

# **Smallpox in Sydney**

**Raelene Allen**

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## **Certificate of Authorship/Originality**

I certify that the work in this thesis has not been previously for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and in the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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## Smallpox in Sydney

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## Abstract

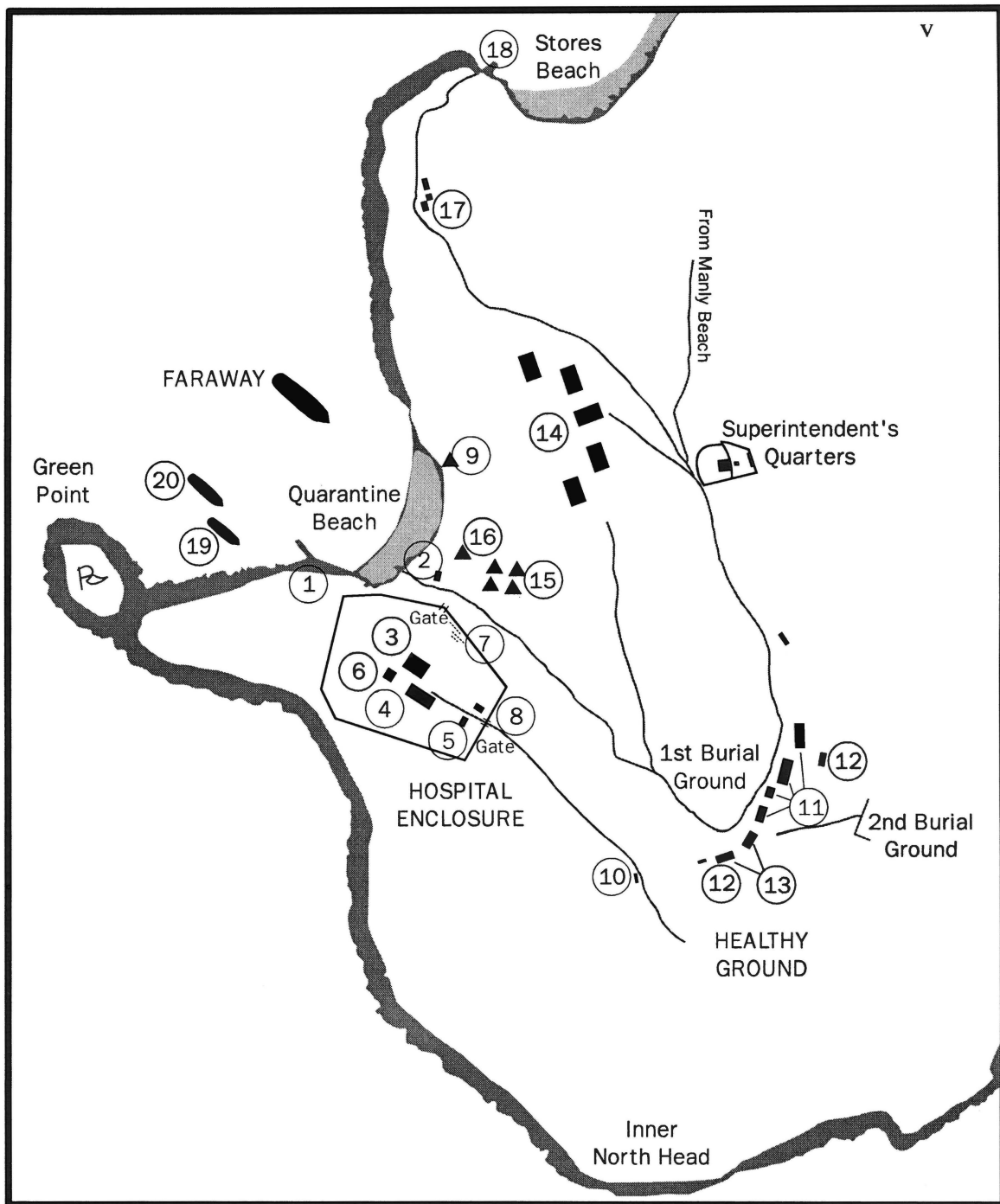
In May 1881 a case of smallpox was discovered in Sydney. In the ensuing months the deadly infection spread throughout the city. By the end of the epidemic eight months later, several hundred cases had been notified to the authorities, with about forty deaths. Compared with other epidemics such as Spanish Influenza or HIV, this one was hardly more than a blip, yet its impact on Sydney was tremendous. With no infectious diseases hospital, no board of health to manage the response, no proper ambulance service, and no known treatment of the disease, there was widespread panic.

Within weeks of the first case being confirmed, three more cases were discovered and the decision was made to isolate the victims and their families at the quarantine station, seven nautical miles from Sydney. It was the only place with facilities large enough to isolate those affected.

A horse-drawn omnibus was purchased to take these people from their homes to Cowper's Wharf where they were transferred onto a steamboat that would take them across to the quarantine station. By the end of the first day, twenty-seven people (more than half of them children) had already been transferred across the harbour. In the early hours of the following morning two doctors who detected those early cases, as well as several other victims, were taken across to the quarantine station along with the corpse of another victim. What happened to these people and many others who were isolated at the quarantine station over the next few months is the subject matter of *Smallpox in Sydney*.

While the story is essentially true and the names are those of actual people who were caught up in the epidemic, this is nevertheless a work of fiction. For reader who would prefer to know exactly where to draw the line, unfortunately there is no line. Like Margaret Atwood in *Alias Grace*, where there was fact I've endeavoured to use it and where there were gaps I was free to invent.

Not surprisingly there were many gaps. There were no diaries or letters I could find that would provide a glimpse into the minds and hearts of characters such as Michael Clune. The best sources of information were the transcript of the Royal Commission and the reports in the newspapers at the time. From analysis of these two sources the characters began to take shape, but the task of bringing them to life is the point where fact and fiction merge.



Rough Sketch of Quarantine Station 1881 (not to scale)

- |    |                                    |    |  |
|----|------------------------------------|----|--|
| 1  | Jetty                              | 11 | Second Class Cabins                          |
| 2  | Carroll's Store & Telegraph Office | 12 | Cookhouses                                   |
| 3  | Hospital Ward                      | 13 | Police Quarters                              |
| 4  | Pavilion                           | 14 | First Class Cabins                           |
| 5  | Doctor's Quarters                  | 15 | Chinese in Tents                             |
| 6  | Cookhouse                          | 16 | Dr Clune's tent after release from enclosure |
| 7  | Coffins                            | 17 | Boatmen's Quarters                           |
| 8  | 'Deadhouse' / Mortuary             | 18 | Stone Pier                                   |
| 9  | Const. Cook's original Tent        | 19 | Ration Boat                                  |
| 10 | Dr Caffyn's Cottage                | 20 | Pinafore                                     |

*There is nothing in our history that will make us appear so utterly contemptible in the eyes of the world as our conduct under this affliction.*

**The Freeman's Journal, Sydney, August 27, 1881**





## Prologue

### Sydney, Winter 1881

On the afternoon of Monday, June 13, a young girl made her way from a terrace house in Bellevue Street, Surry Hills, towards the bustle of Liverpool Street. She was a thin girl, aged about ten with bare feet and lanky brown hair. She reached the intersection of College Street and stopped to watch as a steam-driven tram made its way east along Liverpool Street in the direction of Bondi.

Ashes and soot from the tram drifted onto passengers in the two-storey carriage and on the people walking in the street below. There was the smell of horse manure and the rumble of cartwheels, as horse-drawn vehicles of every description jostled their way through the busy crossroads. Some carted wood, others water, but most carried people to destinations about the city and suburbs beyond. There were pedestrians too, trying to cross the busy street without falling victim to a shying horse or the wheels of a tram.

The girl watched the traffic, waiting for an opportunity to cross. Once the tram had passed, she darted out onto the road and made her way safely to the other side, then headed north along College Street, with Hyde Park to her left. As she walked, she hitched at the waist of her bloomers which sagged below the hem of her dress.

Two blocks down she came to the house she was looking for. A doctor's shingle hung outside. She went to the door and rapped with the knocker. As she waited she moved from foot to foot, warming her bare feet against her calves. The door opened and a young woman came out to join her on the veranda. She spoke to the girl then went back inside. A short time later a man came out and spoke at some length to the girl. When she

left, he stood and watched until she disappeared from sight, then went inside and closed the door.

Around the same time a horse-drawn cab was making its way down George Street towards The Rocks. At Essex Street the cab turned left, past Gallows Hill and the new gaol, and then up into Cumberland Street. It continued past the Whalers Arms and stopped outside a three-storey tenement about fifty yards up the street. A man stepped out of the Hansom cab and with his doctor's bag made his way to the house. As he approached the front door opened, and he went inside.

The waiting driver took a pipe and tin of tobacco from the pocket of his vest. As he packed his pipe he looked around. Across the street, people were drifting out from their houses to stand and stare. A handful of barefoot children darted back and forth across the street, giggling as they sidled up to pat his horse before running away. It was overcast and cold. He shivered as the wind pierced his clothing.

