at me for a reaction. The officers marched past us, towards the trees, feet pattering on the sparse grass. They practiced turn-about, about-faces; they mimed loading their guns and firing them at the kanga rats that skitter over the eucalyptus leaves. They were low on powder,

so Tench encouraged everyone to make explosion noises with their lips. The younger ones did so enthusiastically, blowing spit.

You all shoot worse than sparrows, Tench told them, and laughed uproariously.

My neck's gone bad, I muttered to Caroline.

I'll fix it, she said. She slapped her pregnant belly with her fist, and I cringed. I fix backs. Ask the Surgeon. I sit on men's chests in the hospital, when they're moaning, ohhh, my back, my back, gone and froze itself when I was kneeling in the fields. I wrench their heads this way – then that way – then their pains go from their backs into their feet. It works for them, it could probably work for you.

No thanks, I said. Rhys slopped Rations into Elizabeth Flayton's pail.

It'll be three dried fishies, said Caroline. She reknotted the rope that held up her sacking dress around her bulging waist. That's all. Three dried Indian fishies. Can't find a better trade anywhere else. Aren't you the one, they say, who knows all about making a good trade? She stared at me like someone talking sense to a statue.

Rhys slopped Rations into Mary-pinkeye's pail, and she walked away with discharge running from the corners of her eyes. Her raggy dress collar was all yellow because of it. Forward, Rhys said to me.

What's the matter? Caroline said, her voice rising. Thinking you're too good to bargain with me? Little Miss Governor's girl, Little Miss oh here, let me organize some berry sauce for your lamb, Governor, let me organize some gin-running right under your very nose, Governor.

Please, I tried to say, but it was in such a croaking voice she didn't hear me.

What's happened to you now, Governor's girl? What's happened to all your organizing? Still think you're too good for the likes of us?

I don't want to do it anymore, I said to her. I'm too tired. It's not who I am anymore, I don't think.

I don't care what you think. I'm telling you, I'll give you one back fixing for three dried fishies. What else you want? Ribbons? Beads? You can get good things from the Indians with beads.

We don't have anymore beads.

I can get you Private Bradshaw's glass eye. Indians won't tell the difference.

But I don't want anything, I said. There's nothing I want right now from Indians, thank you. I could feel the ridges of bark around my neck pressing and kneading my veins.

Forward! Rhys shouted at me.

Left, Lieutenant Tench shouted at the officers. *My left*, Private Biers.

What's happened to the line? someone shouted from the back. Keep moving, keep moving, we're hungry!

If my muscles are turning into tree bark, I thought, as I tried to step forward and my head went dizzy and my vision went black, maybe my feet will be next. My toes will stiffen into twisted roots clenching at the ground, my arms blossoming into motionless branches with venomous leaves at the tips, my fingers green bristles. The soldiers' feet were thudding against the ground, faster than ever now, like the stomping of a mad dance. Everyone was yelling and when I went down I tried grabbing at someone's bag of flour for balance, and there was a coarse ripping noise and something soft and snowy slapped into my face. When I finally came to, I was lying on the ground and the gashes on my back hurt like fire. I opened my eyes and although I couldn't move my neck I could see Tench hovering over me, his face looking peaky and scared. A circle of female

faces stared down at me with faintly condemning expressions. Thick crumbs of flour lined my nostrils. I had a sudden picture of myself: coated in white, like one of those tombs you find in an old church, a dead queen with no pupils for eyes.

Oooh! a woman wailed. My flour! She spilled my flour! No one said anything sympathetic. She paused. She thought for a moment. Then she fell to her knees and began licking the white powder spilled across my neck and face.

I stared up at the sky. I'll try trying lying here for now, I thought, the woman's soft warm tongue lapping at my chin. Maybe one day, sooner than anyone thinks, tendrils of bark will burst out of skin and wrap around me in a hard cocoon. I'll harden into a log. When I get tired of staring up at the clouds I'll ask to Tench to roll me over to my side with his foot, so that way I can stare at the bush where I tried running away. Women will ignore me and step over me clutching their pails, or if they get tired standing in line for Rations they'll sit on my wooden hips and discuss trading strategies for Indian hatchets, who knows, maybe one day they'll find a way of bargaining for a spear. I don't have the energy for trades or bargains anymore. No, I'll spend the rest of my sentence lying here, parrots shitting explosions on my head, watching the clouds of flies settle like heavy black masks on the bloated faces of the horse-thieves from Lincolnshire, who slowly and methodically collapse one by one while hacking at briars in the brush.



Sometimes I would ask Tench to check how my back was healing, but he always thought it was very witty to moan in terror and shout that he could see maggots crawling beneath the bandages. Then he would laugh his stupid laugh when my face went grey. It's no good getting upset about it. If Greene the ship boy had still been around, he would have noticed the moments when Tench's teasing had gone too far, and would

have said something like, stop being a pig, sir, you've gone and upset her. But Greene had gone with the Second Fleet back to England. I would think about him going back, lying awake at night. Back to England, and coastal winds that tear off the ears of small children during January storms, and people put boxes of dead roses in their windowsills because sometimes thorns will fall along with the hail and jab the blossoms back into life. Back where girls my age never think of Sydney except to picture a land somewhere between India and the bottom of Purgatory. When it rains here, it is warm and grey, and makes everything look filthier than before. I'm sure when Tench's deployment ends and he goes back to Nottingham to write his memoirs and find some nice girl for marrying, he'll tease and tease her about her wounds, whatever and wherever they may be, and he won't stop until she bursts into tears. It will only bewilder him. What? What'd I say? he'll ask. He just won't get it.