A short time later the doctor returned and climbed into the waiting cab. The driver gave his horse a nudge and they headed back the way they came, watched by the small group of people who were gathered outside Douggan's Family Butcher. About five minutes later the cab pulled up outside the Australian Club in Bent Street. Once again the driver waited while the doctor went inside. He sat and watched with interest as men walked by in their top hats and coats, obviously on important business. Soon the doctor reappeared and climbed back into the waiting cab. This time they headed up towards Broadway.

Across the harbour at the quarantine station, nestled behind the jagged headland that guarded the harbour's northern entrance, a bearded man in his early sixties made his way from a house on the hillside along a path to the cove below. He wore a heavy overcoat and a battered hat. As he limped down the hill with his hands in his pockets, he glanced at the disused burial ground where people who'd died in quarantine had been buried over many years. Some of the gravestones had since been removed but there were still

several dozen small white crosses that marked where some of the graves had been. The crosses could be clearly seen by the ferries that plied between Manly and Sydney.

At the bottom of the hill he came to a footbridge which was built across the soggy ground where a freshwater spring bubbled up. He proceeded down to a small timber shed that was built on the flat above the beach. He undid the padlock and went inside. A short time later he re-emerged holding a couple of hessian bags which he took to a rowboat that lay on the sand. He dumped the bags into the boat, and pushed it out into the water, then climbed aboard and began to row.

About two hundred yards out from shore was an old wooden hulk. The *Faraway* was a hospital ship which was permanently anchored in the cove. There were four men on board, three Chinese from the steamship *Brisbane* who'd been confined to the hulk for the past six weeks, and a caretaker appointed by the shipping agent. One of the men from the *Brisbane* was still recovering from an attack of smallpox. The others had been sent to take care of him.

The man in the rowboat reached the hulk and tossed the sacks on the landing platform. As he did so the caretaker called out to him. The two spoke for several minutes, then the bearded man got back in the boat and slowly rowed back to the beach. He pulled the rowboat onto the sand and limped towards a steep rocky path that led up to the top of the cliff. He began to climb, stopping several times along the way to catch his breath.

At the top of the path, he let himself in through a wooden gate which he fastened behind him. It was windy and he turned up his collar to protect his neck as he stood and took in the scene before him. This was the area known as the hospital enclosure, which consisted of a couple of wards for patients, as well as a cookhouse and a hut for stores, and a cottage for resident medical staff. The place was empty: aside from some gulls that wheeled above, there was no sign of life.

He walked round the perimeter of the enclosure, checking each building as he went. Each ward was surrounded by a veranda, and had its

own rainwater tank. He gave each of the tanks a tap to see how much water they contained, then continued down towards the flagstaff which sat out on a rocky outcrop. A frayed yellow flag fluttered in the breeze, a signal to any passing craft that quarantine regulations were in force. He continued to follow the high paling fence as it curved back around towards the east, and let himself out by a different gate. Ahead of him lay a sandy path that led through the bush towards the hilltop. He followed the path for several minutes before he came to a small timber cottage. Beyond it in a larger clearing were half a dozen timber cabins, each surrounded by an open veranda, and each with its own rainwater tank. This area was part of the healthy grounds and was used to house second class immigrants while they waited for clearance to proceed to Sydney. This area too was empty.

The man stood for a moment to admire the view. Below him the mast of the *Faraway* was all that was visible of the hulk. Across the water he could see the heavily timbered headland known as Bradley's Head. Beyond it lay the city itself. Just then a steamer came into view, the ferry on its way to Manly. He looked at his watch. It was time for his dinner. He made his way along the path that led him back towards the house. It was almost hidden from view by thick vegetation and a tall timber fence. As he let himself in through the back gate, a dog rushed towards him, barking. He pulled the gate closed and slowly limped towards the house. The dog trailed behind, tail lowered, and grovelled as its master sat on the step to take off his boots. He left his boots near the step and disappeared inside the house.

**Sydney, June 1881**

**Monday June 13, College Street**

Michael Clune was wide awake. He couldn't stop thinking about the girl who'd come to the house that afternoon. She'd been sent to see him by her mother, a woman by the name of Nora Rout who ran a lodging-house nearby. The girl seemed frightened. When he asked her why she came to see him, she said her father was very ill and urgently in need of a doctor.

'Can you tell me what's wrong with your father?' he'd asked.

The girl spoke so softly he couldn't hear.

'I beg your pardon,' he said, 'but would you mind speaking up a little?'

'My mother thinks it's the smallpox,' she blurted.

That was what he'd thought she said, but it was the last thing he really wanted to hear. For weeks now – ever since a Chinese child in The Rocks had been diagnosed with smallpox – he and other doctors in Sydney had been living in dread of another case. Of all the diseases they had to face, this one was by far the worst. Every year in Europe and Asia, millions of people died of smallpox, and many others who survived were left disfigured and in terrible health by this, the most fearful disease of all.

Fortunately the Australian colonies had been well-protected, firstly by their isolation – to sail from Hong Kong or China for instance, often took six weeks or more – and if anyone managed to board the ship whilst incubating an infectious disease, this would become apparent en route. And since others on board might have caught the infection, everyone arriving from overseas was submitted to a medical examination before the ship was granted pratique. If there was any doubt whatsoever that the infection might still be active, the ship was sent into quarantine. So far the policy had been very effective. That is, until the On Chong case.

Now Michael Clune faced a real dilemma. If Nora Rout was correct, and her husband did indeed have smallpox, the infection had surfaced right on cue, just three weeks since the On Chong child was first reported to the

authorities. That was allowing for incubation of between twelve and fourteen days, and a further week for the symptoms to appear.

The girl stood waiting for his answer, but he had no idea what to say. He dreaded the thought of getting caught up in the inevitable debacle that would follow a positive diagnosis of smallpox. 'I'm sorry,' he said eventually. 'I'm not feeling very well myself. Perhaps you should try another doctor?'

The girl shook her head. 'My mother said she wants you to come.'

That stumped him momentarily. He couldn't very well refuse, not when she put it to him like that, but he felt he needed more time to think. 'All right,' he said, making up his mind, 'but it will have to wait until morning.'

The girl looked dubious. 'Can't you come now? He's very bad.'

He hesitated, then shook his head. 'Tell your mother I'm very sorry, I'll be there first thing in the morning.'

He stood and watched from the veranda as the girl headed off back up the street. Like many of the local doctors, he'd never seen a case of smallpox until he travelled overseas to Dublin to do his medical training. The first case he saw was a little boy who was suffering from confluent smallpox, the most severe form of the infection. It was almost always fatal. There was little doctors could do for the boy, other than keep him as comfortable as possible and give him something for the pain. They sedated him with Laudanum and the nurses regularly sponged his body with warm water and carbolic soap. Then they applied poultices soaked in starch and placed them on his forehead and neck to try and soothe the tender skin. The rest they had to leave to nature.

Towards the end the little boy was delirious. He began to lose consciousness and was unable to swallow. Without fluids, his death was inevitable. Just before the little boy died he seemed to rally and began to cry out and to become more and more agitated. He tore at the eruptions on his face and arms, and blood and other fluids oozed from the wounds.

The child's death had affected Clune deeply, and images of the little body covered from head to toe with lesions – even on his palms and the soles of his feet – was something he would never forget.

Michael Clune let out a sigh. God help them if this hideous disease was ever to gain a foothold in Sydney.

He went inside to talk to his wife. Annie Clune was horrified when he told her why the girl had come.

'Surely you're not going to see him?'

He didn't answer.

'Michael, please, you mustn't go, can't you get someone else to see him?'

'I can't very well do that, can I? Mrs Rout has asked for me. I don't see how I can turn her down. Besides, I hardly think another doctor is going to jump at the chance to see him.'

'But you saw what they did to Dr Foucart – how they locked him away with the On Chong child. What do you think they'll do to you?'

'I don't think they're likely to lock me away. Dr Foucart's case is different. He's employed by the government for this sort of thing, he was hardly in a position to refuse.'

Annie looked sceptical. 'What about those Chinamen you read about in the paper this morning? Don't you see? If they're prepared to use force to vaccinate people, anything could happen.'

Clune had to concede that she had a point, but he couldn't ignore what his conscience was saying. All his training as a doctor was surely for an event such as this. But there was no point arguing any further. 'Why don't you let me sleep on it? I'll make my decision in the morning.'

As he lay in bed unable to sleep, images of other smallpox cases he'd encountered while working overseas paraded before him. His hand went unbidden to the top of his arm where he'd first had the scratch at the



hospital in Dublin. Four good scars, that's what it took, and he certainly had his four good scars. So did his wife and Madeline, their six-year-old daughter. He'd administered the scratch to them himself during a previous smallpox scare, which fortunately had been quickly contained.

His family were in the minority, however. Vaccination rates in New South Wales were abysmal, despite many attempts by the government to get parents to at least have their children done. This wasn't hard to understand: when there were so few cases of smallpox in Sydney, people didn't want to expose themselves to a procedure that wasn't without its risks. Methods of administering the scratch varied greatly from place to place and there were horrendous stories of people who'd almost died as a result of the scratch. Much depended on the source of lymph, how it was stored, and how applied.

In England and Ireland, where smallpox was common, there were special dairies where calves were kept which were deliberately infected with cowpox. In this way there was a ready supply of lymph. However, New South Wales mostly relied on supplies of lymph from India, where the lymph was dried onto ivory tips. When it came time to use the tips, they were moistened with water, then the skin was broken so that the lymph could be applied. As Jenner had proven decades before, cowpox lymph applied to humans could protect them in the event of smallpox infection.

When cowpox lymph supplies ran low, there was an alternative: to vaccinate people from arm to arm, using lymph from the sore of someone who'd recently been vaccinated. The only problem with this method was the risk of acquiring some other infection, of which syphilis was by far the worst. Once someone was infected with syphilis, unfortunately they had it for life. However, cross-infection needn't occur if the doctor administering the scratch was careful. So long as there was no blood present when the sore was punctured to obtain the lymph, in theory there shouldn't be a problem, but not every doctor was so adept, or so conscientious about the procedure.

There was also the problem of storing the lymph. During the previous smallpox scare, Clune could remember hearing a story about a girl from

outside Sydney who'd nearly died after being given the scratch by a local doctor. Apparently he'd acquired the lymph from a local dairy where there were infected cows. At the time he was about to administer the scratch, the glass slides containing the lymph were swarming with flies. Within a few days the girl's arm turned black, and she was fighting for her life. Weeks later when she began to rally, she found she'd lost all her hair and her fingernails and toenails were gone as well. The poor child was lucky to have survived at all.

Next morning at breakfast Annie was quiet. Even though they hadn't discussed the Routs any further since the previous evening, she seemed to sense what he planned to do. In order to avoid a confrontation, he buried his head in the morning paper. Soon Annie would take their daughter to school and he would then go and check on Mr Rout. He would have to deal with Annie later.

After his wife and daughter had gone, he donned his overcoat and hat and with his doctor's bag in hand, walked up the street. There was a cab rank near the corner. He hired the first cab off the rank. As they set off towards Liverpool Street, his thoughts turned to the task ahead. Assuming Edward Rout had smallpox, the authorities would have to be notified. That was not a comforting thought. The way they'd handled the On Chong case had done nothing to inspire his confidence. Not only had they tried to deny for weeks that there was a case of smallpox in Sydney, but they also wasted precious time before they barricaded the store to try and prevent the infection from spreading. Now, three weeks since the case was reported, they were only just getting around to vaccinating other family members and workers at On Chong's general store.

The driver turned into Bellevue Street, and stopped outside number thirty-seven. Clune directed the driver to wait, and went to the front door of the house. He'd been here before several times to attend to Nora Rout and her children.

The woman who came to let him in introduced herself as Mrs Keene and showed him into the sitting room. As he waited for Nora Rout, two

young girls peeked at him from behind the doorway. One of the girls looked to be about the same age as his daughter, Madeline. The other was several years her junior. When he asked their names, they ducked out of sight but he could hear them whispering.

When Nora Rout came to the room she sent the girls off with Mrs Keene. Then she sat down heavily on the couch. Her face was pale, and her eyes red-rimmed: she looked close to exhaustion.

'Thank God you've come,' she said, and he immediately apologised for the delay.

'Can you tell me when your husband first got sick?'

'About a week ago, I think.'

'And he was working at the time?'

'Yes,' she said. 'On Wednesday night I believe it was, he came home from work and went straight to bed, he couldn't even face his tea. He was feverish and complaining of aches and pains all over his body. Then the next day the fever broke, and that was when he came out in the rash.'

'Could you describe this rash for me?'

'It wasn't much to look at, not at first, just a red rash on his face and arms. Then on Friday we thought he was getting better, he was well enough to go up the street to get some tobacco. But when he came back he said that someone had told him he had the measles and should be in bed. That's when I moved him up to the attic, to try and keep him from the kiddies, especially the McKeown's little boy.'

'The McKeowns are your lodgers?'

She nodded. 'They're not long married.'

'And how old is their child?'

'Six months,' she said, obviously keen to continue her story. 'Next thing Edward starts to get these bumps on his forehead, hard they were, like grains of rice. Before long he was covered in them, all down his arms, and on his chest. He even got them in his ears and nose.'

She looked at him then, a pleading look. 'Does it sound like the smallpox to you?'

He stood. 'It's probably best if I have a look, that way we will know for sure.'

She led him out into the hall and began to climb the narrow staircase. As he followed her up the stairs, he became aware of a terrible smell, one he recognised straight away. He took his handkerchief from his pocket and held it over his mouth and nose. At the top of the stairs was a narrow door. Nora Rout went inside, then turned and beckoned for him to follow. He shook his head, the handkerchief still covering his mouth and nose. In the dim light from the kerosene lamp he could see her husband on the bed. The top part of his body was naked and there was no mistaking his condition – it was smallpox of the confluent type. The poor fellow was probably done for.

Nora Rout beckoned to him again, but he shook his head and turned away. As he went back down the stairs, he could hear her following close behind.

'Why didn't you come into the room,' she said, once they were back down in the hall.

He paused a moment to gather his thoughts. 'There wasn't much point. It's smallpox and I'm afraid to say there's very little I can do for him.'

She stood there, arms crossed tightly and he could see the fear in her eyes. 'But there must be something you can do.'

He shook his head. 'I'm very sorry. I can give you something to help to ease the pain and discomfort, and it will help him sleep as well. Other than that you should sponge him down with a solution of carbolic acid and try to keep his bedding clean. If he's able to swallow, he should have some water, or milk if he can tolerate it.'

Nora Rout was unable to speak, and there were tears welling up in her eyes.

'You should try to get some rest yourself,' he said, his heart going out to her. She had an enormous task ahead, trying to care for her dying husband as well as run a lodging house and take care of their children.

'How can I rest at a time like this? What's going to happen if Edward dies? We can hardly manage as it is.'

As he left Bellevue Street that morning, Michael Clune was deeply worried. There were fourteen people who lived in the house – eight of them children – and none of the children had been vaccinated. Even more worrying was the fact that the children attended three different schools. They'd have to be kept home from school, of course, but in truth the damage was already done. Even if only one of the children was infected with smallpox, that child might already have passed it on. There'd be no way of knowing for a week or two, since it would take two weeks or more for the symptoms to show. In the meantime there could be a dozen families harbouring a carrier in their midst. And as he knew only too well, many of the children in the inner city lived in conditions that were little better than the slums of London. Often whole families shared one small room, and sometimes even shared the same bed. Many of their houses were damp and dark with no sanitation or running water, ideal conditions for the spread of smallpox.

There was no questioning the gravity of the situation. He would have to notify Dr Haynes Alleyne, the chief medical adviser to the government, and the man responsible for quarantine.

He instructed the driver to take him to the Australian Club in Bent Street, where Dr Alleyne could usually be found. Clune wasn't looking forward to the thought of reporting the case. While he hadn't had much to do with Alleyne, rumour had it that the health officer could be very abrupt. As senior medical adviser to the government, and health officer for Port Jackson for the past thirty years, Alleyne was used to wielding power and many Sydney doctors were in awe of him. It was Alleyne who'd developed the quarantine protocols which helped to protect the city from a host of deadly infectious diseases such as cholera, smallpox and scarlet fever. It

was Alleyne who was in charge of the quarantine station, where ships with infectious disease on board were sent until they had a clean bill of health. Alleyne was also chair of several boards including the Medical and Pharmacy Board, and was an inspector of Sydney's mental asylums.

But lately Alleyne had been under fire. It was he who bore the brunt of the blame for the apparent bungling of the On Chong case. Why hadn't he been more decisive and acted sooner to contain the infection? None of his colleagues could understand. Some said he had too much to do, but others suggested he was getting too old – at sixty-seven years of age he was showing signs of slowing down. Whatever the reason, his seeming lapse of judgment and attempts to cover up the case had done little to reassure the public.

They stopped outside the Australian Club, and Michael Clune had the driver wait while he went inside. The health officer was nowhere to be found, so he went to a desk in the reading room to outline the details of the case. He left the note for Dr Alleyne with the attendant at the front desk.

From the Club he instructed the driver take him to St Vincent's Hospital in Darlinghurst. For several years he'd held a position as a consulting physician at the hospital, and there were several patients he had to see.

**Tuesday, June 14, Australian Club**

Dr Alleyne didn't venture downstairs from his room at the Club until after midday. He'd woken with a headache that morning and was feeling generally out of sorts, so he spent the morning resting in bed, something he hardly ever did. As soon as he went downstairs that day, the attendant handed him the note. He scanned the contents, then shoved the note into the pocket of his trousers. Before dealing with this or any other matter, he needed something in his stomach.

After he'd had some toast and coffee, he went to the smoking room on the veranda where he lit a cigar, his first for the day. As usual the damn thing made him cough and his head pounded. He couldn't remember ever having a headache like this, at least not first thing in the morning. It was time to take an extended break, something he hadn't done since he took on the role of health officer twenty-nine years earlier. Now, at sixty-seven, he was slowing down and badly needed a change of pace.

He took out the note from Dr Clune and read it through slowly. It was the second notification of smallpox in as many days, but unlike the first – which was still not confirmed – this one seemed to be very clear cut. While he didn't know Dr Clune very well, he'd heard enough about the man to trust his diagnostic skills. From the symptoms described in the note, there could be very little doubt that Edward Rout was infected with smallpox.