News, news, Tench told me solemnly over breakfast. His cheeks puffed out like meringues from his barely suppressed giggles. Grave news in the correspondence today.

Don't tell me, I said.

We've discovered your latest escape plans, he said. Stroke of genius this time. No, really. This time – oh so brilliant. A raft made out of coconut shells! To sail across the seas to Tahiti! My god, woman. How you hoodwink us!

I pressed my lips together. I focused on straining his watery goat milk through a piece of flour sack. I would always automatically strain it into a plate rather than a cup, out of habit for the Faeries. I still need to give myself a good shake to remember that this isn't Devon anymore, and I don't need to leave plates of milk for any Faeries in Botany Bay. If they ever did think of stowing away on a clipper, they certainly would have the brain to pick one heading anywhere but here.

An inspiration really. What a plan! Tench kept on saying. He sat like he always did with his boots on the table, grinning. Imitators right and left! Girls dropping their garden hoes and running away into the woods. Can't keep track of them anymore. He laughed his squishy laugh that comes from deep inside his chest, which always made me think of blackberries bursting into rich and deep purple colors. Sometimes I would even hear his laughter echoing out of the bush when his regiment was on patrol. I would always hope the Indians didn't hear it and think that everyone in the colony was always in such a good mood.

I didn't know if Tench was right about the imitators. When my back was still smarting with fresh blood from the flogging, Mary-before-the-pinkeye came to visit me in Surgeon General White's rickety hospital. She sat by my cot and told me about the boat that Caroline and Widget and the rest of the Picadilly gang were building.

Don't tell, she whispered while I lay there on my stomach staring at the sick-filled buckets under the cot next to mine. But that's why I asked you to organize some curtains from the Governor's house. That's what we needed them for. Sails, you know. It's only in case the winds start blowing us southwards and we fall over the edge of the world into big black soup.

Soon as she left I started praying. I prayed to Faeries, then Ghosts, then Un-Ghosts, then the Church of England, of Ireland, of Scotland, then the Church of Indians in case they had Churches – I pictured the Indian God as I pictured the Indians, stinking, black, fish-tails for ears. It was selfish. I didn't want anyone else escaping the colony while I was lying on my stomach in the hospital with salve burning the open wounds on my back. I felt too miserable to properly lift my head from the padded straw

and wanted everyone else to feel the same, too dull and stupid to invent any more clever plans for living.

But I wouldn't mind dying! I felt like crying out to the trees and the sky and crud-crust-ed houses. But it didn't happen.

The day I could stand steady enough to walk out of the hospital without leaning on anything, Mary came walked in shivering with fever, her eyes red and paste-filled. I don't know if the men left without her, as they did Caroline, when they decided a pregnant woman indeed took up twice the amount of precious space on a raft. I would think about Mary-pinkeye and Caroline and wonder if that's what Tench was poking at, his jokes about a raft made out of coconut shells.

I'll say this much. Tench and I came together fairly quickly and business-like on the *Charlotte*, around the time the ship rounded Tenerife. A girl needs others to know that she's with an officer, if she knows anything about watching her back. As far as I could tell, Tench was picky about your run-of-the-mill selection in the women's camp. He liked them quiet and sly. Personally, I blamed his parents and their dancing academy. Sometimes I tried to picture them back in Nottingham demonstrating waltzes across a ballroom floor, step-sweep-twirl, step-sweep-twirl. I tried and tried but it felt so far away, I might as well have been picturing them jigging on the moon. Still, if you grow up like Tench did, laughing off missteps, I guess you would enjoy the type of girl who thinks secret thoughts to herself while humming to music, who will continues stumbling doggedly across the ballroom floor long after her feet are blistered and aching and she has no idea what the steps are. Although if my feet are to become tree roots I don't see much dancing ahead of me.





We had potatoes for lunch, as a treat. I had to squeeze them before boiling them, to make sure none were brushed by the banshee's fingers and left with hidden jolts of electricity in the middle. It was easy to keep my hands moving, but my thoughts were a different story. I tried to fill my head with soothing lists of small objects in Tench's hut. I could no longer turn my head to look at them properly without twisting my entire body around, so I pictured them as small and comforting, in the distant unseen corners of my eyes. Spare bootlaces, cracked. Empty jam jar, licked clean. Pair of Indian earrings, which Tench exchanged for his mirror, our first week upon the shore. With no mirror, Surgeon General White always had to come over, to give Tench directions while he shaved.

A little to the left, White said. *My* left.

I'll tell you again, Tench said. My soup pot for your mirror.

That's a trade? That's a trade? The Surgeon mimed chopping his neck with his hand.

How's the Governor's colic? Tench asked, his razor scraping a brown path over the white foam on his cheeks. He would get giddy over gossip. Anything to pass the time, I guess.

Smelly, White whispered, and laughed through his nose. He examined his fingernails, which always looked disgustingly clean to me. You know there was a sighting, he said. A fire, across the cove. He leaned across the table. There could be Indians. With *fish*. Our mouths watered, and we all swallowed longingly at the same time. Our own fishing lines were so tangled and few, most of them were swapped with the Second Fleet sailors for bottles of rum just before they set sail back to England. All most have us had known recently was pork knuckles.

Bennelong's back, is he? Tench said musingly. You know what that means? He looked like he was about to burst with excitement at the thought. Trading patrol!

His Excellency hasn't ordered it, White sighed.

Oh, hooley. He doesn't even tell his own officers what's behind his decisions. He probably doesn't talk about the weather with his own wife. Why would he tell us what he wants us to do?

Both Tench and White looked at me when Tench mentioned the Governor. I just stared straight ahead. It was like they were expecting to see some sign of bad feelings across my face, or something. But nobody has to know how I feel about that. It's nobody's right to know, what I think about everything that had happened between the Governor and me. That's the kind of thing no one has to write about, not in a letter, or journal, or history, or a memoir. Not in anything. Instead, what I thought was funny was when Tench mentioned *trading* – a word that used to send shivers down to my feet, make my head spin with schemes and plans for organizing a good bargain – I felt nothing. Just a dull, stupid tiredness. What is this country turning me into? I didn't know anymore. It was like I was still lost somewhere, stumbling around in circles in the bush, but really everything in my life had stopped moving altogether. Automatically my fingers moved up, to touch the bark stiff as panels around my neck. But then I jerked down my hand and forced myself to pick up the bowl full of boiled potatoes instead.

How's the back? White said, while I was serving him. He smelled of his Brazilian hair tonic. No maggots yet?

Don't even start with the maggots, Tench said. With soap all over his face, he looked like a little boy who dunked his head into a pile of snow so he could pretend to be an old man with a beard.

You can only clean a flogging out with maggots, White said. Floggings and bullet holes. Can't say they do much for spear wounds. He shrugged. But this one here, oh no, wouldn't let me near her. He imitated me in a squeaky voice. No maggots! he squealed. No maggots!

You laugh like a mynah bird, I thought.

You better take a look, Tench told him. I scowled while I was polishing the kettle. They came up behind me and unbuttoned the back of my dress; peeled off part of the bandages and examine the hardened scabs underneath. I ignored them successfully, but then they were so quiet for a long time, it made me jumpy.

What is it? I said.

Nothing, said White. I was buttoned up and when I turned around, my neck rigid as mortar, they were both sitting at the table with carefully blank expressions.

I walked down to the beach that evening, my dress itching against my back. I ran my fingers along the ridges of bark that stop just under my chin. The waves sucking at the sand grit never left behind kind messages spelled out in sand dollars like the beaches back in Devon. But sure enough, there across the water, I could make out a tiny orange fire. I wondered if I strained hard enough if I could make out shadows leaning over the flames, swerving and stepping together in rhythm. It made all the blood suddenly rush to my bad neck, and suddenly it was like I felt like I did have blood pumping through me again, not just cold sharp tree sap. It was a dull sun in Rations line the next day, and when Caroline and Mary-pinkeye asked me if I would be joining the trading patrol, already expecting a heavy shake of the head, I told them, yes. I would go trading. I would try to organize a bargain again, the way I used to. I would learn to live with tree bark beneath my neck, maybe.



Bennelong and his Indians kept near their campfire, watching White, Tench and the other soldiers haul our cutter onto shore. They were so drenched in fish oil and so dark I had to squint when looking at them like I was staring at an eclipse. I listened to the nasal lilt of their words and I wondered if their jabbering conversation made sense even to them. Those two right there right there, I thought, with fish spines threaded through their noses and thumbprints of white clay disappearing into their beards, they could talking about how excited they are to see us. Or, they could be arguing that it isn't the time to day to bother with trading, they've already had long tiring day of spirit worship and battle and whatever else it is that Indians do.

We sized one another up and down but pretty soon it was clear that business was at hand. We started haggling over bread, half empty wine bottles and scraps of dried beef. Soldiers frantically dug through their pockets for any extra buttons, shoestrings, handkerchiefs, anything for bartering. I stood off to the side, just watching at first, my hands clasped together, feeling strangely self-conscious of the bandages on my back rubbing my thin wool dress. Despite myself, I started looking at a thick string of seedpods that hung around one young Indian's neck. He was slender with angry eyes that jumped around like hot bacon fat. I don't know why such an ugly and crude necklace looked so pretty to me. I guess it's because it had so many different types of seeds, threaded through thick twine: honey colored discs, brown pods that look like chocolate nibbles. I'm not the type who goes for that kind of thing usually. I remember girls back home who traded dolls made out of discarded shoe heels and twine, but I would never have any of it. I could never see a doll there – it was only the dirty stump of an old boot. Still, the more I stared at that necklace, hanging around the angry young

Indian's neck, the more I pictured myself rubbing the chipped seeds one by one in my fingers, imaging what kinds of little trees could grow from each one.

Tench, I said, do you have anything else for trading?

Tench gave a longing look at the spears before tearing his attention away to me. What is it?

Do you have any marbles with you? I said, or could I borrow one of your buttons? All of a sudden I felt fidgety, and I thought to myself, what is the good trading for a frippery necklace to hang around a wooden neck. Never mind, I mumbled. It doesn't matter.