The other case under investigation was a young married woman from Cumberland Street, a few streets away from the On Chong place. He had doctors keeping an eye on her, but smallpox could be difficult to diagnose, especially in the early stages when it was often confused with some other disease such as chicken pox or influenza. In the case of Mrs Guildford, a woman in her early twenties, it was too soon to know if what she had was smallpox or something less dramatic. But if her case turned out to be smallpox as well, it didn't bode too well for him.

He clenched the cigar between his teeth as he folded the note from Dr Clune and put it back into his pocket. He would have to find another doctor to go and check on Edward Rout, just to be sure, but he couldn't think of

whom to send. His deputy Dr Louis Foucart would have been the obvious choice, but he was now locked up with the child in the residence above On Chong's store. Apart from him there was Dr Dansey, who worked as health officer for the city, but he was already involved in following up Mrs Guildford's case.

Alleyne heaved himself out of the armchair and went to stand in front of the fire. He flicked the ash from his cigar. As he stood there warming his backside, his mind went back for the umpteenth time to the question of how smallpox had got into Sydney. Despite the persistence of his enquiries he was still no closer to finding out how a seventeen-month-old Chinese child – the son of a wealthy businessman who as it happened was quite well-known to Dr Alleyne – had contracted smallpox in the first place.

Thanks to a stringent quarantine policy – which he'd helped to develop decades before – smallpox in Sydney was extremely rare. Only once in recent years had somebody local contracted the disease. In 1876, several members of the Holden family in The Rocks were somehow infected. The whole family was immediately removed to the quarantine station, where several of them succumbed to the disease. In that case, quick action in isolating the victims had prevented the infection from spreading further.

Alleyne threw the cigar butt into the fire. He'd been over and over the facts of the case but was still no closer to understanding how the On Chong child could have been infected. It had to have happened from contact with someone who'd just arrived from overseas – but how? Every ship when it arrived was inspected by one of his medical officers, who examined everyone on board. If there was any infection apparent – whether diphtheria, scarlet fever, cholera, smallpox or any of a number of other diseases – the ship was sent straight to the quarantine station. There, infected passengers or crew were kept in isolation, until they either recovered or died.

His suspicions rested with the *Brisbane*, a steamer which arrived from Hong Kong at the end of April with a single case of smallpox on board. As was usually the case, the *Brisbane* went straight into quarantine, where the sick man along with several others was transferred to the hospital ship.



Had someone from the *Brisbane* jumped ship and found their way into Sydney?

If that were the case, it was possible that On Chong, the father of the affected child, had given shelter to the man in question, not realising he was infected with smallpox. Or perhaps it wasn't On Chong himself, it could have been any one of the hundreds of Chinese who lived and worked in the vicinity of Lower George Street where there was a thriving Chinese community.

Alleyne had already checked the dates. The On Chong child was first reported as having smallpox on May 25, three weeks after the *Brisbane's* arrival. This dovetailed neatly with the course of infection, which incubated for several weeks before the symptoms began to appear. Assuming someone from the *Brisbane* had come into contact with the child soon after the *Brisbane* had arrived, the timing was perfect. The trouble was he had no proof, and even if he did, he wasn't about to tell the public that someone had managed to find a way to breach his quarantine regulations and bring smallpox into the city.

He brushed the ashes from his crumpled waistcoat. It was time to get moving and try to find someone to go and check on Mr Rout, but his head was throbbing and his eyes were sore. He was very tired, not just physically but mentally as well. The pressure on him in recent weeks had proven almost overwhelming. Suddenly it seemed everyone in Sydney had an opinion about the On Chong case and how he could have managed it better. What took him so long to confirm the diagnosis, everyone demanded to know? And why hadn't he quarantined the On Chong's store as soon as the suspicion was raised?

What really irked him about all this was the fact that some of those who offered their opinion were the same people who'd refused all efforts to get them to vaccinate their children. At last count only twenty per cent of Sydney residents had been vaccinated. Why should he now go out of his way to try and protect them? Why not let someone else take over, and give himself a chance to rest? He went into the reading room and sat down to

write a note to his friend and colleague, Dr William Goode. He would ask Goode to take over from him for a while. He finished the note, inviting Goode to meet him at the Club that afternoon, then gave it to one of the attendants to have it delivered on his behalf.

A short time later the attendant came to tell him someone wanted to see him, a doctor by the name of Caffyn. His first instinct was to have the attendant tell Caffyn he wasn't available, but then he remembered Edward Rout. 'Send him in,' he said.

Dr Stephen Mannington Caffyn was a visiting British surgeon, who'd been in Sydney for the past few months. He'd come with a letter of recommendation from a colleague of Alleyne's in London, and had done several stints for him already, as a government medical officer.

Once the pleasantries had been dealt with, Alleyne passed the note from Dr Clune across the desk. 'How would you like to take care of this?'

Dr Caffyn read the note. 'Smallpox!' he exclaimed. 'So you want me to go and see this man Rout?'

'As soon as you can, we have to confirm the diagnosis. I'd suggest you take Dr Clune along with you. You'll be paid in the usual manner, of course.'

No sooner had Dr Caffyn left the club, than Dr Goode arrived for their meeting. He was an amiable man and a competent doctor, and Alleyne instinctively trusted him, but when Goode realised what Alleyne had in mind – which was for him to take charge of the response to smallpox – Goode's immediate reaction was disbelief.

'Why on earth choose me? There must be someone else who can do it, someone who's used to taking charge.'

Alleyne shook his head. 'There are very few men I could trust with this. It won't be easy, I don't doubt that for a moment, but I'm certain that you'll be able to manage. I wouldn't have asked you otherwise.'

But Dr Goode still wasn't convinced. 'Your people in government hardly know me, why on earth should they listen to me?'

'I don't think they're going to have much choice.'

Dr Goode was silent, and Alleyne got up and began to pace. He wasn't about to take no for an answer, but he wasn't sure how much to say about his concerns for his own state of health. Then he made up his mind. 'There's something else I should tell you, which will perhaps influence your decision. The fact is I haven't been very well, I don't want to go into all the details but if I don't take a decent break...

Dr Goode looked at him in alarm. 'What is it, is there anything I can do?'

'Of course there is, you can take over for me – even if it's just for a week.'

Goode looked as though he was about to argue, but then he relented. 'Very well, if you insist, but I'll only do this on one condition. I have to be able to contact you in the event I'm out of my depth.'

'Very well,' Alleyne said, though he wasn't happy with the prospect of being at Goode's beck and call. More than anything he needed to rest, away from the stresses of the job. 'But only if you really can't manage, I have every confidence in you my friend, all it takes is common sense and diplomacy, and you have both.'

Now that Goode had committed to the task, they went across to the Treasury Department where he could meet Geoffrey Eagar. As the Under Secretary for Finance and Trade, Eagar had been party to the decision to remove the Holden family from The Rocks to the quarantine station when they came down with smallpox five years earlier. Since the treasurer was away on business, Eagar would be the man in charge and would soon take Goode under his wing.

**Tuesday afternoon, College Street**

Michael Clune hadn't got around to telling his wife about Edward Rout when Dr Caffyn called in to see him around four o'clock that afternoon. When he learned the reason for Caffyn's visit, Clune quickly grabbed his hat and coat and went with Caffyn to the waiting cab. As they set off in the direction of Bellevue Street, they discussed the details of the case. From Dr Caffyn's questions, Clune gathered he'd had only limited experience with the infection, no doubt because he was trained as a surgeon and smallpox was not a surgical problem.

Once they arrived outside the house Dr Caffyn had the driver wait. The two men made their way to the door, and Clune was amused to see the walking stick his colleague was carrying under his arm. Caffyn used the stick to rap on the door, which was opened by Nora Rout herself. She was obviously surprised to see them and was about to invite them into the hall when Dr Caffyn reached across and grabbed the door handle to pull it closed. 'Get back,' he said roughly as he did so. But Nora Rout wouldn't let go. She looked at Clune in some alarm, but he was as mystified as she was.

'We can speak through the window,' Caffyn said, as he pulled the door shut.

'But surely you want to see for yourself whether it's the smallpox or not,' Clune said as they moved to the window.

'Not at all,' Caffyn replied. 'I trust your judgement completely, dear fellow.'

Nora Rout was already at the window and had it open waiting for them. 'Very good,' Caffyn said. 'Now what we really need to establish is how your husband became infected. Has he been anywhere near On Chong's store in Lower George Street in the past few weeks?'

'I already told Dr Clune the story. My husband was working down near the Quay a week or so before he got sick.'

'I see,' Caffyn said. 'And you run this place as a lodging-house, is that correct?'

'Yes, but why do you ask?'

'Never mind, we'll come to that.' He was about to continue when he was interrupted by Mrs Rout.

'Would you mind telling me what this is about? My husband is up there in the attic, he could be dying for all you know, and you can't even be bothered to come in and see him.'

'I'm only following official procedure,' Caffyn said. 'There's no point exposing myself to infection when Dr Clune has already seen your husband. His diagnosis is quite sufficient.'