Did something catch your eye? Tench said. He sounded just as surprised as I was that such a thing had happened, so I pointed at the seed necklace around the scowling Indian's neck. He hadn't spoken to anyone yet. He just stood there naked as anything with his hands clenching and unclenching at his sides, sometimes shooting ugly glances at Bennelong, who busy telling a long-drawn out story about some tree-climbing contest to White.

Tench studied the necklace. A funny expression crept over his face, one I didn't think I'd ever seen before. How old are you again? he said. Somewhere between sixteen and twenty? He gave a formal little shrug. You probably don't have the exact date memorized, do you?

No, I said, confused. Well, maybe. Well, I guess somewhere between those numbers sounds right.

Tench gave me a long stare and this time it was his eyes pressing hard on me, thin and sharp and blue. Finally, to my surprise, he opened up his jacket and took out his journal from the inside pocket. He tore out a handful of paper and handed it to me.

Well, he said. Go get yourself a birthday present. They like paper, some of them.

I looked down at the thin parchment, saw it was covered in black scribbles. I tried to hand it back to him, but he pushed back my hand, shaking his head.

It's all right, he said. It's nothing important. If it is, I'll just make it up later.

It was the first and only time I heard Tench say something in a stiff kind of voice. I pressed the parchment between my fingertips. We were both embarrassed and because of my neck I had to shuffle my entire body around before I could stare off to the side, looking at the soldiers and the Indians pass trinkets back and forth. Who knew that giving birthday presents was something that happens in this country, I thought. I stepped towards the Indian wearing seed necklace, my hand outstretched, brandishing the pages of the journal. He raised his hand and some very determined, disagreeable sounds came out of his mouth. I tried to model the paper's uses for him, how it could be folded up into a tiny transportable square, or could be used to wipe his armpits, or even muffle the mouth of some captive late at night. But my birthday present stayed around his neck and his hand stayed raised and his voice stayed annoyed at me for bothering him. But then I was smiling and then before I knew it I was laughing at the strangeness of the whole scene, the in-betweenness of the beach at sunset and Tench back to squabbling with Bennelong over a spear, and because I didn't come all this way for someone to keep my birthday present away from me, I was still laughing when I lifted the seeds off the young man's neck and pushed the paper into his fist.

I stopped though, when the Indian leapt back with a loud shout of surprise and White, who had been watching me the whole time, started shouting something – dammit – woman – impudent – but his voice died away when he saw how Bennelong and the other Indians were staring. There were a few awful seconds of silence. We stared at the

Indians and the Indians stared at us, like we had all just realized how wrong it was, all of standing and mixing together. But then Bennelong, just as laughingly as I did, kneeled down and picked up the paper where it had scattered at the young Indian's feet, then took a string made of broken reeds from his own neck and tossed it onto the sand. Then the beach was filled with heckling giggles and shouts all over again, and the young Indian had this sheepish expression come over his face and he started prodding Bennelong for the paper again.

That was when the silliness began between us, with the last harvest-colored rays of sunlight sinking below the ocean; and the grey light that comes before total darkness and with the campfire twinkling a reddened eye in the background. Once Tench started giggling it was hard for everyone to stop smiling at one another. White beckoned at Bennelong's first and favorite wife to come forward and to everyone's surprise she did so, reluctantly, hands resting on her massive pregnant belly but with this extremely particular look in her eyes, bold and black and fierce. While she was standing there, White whipped out one of his lilac-oil scented handkerchiefs from his pocket, and told Bennelong, You've got some nice lively women, but think about what a little decoration might add to the whole scene. He leaned forward all business, like all he was doing was showing one of his assistant surgeons how to remove a bit of shirt from a bullet wound, and he dangled his handkerchief before Bennelong's wife in the place where, as I think Tench put it in his memoirs, *Eve pranced about with her little fig leaf*. This started up even more shouting and laughing, and I shook my head and felt like I was back in Devon all over again working in my uncle's inn, when the stunted-giants always used to travel down from Scotland to help out with the summer tourist season, and would always stir

up rollicking laughing fits whenever poor Mary Toggins would show them her underwear in exchange for pinchfuls of giant-baccy.

Bennelong's first and favorite wife stared back at White with her eyes slicing through his uniform, then she turned away from him when her eyebrows arching so deliciously on her forehead that both Bennelong and White could only grin stupidly at one another. Come back, White called to her, and when she did he gave her even more handkerchiefs, tying them around her neck like he was knotting her napkin for a Christmas banquet. When she coyly fingered the big buttons on his red coat, her smile sly and crooked, White didn't waste a second in cutting the buttons away, attaching them to a piece of thread and then tying them around her waist, although her belly was so big at first the ends didn't meet. Everyone was hooting now and hardly anyone noticed when we were all mixing together, and that was when the singing started. Private Biers tried to start a round of God Save the King but the other soldiers quickly shunned him into silence, and instead some good rude sea shanties were selected. Tench sighed and I knew he was probably thinking of his young friend Greene, halfway back to England now, perhaps playing the same tune to the drunken mermen that leapt like silver fragments of the ocean alongside his ship. The Indians imitated our own songs for a bit but then started with their own, and they had such good ears that the songs they selected were the perfect compliment to the shanties which Tench's soldiers bellowed across the empty beach. For awhile it was like the midnight music I used to hear in woods behind my uncle's inn, two phantom choirs chanting two phantom hymns, one choir echoing a druid-chant from a hundred years before my birth and another one singing a sweet thin melody a hundred years after my dying, but the music molded together and created just the right harmony. It didn't take me long to join in, although I didn't know the words,



and the way my spirit had been feeling lately, I did not think I would ever again have enough energy to sing unless it were wind whistling through my sad and motionless branches. But even I know that joining a song that you don't know does more good than standing silent and apart from everyone else.

With the first distant stars began glimmering in the grey sky like a dog's eyes in the dark, that was when the dancing started. The campfire kept glowing with its watchful orange coals behind us, and not all of the crystal ballroom chandeliers of London could have given us better lighting. The Indian men made a ring, and those who leapt into the center twitched their knees like something I've never seen before. It was really pretty much the most impressive show of twitching and shaking that I've ever seen, as violent as one of White's fevered patients having a fit after the banshee had bitten the nape of his neck. Tench, who was practically besides himself with boyishness at this point, jumped into the ring and tried to do the same, but I guess dancing academy or no dancing academy, his parents never taught any lessons in knee-trembling. White quickly followed him, conducting the experiment in the name of science, I'm sure he told himself. Then the Indians began pulling random soldiers into the ring with them, encouraging them to try out the knee-trembling, and Private Biers was so awkward and shy, he dug his heels into the sand while the Indians dragged at arms

Someone finally found a pipe tucked away in an inner coat pocket, and a few soldiers started jigging on the beach, kicking up sand clouds while their feet criss crossed and hip hopped, tucking and ducking and weaving, the ground so soft there was none of that satisfying heel-clicking that usually comes with a jig, but it is was really well done all the same. Tench took Bennelong's first and favorite wife by the hands and showed her some dancing steps, but either she was too pregnant or too proud to follow him

properly, because what they ended up doing was a clumsy shuffle-step, shuffle-step from side to side, bobbing back and forth like a soap bubble in a bath. It was great awkward fun, and soon enough, red uniforms and green uniforms had paired off in twos or threes with the naked blacks, men and women both. Laughing, grinning Bennelong grabbed my wrists before anyone else did, and he was the type who kept trying to make conversation while dancing, the topic probably being himself, his local tribal politics, or the weather. I don't understand you, I kept telling him whenever he paused for breath, but it was no good, and we all danced together the way farmers' children do when they get their hands on a bottle of rum on a warm Midsummer night, facing your partner, arms stretched out, sweaty hands grasped together, loping about in dizzying circles first from one side, then the other. At one point Tench tried to organize something a bit more complicated, involving switching partners and forming lines, but when he shouted directions everyone ignored him, preferring to step on toes and bump stray elbows. Finally Tench gave it up and instead kept himself busy trying to dance with as many different Indian women as possible, and I bet you anything the next morning he and White compared how many of their dance partners blinked pretty eyelashes at their shirt collars.

There was dancing and dancing in the place in between the land and the ocean, and it had been a long time since I had worn a birthday present around my neck or since my cheeks were numb from smiling, and when we all went home that night Tench and I lay next to each other on his prickly straw mattress, not touching one another but staring at the roof of his hut, both of us thinking our own solitary thoughts. I left the bed at dawn the next morning and headed to the beach again. When I looked across the cove, not even the ashes remained, smeared across the sand. The clouds were already peeling back from the sky because of the heat, and when I turned my head I could hear the sigh

of a boiling kettles drifting from the daub-and-wattle huts, and the men and women are scraping dried dirt from their shovels, to later use for frying their morning flour-cake.

Back in Tench's hut we were both quiet when I made tea. Neither of us said anything about last night's trading ,and it made me squirmy for some reason.

Check my back, will you? I said. I need to change the bandages soon.

He shrugged. He came up to me and unbuttoned the back of my dress. While he was lifting up the bandages and staring at the wounds, I looked to the side and saw the door opened a crack, and it was a clear enough day that I could see all the way across the marines' camp to the ocean, clear as boiled silver, with the rip tides creeping across the water on tiptoe. That was when I realize my neck could swivel from one side to the next as easy as I pleased. My breath hissed to a stop and I felt blood rushing to my face. I pressed my fingers against the skin, and it was true: the muscles were meaty and human once more, dappling beneath my touch in a shy curtsy. I stood there a good five minutes, slowly twirling my head around, wondering at the beauty of the sights to the left and right of me, my head dancing with the strange visions which before I could only ever see directly in front of me, the grubby clay wall, Tench's boots in the corner, the door cracked upon with the ocean peeking through. Tench must have thought I was imitating a horse with an uncomfortable bridle, but I know what I was doing. He was strangely quiet and still, studying the scabs.

Is something wrong? I said.

Nothing, he said. Well, something. He hesitated, then plucked the tiny flower that had sprouted between my shoulderblades and tucked it behind my ear. It doesn't match your necklace, he says.