'So why did you bother to come here, then?'

'For a number of reasons as a matter of fact. There's the matter of quarantining the house, and then there's the need for vaccination. Everyone in the house will have to be done, including the children and your own good self.'

'What do you mean, quarantine the house,' Nora Rout said in alarm.

'The house will be placed under guard. As a matter of fact the police will be here shortly and once the barricades go up, no one will be allowed to enter or leave.'

'But what about Edward?' Nora Rout said, a look of panic on her face. 'How am I going to look after him? He needs medicine – and what will we do about food?'

'Don't worry,' Clune said, interrupting. 'I can continue to take care of your husband.'

'That won't be necessary,' Caffyn said. 'It's become a matter for the government to deal with. I'll send someone over later, with some medicine for Mr Rout. After that, we shall have to see.'

There was an awkward silence in the cab as they made their way back to College Street. Clune was affronted by Caffyn's behaviour and his offhand treatment of Mrs Rout, especially when he was being paid by the government to attend to the man. When the cab stopped outside his house Clune gladly took his leave and went inside. He needed some time to think things through, and after hanging his hat and coat, he went into his office and closed the door. What was he going to say to Annie? She would naturally want to hear what had happened and why he'd been called out to Bellevue Street. He was dreading her reaction when she heard the news that not once but twice that day, he'd been to see someone with the smallpox.

**Wednesday June 15 – Surry Hills**

Nora Rout woke with a start. She was cold and cramped in the hard little chair. She looked at her husband on the bed. His eyes were open but they were vacant and for a moment she was sure he was dead. Then he began to cough and couldn't catch his breath. She managed to get him sitting upright against the bed head which seemed to help. As the coughing eased he slumped back exhausted against the pillows.

She left him propped up on the bed and went downstairs. The house seemed quiet which was very unusual for the time of morning. After she'd been to the toilet out the back she went to the kitchen. Two of her lodgers, Thomas McKeown and James Keene, were sitting glumly at the table while Lucy Keene made them some breakfast. They'd normally be at work by now.

'How is he?' Lucy asked. She was a few years younger than Nora Rout but behaved towards her like a mother.

Nora was about to answer when Thomas McKeown got up from the table and without a word left the room. Nora stood looking after him, puzzled by his behaviour.

'Don't you worry yourself about him,' Lucy Keene said as she pushed a slice of freshly-made toast from the toasting fork onto her husband's plate. 'He's just worried about his little boy. Now sit yourself down and have some tea.'

Nora sat and her shoulders slumped. Her whole body was aching with fatigue. 'I don't think Edward will last much longer.'

'But he had a better night, I hope?' Lucy said. 'That medicine the doctor sent must have helped to settle him down.'

'It worked for a while but then this morning he couldn't breathe, I thought he was going to choke on me. He doesn't even know who I am.'

'You poor thing,' Lucy said. 'Will the doctor be coming back today?'

'I don't know. He couldn't wait to get away from here.'

James Keene, who'd been listening quietly, looked up from his breakfast. 'I wouldn't count on it,' he said. 'Not from what you told us about him.' He got up from the table. 'I'm going to see if I can get any sense out of one of those coppers out in the street.'

He came back a short time later. 'Come and have a look at this.'

The two women followed him to the front of the house. As they looked through the front window they could see a team of men in the street outside who were setting to work with shovels and brooms, scooping up great piles of rubbish that had lain about in the street for years. Others had buckets of disinfectant which they were sprinkling all over the ground.

As the three of them stood at the window to watch, a Hansom cab pulled up outside and a man in a top hat stepped onto the street.

'It's Dr Caffyn,' Nora said, stepping back from the window. 'You talk to him for me Lucy, I don't want anything to do with him. And ask him to send some more of that medicine, there was barely enough to last the night.'

She went back upstairs, anxious to get out of sight before Lucy Keene opened the door. When she went into the attic, she found her husband on the floor, where he'd obviously fallen out of bed. His body lay tangled in one of the sheets. As she bent to lift him back into bed, she nearly gagged. He'd lost control of his bowels and bladder. After struggling to lift him from the floor and somehow get him back into bed, she was forced to give up. Instead she dragged the mattress onto the floor then somehow managed to roll his body onto the mattress. With a part of the sheet that was still unsoiled she cleaned him up as best she could, then bundled up the dirty sheet and left it lying at the top of the stairs. She knew that the soiled sheets should have been burned, but there were no more clean sheets left in the house. She'd just have to wash it and hope for the best.

Next she tried to get Edward to drink some water but it simply dribbled from his mouth and trickled down over his chin. His lips were cracked and oozing blood and his tongue was so swollen he couldn't close his mouth. The smell of his breath almost made her sick. She gave up and sat in the chair, exhausted. She was almost too tired to contemplate what



might lie beyond his death. All her life she'd had to struggle. Now it looked like things were about to become even harder for her and the children.

Later that morning she went downstairs, taking the sheet from outside the door. She left it outside in a bowl to soak, then washed her hands and went inside to find Lucy Keene bursting with news. It seemed the reason for Dr Caffyn's visit was to vaccinate everyone in the house. 'He made us all line up out the back and poke our arms through a hole in the fence.

'You should've seen us,' Lucy said. 'He even had a policeman with him, standing guard while he gave us the scratch. I don't know what he thought we'd do, jump over the fence and bite him or something.'

Nora absently rubbed her eyes, which were red and sore from lack of sleep over the past week or so.

'He kept asking me where you were,' Lucy continued. 'I told him you were busy with Edward so he left one of these for you.' She took an ivory stick from the mantle place.

'What's it for?' Nora said.

'That's what he used to give us the scratch. He showed me how you're supposed to use it so I can do your arm when you're ready.'

'Isn't it a bit late for that?' Nora said. 'I can't see what good this is going to do. The way I'm feeling at the moment, I've probably got it already.'

'No,' Lucy said. 'You don't understand. It doesn't matter if you're infected, you won't get it as bad and it will help you get over it faster, at least that's what Dr Caffyn told us.'

After Nora had drunk her tea she agreed to bare her arm, and gritted her teeth as Lucy scratched at the skin before scraping the wound with the ivory tip. 'There,' she said. 'That ought to do it.'

Just then Nora's eldest daughter, Lizzie, a girl of twelve, came into the kitchen. She was breathless with news. 'You should come and see. Everyone's leaving!'

They followed her to the sitting room window. Sure enough, out in the street they could see their neighbours on either side loading their belongings onto horse-drawn carts. Obviously the word was out.

**Wednesday afternoon, College Street**

Michael Clune had been busy all morning with a steady stream of patients who were concerned that they might have caught the smallpox. They insisted on showing him their every blemish, no matter how small, but none of them had any telltale signs.

One of the men who came to see him was a man Clune knew through the church, a wool packer by the name of Hughes who lived in Underwood Street, two streets away from the On Chong place. John Hughes, who was in his early thirties, lived with his wife and their six children in a dingy flat next to Ebsworth Wool Stores. This was where six days a week Hughes lugged heavy bales of wool, which explained his fine physique. But today he was a worried man – he'd developed some nasty lumps on his neck which he said had been there for several days.

'Take off your shirt and let's have a look,' Clune said. 'Have you had any headaches, any pain in the back, any signs of a rash?'

Hughes shook his head. 'Apart from a rotten hangover. That's the only headache I can remember.'

Clune examined Hughes' upper torso, especially the area around his neck where there were several angry red lumps. They didn't appear to Clune to have anything at all to do with smallpox. 'Open your mouth for me,' he said, as he looked for the telltale reddish spots that usually formed on the tongue and palate in the early stages of smallpox infection. Again there was nothing to cause concern.

'What do you think?' Hughes said, as he began to button his shirt.

'I don't think you should worry too much. It certainly doesn't look like smallpox.'

'Do you think it might be the King's Evil, then?'

'Scrofula you mean? No, I don't think so. To tell you the truth, I have no idea, but I'd like to arrange a second opinion to be on the safe side.'

Hughes was obviously relieved. As he was leaving, Clune reassured him that someone would see him the following day. In the meantime he told Hughes to stay off the grog, and to make sure he got plenty of rest.

\* \* \*

Although the news about Edward Rout had only appeared in the papers that morning, the atmosphere on the streets of the city had already changed. People who were fairly sociable or normally on friendly terms now stood back and eyed each other, checking for any signs of smallpox. The Chinese, who were blamed for the outbreak, fared worst of all. There'd been several incidents already where people of Chinese appearance were ordered off the footpaths or turned away when they tried to board an omnibus or tram.

That afternoon a man named Ah Home was in the vicinity of Lower George Street when he was approached by a fellow Chinese. A man by the name of Won Ping was ill and needed to be taken somewhere safe. Would Ah Home help them?

Ah Home, who was only too aware of the tide of resentment that was growing towards anyone of Asian appearance, didn't hesitate. That night under cover of darkness he and several other men bundled Won Ping into a cart. They covered the sick man with a blanket and a large sheet of canvas. Then they set off in their buggy towards Waterloo where they'd been told there were a number of empty warehouses, one of them belonging to Sun Kim Tiy, a Chinese grocer from The Rocks. Sun Kim Tiy's shop had also been closed down because it was next door to the On Chong premises. The empty warehouse was apparently situated right next to the Chinese market gardens and Won Ping and the other men should be able to blend in without raising undue suspicion.

Ah Home drove his cart through the city, choosing the back streets wherever he could. As far as he was able to tell, their only witnesses that night were the stray dogs and goats that roamed the streets scavenging for something to eat.

When they reached the warehouse on Botany Road that bore the name of Sun Kim Tiy, Ah Home pulled up outside the building. He and

another man went inside to see if they could find a bed for Won Ping. Upstairs they found some empty rooms, one of them with several beds. Satisfied that they'd be safe, the men went back down to the cart and together took hold of Won Ping who was still bundled in the piece of canvas, and took him upstairs to the room. Once they had him safely in bed Ah Home sent the other man to help tend to the horses and stow the cart out of sight of prying eyes. Then he took out a small opium bottle and held it up to the sick man's lips. Won Ping managed to take several sips then settled back quietly on the bed. The opium quickly took effect.

Now that they appeared to be safe Ah Home lay on the other bed and closed his eyes. Soon he too was fast asleep.

\* \* \*

John Hughes was at home that evening, at his place in Underwood Street. He and Sarah and the children had already finished their tea, and Sarah was preparing the children for bed when they thought he heard someone yell 'Fire!'

Hughes was a volunteer with the fire brigade and assumed they must be looking for him so he went down to the gate to check. Instead of the firemen he was expecting, he found two policemen waiting outside.

'Where's the fire?' Hughes enquired, mystified by the presence of the police.

'Is anyone on the premises sick?' one of them said abruptly.

Hughes shook his head. 'I thought someone said there was a fire?'

'Are you sick then?' the other one said, ignoring his question.

'Do I look like a sick man to you?' Hughes retorted. 'What the devil is going on?'

Then one of the policemen struck a match and held it up to his face. 'Smallpox,' he announced to his colleague. 'That will do – quarantine.'

Hughes was too shocked to speak at first and by the time he got his thoughts together, the police were heading back up the street. What was

that all about, he wondered as he watched them go. Then it hit him. They'd obviously been informed by someone about his visit to Dr Clune. But surely the police didn't have the power to place his house under quarantine, especially when the smallpox wasn't confirmed. He went upstairs to talk to his wife.

At first Sarah Hughes was as baffled as he was but once the implications sunk in, she begged him to help her pack up the children and leave the place straight away. 'Let's get out of Sydney,' she said. 'I don't care where we go just so long as we don't stay here.'

But John Hughes wasn't so sure. To start with he had his job to think of. With such a large family to provide for he couldn't afford to be without work, not when they didn't have any savings or any close family to help them out. As it was his children had to go barefoot, he couldn't afford shoes for them all.

'Don't worry,' he said to his wife. 'Dr Clune will sort this out. He'll soon tell them that it's not the smallpox.'

\* \* \*

Ah Home woke to the sound of voices. It was dark, and he had no idea of the time. Silently, he went across to the door to make sure it was securely barred, then went and lay back down on the bed. Next thing he heard someone on the stairs. He held his breath as they tried the door. It didn't budge. There were muffled voices, and to his relief, he heard the men going back downstairs.

A short time later they were back, this time obviously with reinforcements. It didn't take long to break down the door.

As Ah Home lay there squinting in the light from their lanterns, two policemen came into the room. One of them ordered him out of bed, before going across to the other bed and pulling the blankets away from Won Ping. Then Ah Home saw the man reel back in horror from the bed. 'God spare us,' he said, as his hand flew to cover his mouth and nose. He said something to the other policeman and they both retreated from the room.

Once he was sure they had gone, Ah Home got up and went across to the other bed. He covered Won Ping with the blanket once more, then went to his bed and lay back down. This time, though, he couldn't sleep. He knew it was only a matter of time before the police came back for them.

Sure enough, an hour or so later there was more commotion on the stairs. This time when the police came in they brought with them another man and took him over to Won Ping's bed. The man held up his lantern above Won Ping's face, then without further ado, turned on his heel and was gone. The police returned a short time later and ordered Ah Home out of bed and escorted him downstairs for questioning. Who was the sick man, they wanted to know. Where had he come from? Where had he been staying in Sydney?

Ah Home told them the sick man's name but more than that he wouldn't say. 'No savee,' he said again and again. Even when they threatened to have him whipped he continued to maintain his silence. Eventually they gave up in disgust and he was allowed to go back to bed.

**Thursday morning, The Australian Club**

Dr Alleyne was woken in his room upstairs by someone knocking at the door. It was one of the attendants who'd come to bring him an urgent note from Dr Goode. Rather than open the note straight away he put it on his bedside table. It could wait. He lay back down and stared up at the yellowing paint and the cracks on the ceiling.

Ever since he'd handed over responsibility to Dr Goode he'd kept a low profile at the club, and spent much of the time locked in his room. The attendants brought his meals up to him, along with his mail and the newspapers. Otherwise he'd left instructions that he was not to be disturbed.

For much of the previous day he'd slept. It was as though all the years of relentless hard work and responsibility had caught up with him. The rest had done him the world of good. He still had his headache but it wasn't so fierce and the pains in his chest had considerably eased.

Now as he lay wide awake on the bed, he couldn't stop wondering what was in the note and whether there were any new smallpox cases. No one in Sydney knew better than he did the implications of a smallpox outbreak. In the past two decades Sydney's population had doubled and almost overnight, it seemed, row upon row of shanties sprang up wherever there was space to build. Most of these dwellings were poorly constructed with too few windows and earthen floors. Many had no running water and few of them had proper toilets. In the dingy back streets and alleyways where these shanties were crammed together, piles of rotting refuse lay all about. There was no council garbage collection and there was nowhere else for the rubbish to go. The city elders were aware of the problem and knew these were breeding grounds for all kinds of vermin – rats, mice, cockroaches, flies – and that the residents were sitting ducks for disease. If smallpox got into one of these slums it would spread like wildfire.

Alleyne sighed. What was the point of trying to rest when there was a crisis looming? He simply couldn't turn his back on the possibility of a smallpox epidemic, not when he'd spent almost half a lifetime working to



prevent the disease from taking hold in the city. He went to the wash stand and splashed some water on his face then sat back down on the side of the bed and opened the note from Dr Goode.

The message was short and to the point. A meeting had been convened for that morning by Geoffrey Eagar from the Treasury Department. Now Dr Goode was wanting to meet with Alleyne, preferably before the meeting started. It seemed that plans were well underway to make use of the quarantine station to isolate the smallpox cases as well as the close contacts of the victims. The first boatload of people was expected to leave for the quarantine station that afternoon. He checked his fob watch. The meeting would have already started.

The plan to use the quarantine station came as no surprise to him. There really was no other choice, not for an outbreak such as this. Not only would the smallpox victims have to be isolated from Sydney, but they had to be segregated from their families as well. The quarantine station wasn't ideal but at least it had separate hospital wards for male and female smallpox patients, and accommodation in the healthy ground that could be used for all the contacts. The one snag in the plan so far that Alleyne could see was Dr Goode: he'd never been anywhere near the place, which put him at a disadvantage.

Alleyne took out pen and paper and began to draw up a list of items for discussion with Dr Goode at their meeting. The very first thing on his list was to send Dr Goode across to Spring Cove where he could make himself known to the superintendent, an Irishman by the name of Carroll who could be a very difficult man to deal with. Carroll would need to be informed of the plan to send the people from Sydney, and since the telegraph system at the quarantine station had been out of commission for several months, it would be up to Goode to let Carroll know.

Alleyne wrote a note to one of his boatmen instructing him to bring the launch to Cowper's Wharf as soon as he could, and be ready to take Dr Goode to the quarantine station that afternoon. While he thought of it Alleyne also made a note to remind himself to sort out the problem with the

telegraph line. It would have to be fixed without delay so there was an efficient means of communication between the quarantine station and the city.

Next on his list was accommodation. The quarantine station was a rough old place that had been neglected in recent years. The buildings themselves were sound enough but for the most part they were sparsely furnished and the facilities for cooking and washing left a lot to be desired. There was very little that could be done about this, especially at such short notice. To compensate for the poor conditions it might be prudent to ensure that the residents were well-supplied with whatever they might need during their stay. The more he thought about this, however, the more he realised it was a matter that should be dealt with at the highest level, since the superintendent, Carroll, could be a bit of a miser when it came to doling out supplies. Alleyne added a note to his list to contact his parliamentary colleagues. An instruction that came from the government would have a much better chance of being observed.

Another matter that would need attention was the segregation of smallpox cases from healthy contacts once they arrived at the quarantine station. If this wasn't managed correctly the infection could quickly spread to others. Yet no matter how many times he'd been told, Carroll still seemed to get it wrong. This was something Dr Goode should be made aware of, to ensure there was no misunderstanding when he went to speak to Carroll about it.

The hospital ship *Faraway* was another area of concern. Several Chinese men from the steamship *Brisbane* had been on board the hulk for the past six weeks while one of the men recovered from smallpox. They would have to be moved into tents to make way for Edward Rout and others. Dr William Walsh, the caretaker who'd been employed by the agents for the *Brisbane*, would have to be notified of the plan and arrangements made for him to stay on to take care of the new arrivals.