## To end with: five women of New Albion

### I. mary-with-the-pinkeye

temporarily replaced Miss Shaw as Arthur Phillip's housekeeper after Miss Shaw tried her luck running away into *el dompe*, which was what Arthur called the bush when he was in a bitter mood. It meant, *the dump*. It was a word he picked up from Spanish slave merchants, when his ship would dock at Cartagena to restock on oranges and cabbages because it pained him to see his sailors' gums bleed, even a little bit. After the whipping on Miss Shaw's back healed, the only time she went into *el dompe* was to gather bunches of wild chamomile and leave them on the doorstep of the Government House. She suspected that Mary probably didn't know that the only way to keep Arthur from staying up all night at his desk writing furious letters to who knows who was to brew him pot after pot of herbal tea. Sometimes she brought bits of dried meat in her apron pocket, and she would lean over the garden fence and feed them to the emus that Arthur had taken in after his dog had died. One day when she was placing the usual bundle of chamomile on the doorstep, as well as an oatcake, the door swung open and there Governor Arthur Phillip stood there staring at her. Miss Shaw started to run away, but then asked herself, *what's the point?* She stood there for five seconds, and through the glass windows she could see Mary moving about in the kitchen, her back to them. Arthur bent over and picked up the oatcake. He took a bite and gave Miss Shaw a long slow look that made her chest tighten. My favorite, he said. That was when Miss Shaw

knew that in a little while she would be working again at the Government House. Then Arthur shut the door. When Miss Shaw walked past the garden fence the emus ran towards her, eyes glimmeringly wetly. She tried to picture them wild and scavenging for themselves in the bush, but all she could see was the ferns and eucalyptus trees and hedges piled around them like mountains of garbage. She offered the emus her empty hand, which they pecked until it bled. Inside, Mary prepared the Governor's supper for the last time.

## **II. mrs. deborah brooks**

Before he worked on Arthur's estate in Lyndhurst, Harry Rhys spent many years running the farms on the pyrate colonies of the Mosquito Shore. Arthur never asked him where exactly did he learn so much about farming *and* sailing, but then again Rhys never asked why did Arthur have a soft spot for the colony's Jews, even allowing them to build a synagogue tent out of leftover sailcloth. Rhys spent his days funneling goat milk through a hollow iron tube from an old revolver into Arthur's pumpkins and potatoes, reciting old pyrate ballads about battles against the Flying Dutchman and duels against Minoan Cyclopes. Sometimes, if he was moody and thinking about why he ever left the Caribbean in the first place, he would tell jokes. What happens to all those foreskins the Jews throw away? Why, they send them to Ireland and turn them into priests.

Soon Arthur granted Rhys his own parcel of land, mainly to get him out of the house. One day he was trickling goat milk down an iron tube into a squash when Miss Shaw came up to him with a pale face. She told him that Bennelong's first and favorite wife had died during childbirth, and now Bennelong, half-crazy with grief, wanted

Arthur to come to the funeral, wanted Arthur to take him and his other wife back to England.

Did you know that he was leaving? she said. None of the officers knew. That was sneaky, him not telling any of the officers.

Sneaky like you and your smuggling, you mean, Rhys said in a mean voice that took them both aback. Rhys had been waiting to make that comment for a long time, ever since he had figured out why Arthur had granted him his own plot of land to work on, ever since he had seen Miss Shaw slip a fork into her apron pocket calm as anything, while they were crushing berries for Arthur's Commencement Day dinner. Even so, he was surprised when the remark had finally slipped out, at the venom in it, the pyrate in it.

Miss Shaw was surprised mostly by the tone in his voice. She'd known that Rhys knew things about her that the Governor never would. It was easier to keep secrets from Recorders than pyrates. Usually when he was lugging pails full of milk from Arthur's barn towards his pumpkin fields, she would be lugging wine bottles from Arthur's cellar towards the men's camp across the creek. She traded for things she had no use for, except to trade them for something else: playing cards, bullets, copper-plated pipes, fishing nets stolen from the Bennelong's people.

I never made a profit on any of that, she told Rhys. It was true. She had never been interested in seeing money blossom in her empty hands. It was the thrill of the movement of the goods that excited her, the silence and secrecy that surrounded it all. The gin bottle jumping from her hands to Caroline's to Lieutenant Dawes' to Private Bradshaw's, sometimes even making it way back to her but this time it would be a bottle filled with dried opium leaves or porpoise oil. It was the planning that she liked, the

calculation of values, the bitter arguing that went into a bargain done badly, the scheming and sneaking and secrets and long silences that went into a bargain done well.

Rhys squatted in his garden, pulled at the tufts of white hair growing from his ears and sighed heavily to himself. Well, never mind any of that, he said. Thanks for the news. I guess His Excellency and I will be heading back to England soon. Bennelong too, if he really means it about coming with us.

But, said Miss Shaw. But. Then she said it. I can't stay here, she said. I can't stand it. This place is going to run itself into the ground in the next five years. Everybody knows that. I won't stick around to see it. I won't. One day I'll just drop everything and I'll run away again, and this time I'll keep on walking until I'm dead and happy about it.

He'll take my sentence away if I ask him, won't he? she said. For all my hard work. If he understood about what happened to the dog, then he'll understand if I ask him to – She pointed at the Government House. I've been employed there for years, she said. No one can do that kind of work as well as I did.

What kind of work was that, Lily? Making Arthur oatcakes, beating his dog with a saucepan, feeding cabbages to his emus, stealing and lying and smuggling under his own nose? Lily, old, blind, not saying anything, not answering inky questions on a page.

Rhys swept soil off a pumpkin with the back of his hand. He was a pyrate through and through. He knew exactly what kinds of secrets to reveal, what kinds of silences to break, in order to affect her the most.