Alleyne sucked on the end of his pen and stared absently at the cobwebs above the door. There were so many details to arrange, and so little

time in which to prepare, especially when it came to staff. For a start they would need at least one nurse as well as someone to cook and wash for the women and children in the hospital enclosure. He took out a fresh sheet of paper and began to write to Lucy Osborn, the superintendent of the Sydney Infirmary. She'd been helpful in the past and might be able to arrange something for him.

By this time an hour had already passed. He quickly dressed and went downstairs. On his way out, he gave the two letters to the attendant to have them delivered. Then he put on his hat and coat and headed down to the Treasury Department.

**Thursday morning, Underwood Street**

While the meeting at the Treasury was still underway, John Hughes and his family were waiting at home. They'd awoken to find the place barricaded and a policemen standing guard nearby. He'd apparently been there for most of the night. When Hughes went down to talk to him, he said that no one was allowed to leave, but more than that he wouldn't say.

Hughes could barely contain his anger. There was no sign of the doctor that Clune had promised. 'I should try and sneak over the back fence,' he said to Sarah when he went upstairs. 'I could go and see Dr Clune and get him to talk to the sergeant for us.'

His wife gave him a scathing look. Hughes knew she was angry, not with the government or the police, but with him. She couldn't forgive him for refusing to listen when she suggested they leave the night before. Now there was nothing they could do. There was no knowing how long they'd be kept under guard, and in the meantime they were stuck in the flat with no way to go out even for food. What little they had wouldn't last long, not with six hungry mouths to feed.

Hughes didn't know what to say. He kept going downstairs to the gate, hoping the constable standing outside might tell him what was going on. But the young man didn't respond at all to Hughes' attempts at conversation.

Finally just before eleven, they heard someone calling out from the gate and Hughes flew downstairs to see who it was. He was certain it must be the doctor. Sure enough, a man dressed in a top hat and tails was waiting outside the gate and there was a Hansom cab just down the street. The man introduced himself as Dr Caffyn.

'Did Dr Clune send you to see me?' Hughes said as he went to open the gate.

'Stay back!' Dr Caffyn said, and raised his walking stick.

'It's not the smallpox so you needn't worry.'

'I think I'll be the judge of that.'

'But weren't you sent by Dr Clune?'

'Indirectly, perhaps, but I'm here on behalf of Dr Alleyne who was notified that someone in this house has smallpox.'

'Who would have told him that?' Hughes said. 'Yesterday I went to see Dr Clune about these lumps I've got on my neck.' He began to pull his collar aside to let Dr Caffyn have a look.

'Never mind,' Dr Caffyn said, backing away.

'You needn't worry,' Hughes said, 'Dr Clune says it's not infectious. Here, you can see for yourself.' Hughes began to unbutton his shirt.

'Please, there's no need,' Dr Caffyn said. 'I can see very clearly even from here. It's the smallpox all right.' With that he walked off with his stick tucked under his arm.

Hughes watched him climb into the cab. As the driver flicked his reins and the horse began to move off up the street he cursed the doctor at the top of his voice. Then he turned and kicked the gate so hard he thought he might have broken his toe. He saw the startled look on the constable's face.

'What are you looking at?' he snarled, before going upstairs to face his wife.

### Thursday morning, Treasury Department

The meeting of the executive council was already over when Alleyne arrived. Geoffrey Eagar, who was standing in for the treasurer and who'd taken it upon himself to call the meeting in the first place, quickly took Alleyne aside. He wanted to have a quiet word.

'We're going to need a couple of doctors to look after people at the quarantine station. I was wondering whom you might recommend?'

Alleyne had already thought about it. The quarantine station had such a bad reputation that most Sydney doctors refused to work there. Not only was it isolated, but once a doctor was assigned to the place there was no way of knowing when they'd get back. It was all very arbitrary and sometimes they were kept there for several months for a fee that was nowhere near enough to compensate for the rough conditions or for the inconvenience. It was only seven miles from Sydney but it might as well have been on the moon.

In the past Alleyne had been forced to make do with whomever he could find at the time and the calibre of doctors was usually abysmal. Dr William Walsh on the *Faraway* was a good example. Although he called himself a doctor, he was never actually trained as such. He'd been trained as an assistant apothecary in London but that was many decades ago. More recently he'd been employed at the gaol in Darlinghurst where he dispensed medicines to the prisoners. Alleyne knew him to be very lazy and a little too fond of the grog. He obviously wasn't the ideal choice, especially when there were sick men to care for, but there had to be someone on board the hulk to ensure that food and other supplies were made available to the patients.

Alleyne sighed. 'It's always difficult as you know, but I'd suggest Doctors Caffyn and Clune. They've both been involved with the smallpox cases. I doubt they'll consent to go there, however.'

'Don't worry,' Geoffrey Eagar said. 'I have the full authority of the treasurer. I shall simply tell them that the treasurer himself has issued the order for them to accompany the smallpox patients and to tend to them at the quarantine station.'

Geoffrey Eagar was in a hurry, there was so much to do before the day ended. To begin with, both he and the police superintendent were off to purchase an omnibus which could be used to transport the smallpox cases from their homes down to Cowper's Wharf. One of the other members of the executive council meeting that morning, a man named Captain Francis Hixson who was president of the Marine Department, had already gone to arrange the lease of a suitable vessel which could be used to ferry patients across the harbour. Depending on how long it would take them to make the arrangements for transportation, the first lot of healthy contacts could be ready to go to the quarantine station that afternoon.

Once they'd all gone Alleyne sat down with Dr Goode to discuss logistics. Things were moving at such a pace that there wasn't a single moment to lose. Alleyne outlined as best he could the situation at the quarantine station and emphasised to Goode that he needed to tread carefully where Carroll was concerned.

'He's been there for close to forty years, longer than I've been in this job, and he likes to do things a certain way. I suggest you go to see him today as soon as we've gone through all the arrangements. My boatman is waiting at Cowper's Wharf to take you across. You'll need to spend some time with Carroll and go through all the details with him as this will be the first he's heard of the plan to use the quarantine station. We don't know yet when the first boatload will leave but he should have everything ready just in case. Otherwise when the first group arrives he won't have made any preparations.'

'What will I tell him if he asks about you?'

'You should explain to him I'm not very well or I would have seen to this myself. But remember if you get off on the wrong foot with him you'll have nothing but problems – he'll do everything in his power to thwart you.'

Dr Goode didn't look happy. 'If the man is as difficult as you say, why haven't you had him replaced before this?'

'Carroll knows the place like the back of his hand, and besides you must know how hard it is to get anyone decent to work over there.'

Goode was silent, and then he said 'I don't like the sound of this at all. And how am I supposed to find this man Carroll when I've never been anywhere near the place?'

'My boatman will know where to find him. He takes me over there once a week. I usually meet with Carroll on Stores Beach, well away from the quarantine grounds but you don't have time for any of that. Don't worry, my boatman will know what to do.'

He glanced through his notes, aware that time was slipping by.

'There's one other thing,' Alleyne said. 'I'd like you to tell Mr Carroll I'll be arranging for someone to come tomorrow and sort out the problem with the telegraph service.'

He glanced at his fob watch. It was time to get Goode down to the wharf. 'Come on, I'll take you down and introduce you to the boatman myself.'



### Thursday afternoon , Quarantine Station

John Carroll heard the distinctive whistle of the health officer's launch from his cottage on the hillside above the cove and went out to see what was going on. To his surprise he saw the launch in the cove approaching the *Faraway*. Carroll was puzzled since Dr Alleyne hadn't been anywhere near the *Faraway* for a long time. These days he rarely came to the grounds but met with Carroll on Stores Beach, well away from the infected areas.

Carroll grabbed his coat and hat and limped down the hill as fast as he could. What was Alleyne doing here? Was Dr Walsh in some kind of trouble? He doubted it. Walsh had been confined to the *Faraway* for the past six weeks and in that time had no communication whatsoever with the health officer that Carroll knew of. All communication from the quarantine station with Sydney was by telegraph, and the telegraph service wasn't working. Perhaps the visit had had something to do with the smallpox outbreak in Sydney which Carroll had been reading about in the papers. He only hoped the health officer wasn't planning to send smallpox cases here from Sydney, as they'd done once before. He already had enough to do what with taking care of the grounds and tending to ships that were quarantined.

By the time he got down to the beach he had to stop and catch his breath before dragging the rowboat down to the water. He was just about to hop on board when he saw the steam launch preparing to leave. He waved and called out to the boatman but he couldn't make himself heard. With a toot of its whistle the launch was off, heading in the direction of Sydney.

Carroll was furious as he began to row out towards the *Faraway*. To his intense irritation Walsh was standing on the deck of the hulk watching him.

'What was all that about?' Carroll snapped as soon as he came alongside. 'What did the health officer want with you?'

'It wasn't Alleyne, it was Dr Goode'

'But that was the health officer's launch.'

‘Yes, but apparently Dr Alleyne isn’t well, and he sent Dr Goode in his place.’