Miss Deborah Brooks was His Excellency's housekeeper for donkeys and donkeys of years, he said. No one could do the kind of work as well as she did. But he dismissed her when he received his commission to come over here.

He added, Not that it saved Mr. Phillip's marriage at that point.

Miss Shaw had heard about Mrs. Deborah Brooks before, in snatches of gossip and whispers, but it still felt strange hearing her name spoken out loud, in such a flat, matter-of-fact way. *Mrs. Deborah Brooks, who broke up the Governor's marriage*, Lily says now, in a musing kind of way, rubbing a tired hand over her cataracts. Rhys made it sound like something that happened in a single instance, splitting Mrs. Deborah Brooks and the Governor and the Governor's wife quickly down the middle, as opposed to something that would tear them apart for months and months on end.

I don't know him at all, she thought. He doesn't know me. There was so much about so many things that could never be known, could never be trusted.

*But in the kind of work you do*, Lily says now, her blind eyes straining across the table at the moving quill, *you have ways of making secrets sound not that secret*. Yes. Of making blank pages seem not quite so blank, of making silences seem not quite so silent. Cover pages with words. Fill silences with the sound of running water, the sound of stories and voices and secrets and centuries trickling away from helpless, grasping fingers.

### **III. nanya/joan**

Sergeant Dawes owned the colony's only telescope, and when he wasn't taking notes on the upside down constellations that traced their way across the sky, he was compiling a dictionary of Indian words. He had an ink stain on his cheek that looked like an ugly mole and a Cambridge accent that always made Miss Shaw's mind wander when he spoke, and faint purple circles tattooed around eyes so big and beady Miss Shaw thought it was a miracle that there existed telescopes large enough to fit them. He spent most of his time working with the colony's new translator, Nanya, or Joan, as Reverend Johnson had baptized her; she who had lost her family to smallpox around the same



time that the colony had lost Arabanoo. Miss Shaw would always catch her smoking from Reverend Johnson's birch pipe behind the half-finished parish. Their eyes would trace over one another's smallpox scars and the Indian girl would wordlessly offer Miss Shaw a puff from the pipe, which was always turned down. Miss Shaw had a feeling that Naya was doing her best, but for some reason production on the dictionary had slowed from twenty words a day to four. It aggravated Arthur to no end. It had taken them nine months to figure out that the Indian word that they had taken to mean *No* was actually *Bad thing, bad thing*. There was no time for the colony to re-train translators. There had barely been time for Arthur to re-train a housekeeper.

Unlike many of the officers, Sergeant Dawes had never been interested in having Miss Shaw organize some whiskey for him, in having her organize anything at all really. But that was before she asked what did he want in exchange for some Indian words.

Which ones? he asked her.

I am sorry that your first and favorite wife died, and that we are all here in the first place, but please, don't go to England. Don't follow the Governor. Stay behind, in your own country, with your own ghosts, and faeries, and Changelings that we cannot see. Here are the reasons why.

Sergeant Dawes thought about it. I will need parchment, he said.

She brought over half a pound to his hut the next day. The first thing he said when he saw her was, I will need a great deal more parchment than that.

A horrible suspicion came over Miss Shaw. You'll have to give me a good explanation why, she told him.

He laughed. Allow me to show you something, he said. She followed him reluctantly to his study, where he stroked his telescope like a horse's flank before he

opened a drawer in his desk and told her to look inside. It was filled with what looked like the shredded remains of the dictionary. She picked up one piece of paper and studied it. Sergeant Dawes' handwriting was as delicate as tiny, sharp beads. She looked at him with the same expression of utter contempt that many years before had made the growls of her uncle's Baskerville Hound gurgle away into subdued silence. What a fool you are, she told him severely, and turned to leave. He grabbed her shoulder and pushed her against the wall. She was too surprised to understand what he was snarling at her. Because his voice was so hoarse and his Cambridge accent so reedy, part of her thought that she had misunderstood something, something had been translated wrong, the wrong letter had been delivered to the wrong person. When he grabbed her breasts there was no more misunderstanding anything. His palms felt bumpy, as though once covered in feathers that had long since been plucked. She bit him on the cheek and when he shouted and clapped his face, she ran.

But wait! he cried, I still need more parchment!

I should take another chomp out of your cheek, Miss Shaw thought. I should kick you between the legs, for poor Nanya.

Instead, the next day she stomped back to his house with another half pound of parchment. It had cost her two hours of fierce bargaining with Lieutenant Tench, who needed it for his journal, as he was putting the finishing touches on the notes that he would later use for his best-selling memoirs. She went back because in the end, Sergeant Dawes was just another customer, just another man in just another colony, and it was just organizing, wasn't it, and because since Arthur did not have the words to tell Bennelong, don't come to England, she would do the dirty work herself.

If there is only one thing that can be said for certain about Lily Shaw, it is this: she didn't mind dirty work.

She shoved the parchment into Sergeant Dawes' arms. He let it drop and scatter across the floor.

Actually, he said smugly, I had extra all along.

That was the end of Miss Shaw's attempts to explain to Bennelong why it was a bad idea, him leaving the colony, which Bennelong would have then explained to Arthur, who would have then realized himself, indeed, leaving the colony was a bad idea. Yes, it would be better for both him and Bennelong to stay behind.

If there is another thing that can be said for certain about Lily Shaw, it is this: she had a backhanded way about doing things, which does not translate well on the page, especially with the way histories are written these days. Which is: with a point to them, with a shape that the eye can follow, that the hand can hold. Histories these days do not scatter when grasped at, like something broken, like something that belongs in *el dompe*, not a library.

#### **IV. caroline**

Caroline was Miss Shaw's go-between between the marine's and the men's camp. They'd been friends ever since that day Miss Shaw had seen Caroline give Reverend Johnson the shock of his life, when he approached her with pamphlets and in response to his greeting she pulled her skirts over her head. She had a scratchy voice and a bloated pregnant belly. She would sit outside her hut with Widget and make fishing lines from cabbage tree bark instead of working in her vegetable garden. She said she was twenty eight, so she couldn't have been more than ten years older than Lily, but still Caroline

scolded Miss Shaw as though she were twice her age, when Miss Shaw told her about what had happened with Sergeant Dawes and the Indian words.

There's better schemes than that to spend your time on, Caroline said.

Miss Shaw said she didn't really know about that. But then Caroline began telling her about her plans for leaving. Day after day, she wouldn't stop. You heard the news from the French ships? Bly and his men sailed on a raft halfway across the Pacific. If they could do it, so could we. You know how to make bargains. Bargain for some spare meat, some rope, a compass. Organize some curtains from the Governor, for sails. Only you can do it. I know you can. She would grab Miss Shaw's elbow when she spoke of this. Miss Shaw would think about the sores appearing at the corner of Caroline's lips, would think, syphilis, would think, madness can be catching, and would slowly pull her arm away.

Then one day Caroline put a heavy forearm on Miss Shaw's shoulder and looked at her with yellowing, crusty eyes. Have you thought about what I asked you, Lily, she said in a weary voice.

Miss Shaw weakly said something about maybe after the Governor went back to England they could speak further.

The next week Caroline was gone. There were rumors of someone spotted stealing away into the bush, of a raft built with curtains for sails, of boat stolen from Port Jackson during the changing of the watch. Widget disappeared around the same time, and Miss Shaw hoped that however they left the colony, they left together. Miss Shaw was sad and worried to think of anyone making such a journey alone, among other things.

*You know, she says, it is very hard to make life turn out the way you want it to. It's a cold comfort, but you need to keep your head down and take what you can bargain for without too many people noticing.*

It is to be hoped, however it really happened, that Caroline and others like her found a way to turn their lives into something resembling what they really wanted, even just a little bit. No matter how it is written about, Miss Shaw must believe that Caroline is out there somewhere, floating on a raft in an ocean, petting a Chinese dog in front of a pagoda. *It hardly matters how it really happened, Lily sighs, as long as you can guess that there was some kind of ending.*

## **V. britannia**

Miss Shaw helped Bennelong prepare the pyre for his first and favorite wife's funeral, digging the hole in the ground and stacking it full of sticks. He had not wanted anyone to come besides Arthur and Tench and Surgeon General White. In place of Reverend Johnson, it was Arthur who said a few words in eulogy.

We fear death because it is such a secret until it happens, because it seems like a silence that can never be filled, because it seems like some terrible lonesome thing, he said. Many die alone, without anyone who cares for them nearby, sometimes with no one there to witness, no one there to narrate how it happened. I will say for my part, I have seen many sailors and soldiers and yes, some women too, leave this world alone, without company. They are lost to others, lost to history. But at the moment of their death, they are powerfully linked to everyone in a different way. They say when an elf dies, or some other creature of Faerie, all members of the race can feel it when it happens. In the same

way, Christ died very much alone, but at same time was linked to all of us. So – I will say that there is some comfort to take in what is secret, and silent, and lonesome to us.

He looked at Miss Shaw when he finished speaking, and then they both looked away.

After the body had finished burning, Miss Shaw tried crying a little but it didn't work, so she gave up and waited until it was dark before walking down to the beach, where she could look out across the cove, at the blue stretch of the ocean. The clumps of white huts were visible from where she stood. She could hear the sound of deep throated sea-shanties being sung, shoulders being clapped, a rifle going off in a duel. She could almost see Rhys' farm with the earth all rich and turned up in furrows, the vegetables thick and bulging. The tiny candles in the Governor's windows looked like a pinpricks on a dark blanket lit up from behind by a giant fire. She listened to the splash of the waves against the sand, the rippling of sails in the wind, as the boat that would take Bennelong and the woman he loved and the Governor back to England waited in the harbor

I have to get away from this, she thought.

But instead, she stayed. She stayed in a memory of the past where the shadow of her can still be seen, like a scratch upon ice, she stayed in some other century where her real name and her real identity does not matter now. She stayed somewhere that is not reachable or knowable through words alone, somewhere where there is also Governor Arthur Phillip, and his strange dog that never barked, and Bennelong and Arabanoo and Caroline and Tench, and somewhere also where there is an inky quill writing on blank parchment. Maybe there are new and better and more complete ways of going about this. But Lily, it might have been you who knew how to write a complete account all

along, it might have been you holding the quill in your hands and moving from one piece of parchment to the next, it's you skimming words over the surface of this history, writing faster and faster, looping your y's and g's like you were taught, and now that Recorders have stepped back into the dark along with the Changelings and the elves and the ghosts of a lost century, it's you who's been telling your own story, but you don't know yet that it has never been yours to tell.