Carroll was startled: he’d been working with Alleyne for close to thirty years and in all that time he’d never known the health officer to take a day off sick. ‘So what did this fellow want with you?’

Walsh explained that Dr Goode was in a hurry, and as soon as he spotted Walsh on deck he decided not to try and find Carroll but to speak to Walsh instead. ‘He was sent to let you know that there was a meeting in Sydney this morning. Apparently the government’s decided to use the quarantine station for the smallpox cases. They’re planning to send about twenty people over here this afternoon.’

‘This afternoon! But nothing’s ready.’

‘Don’t worry, Dr Goode said there’s a boatload of supplies on its way with extra tents and that sort of thing. And he said we should get the Chinamen ashore so the *Faraway’s* ready for the new arrivals.’

Carroll was stewing as he rowed back to shore. Things had been quiet for several months and the thought of a whole lot of people arriving, especially at such short notice, really put him out. At his age he was in no condition to rush about trying to prepare for their arrival. Like Alleyne, he was getting on in years – he was already well into his sixties – and he couldn’t push himself the way he used to when he was younger.

He stowed the boat and went to find his youngest son, the only one of his twelve offspring who still lived in the grounds with he and his wife. He hadn’t seen the boy since breakfast – knowing him he’d be out fishing.

Carroll decided to get his son to put up a tent above the beach so the Chinamen could be brought ashore. Once that was done he could help his father sort out the enclosure for the new arrivals. There was no time now to arrange any rations, they’d just have to go hungry for the night. There were bound to be complaints about that but it was hardly Carroll’s fault. He could only do so much in a day. So long as everyone had some bedding and a place to sleep they’d just have to make do until morning. And besides if

they had any sense they'd bring something with them to eat. He certainly would if he were in their shoes.

**Thursday afternoon, Sydney**

Just after midday, Michael Clune went to the office of the Inspector-General of Police near the junction of Phillip and Hunter Streets. He and a doctor by the name of Sedgwick were waiting outside the Inspector's office for some cowpox lymph to be delivered from a dairy on the outskirts of the city. The sudden panic about a smallpox epidemic meant cowpox lymph was in short supply, especially since the government had offered free smallpox vaccination for children.

As they waited the two men were discussing the implications of the smallpox outbreak. They were joined by a third man, a solicitor, who wanted to hear from Michael Clune about his experience with Edward Rout. As Clune was describing the man's condition, he noticed the arrival of the police superintendent but didn't pay him much attention. However the conversation came to a halt when they saw superintendent approaching.

To Clune's surprise, Superintendent Read came up to him and asked him to step aside for a word.

'I don't have much time so I'll have to be brief,' the superintendent said. 'I'm afraid I have some unfortunate news: It was decided at the executive council meeting held at the Treasury Department this morning that both yourself and Dr Caffyn will be going across to the quarantine station, along with the patient Edward Rout and several other smallpox cases.'

'I beg your pardon?'

The superintendent repeated himself, but still it didn't make sense. 'Are you sure this is not some kind of mistake? You realise I'm in private practice, that I'm not a government medical officer?'

'I can assure you that it's no mistake, you'll be taken to the quarantine station today, as soon as transportation is arranged.'

'But this is ridiculous. I can't leave my family and my practice.'

Both Dr Sedgwick and the solicitor had overheard the conversation and seeing the effect on Clune, came to see if they could help him.

'If I may,' the solicitor said, 'I'd like to offer some advice to my colleague.' Without waiting for the superintendent's reply he turned to Clune: 'They can't make you go without your consent. Whatever you do, you mustn't comply.'

'I agree,' Dr Sedgwick said, turning to Superintendent Read. 'Dr Clune's livelihood depends on his patients and a prolonged absence would destroy his practice. And besides, how his family will manage? It's simply out of the question.'

But the superintendent stood his ground. 'I was at the meeting this morning when the decision was made. Both Dr Clune and Dr Caffyn have been in contact with the smallpox victims so it was considered appropriate that they should go with them to the quarantine station.'

Clune felt the blood rush to his cheeks. 'And what will happen if I refuse?'

'I'm afraid you don't have any choice, but if you wish to argue the point you should go down to the Treasury Department where Geoffrey Eagar will put you straight. Now I really must be going. Good day.'

Once he was gone, Clune turned to the others. 'What on earth am I going to do?'

The two other men offered to accompany him to the Treasury Department. As they walked the short distance down to Bridge Street they tried their best to reassure Clune. If any doctors were to be sent, they said, it should be government medical officers and not someone like Clune who was in private practice. Buoyed by their optimism Clune began to believe he would find a way around the decision.

His hopes were soon dashed by Geoffrey Eagar who wasn't prepared to discuss the matter. 'Since the treasurer himself has issued the order. I don't see on what grounds you can refuse.'

'But what will happen to my practice and my wife and daughter while I'm gone? How are they going to manage?'

'For God's sake, man, pull yourself together. We're facing a smallpox epidemic here. Now I don't have time to discuss the details, but you'll be adequately recompensed once this is over, I can assure you. Now if you'll excuse me I must be going.'

Devastated by his response Clune took his leave of the other two men and began to walk in the direction of home. He couldn't help thinking what Annie had said when she tried to warn him not to get involved. As it turned out she'd been right as usual. Why hadn't he taken her seriously?

Lost in thought, he almost walked past Dr Alleyne who was heading in the opposite direction. On impulse Clune stepped into his path. 'I'd like a word with you, if I may.'

Once Alleyne realised who it was he kept his eyes fixed on the ground as Clune began to argue his case, ending with an appeal for Alleyne to intervene on his behalf.

'I don't see how you can get out of it,' Alleyne said when Clune had finished. Then he continued on his way.

**Thursday afternoon, Bellevue Street**

Nora Rout was dozing in the chair next to her husband who lay on his mattress on the floor. She'd been too frightened to leave him for long, sensing the end must be very near. In the past day or so his skin had turned a sickly yellow colour and he hadn't passed urine since the night before. There was little more she could do for him other than try to keep him calm during the periods when delirium set in. Sometimes he got very agitated and started tearing at his skin. It was very distressing to see him like that, as blood and pus oozed from the welts he made on his arms and face and upper body. He was obviously tormented by the scabs that had formed on the lesions.

She was roused from sleep by Lucy Keene, who was calling to her from the hall. Nora went to the top of the stairs to find Lucy in quite a state.

'A policeman just came to the door. He says that we're all to go to the quarantine station. They've got an omnibus waiting outside.'

'But what about Edward?' Nora said. 'They can't move him in the state he's in.'

'James has already spoken to the police about him, and they said he would have to stay where he was and that you should stay back here as well. They'll be back to fetch you later on.'

'But what about the children,' Nora said as she made her way down the stairs and sank down on the bottom step. 'I can't very well look after them, not with Edward the way he is.'

'You needn't worry about the children, James and I will take care of them.'

Nora was feeling overwhelmed. 'I don't think Edward will last the night. Oh Lucy, I can't stay here on my own. What am I going to do if he dies?'

Lucy thought for a moment. 'Let me go and talk to James.' She returned a short time later. 'James has decided to stay here with you. Now I'd better go and round up the children.'

In addition to Nora Rout's four children, James and Lucy Keene had three of their own. Lucy would certainly have her hands full, but Nora's eldest daughter Lizzie would help her, Nora was certain of that.

The other couple who were lodging with her – the McKeowns and their baby – were also getting ready to leave. Ever since the doctors had been and confirmed that Edward Rout had smallpox, they'd kept to themselves for much of the time. They were probably frightened for the child, and Nora couldn't blame them for that.

Soon Lucy Keene returned with the children and Nora's youngest daughter, May, rushed over and clung to her mother's skirt. Nora held the little girl at arm's length and made the child look at her. 'It's all right, Lizzie will look after you. Now I want you to be a good little girl.' She stroked the child's hair. 'Mummy will see you soon.'

Lizzie came and took May by the hand and Nora's eyes filled with tears as she followed them as far as the door and stood watching as they went out to the 'bus, along with all the other children. May kept turning back to look at her mother, her face solemn, but she didn't cry.

Lucy Keene embraced her husband then walked quickly outside to join the others. James Keene stood at the door with Nora and they watched as the driver flicked his reins and the two horses set off up the street, with one policeman walking ahead and another following behind on foot.

Once the 'bus disappeared round the corner Nora went slowly back upstairs. The house seemed quiet all of a sudden and her husband was very still. Leaning down for a closer look she realised that he'd passed away. She knelt down on the floor beside him and gently covered him with the sheet. Then she sat on the floor beside him. She had no idea how long she stayed there before she was able to rouse herself and go downstairs to tell James Keene.

'What do you think we should do?' she said as she sat down at the kitchen table.

'The police will know what needs to happen, I suppose I should go and tell them.'



'Would you ask them to send a doctor to see him? Aren't they supposed to write the death certificate?'

'I'm not sure,' Keene said. 'But if we couldn't get a doctor to see him when he was alive, I doubt they're going to get one now.'

Nora was suddenly angry. 'Well you can tell them that I'm not budging until they send a doctor to see him.'

**Thursday afternoon, quarantine station**

John Carroll watched from the wooden jetty as the *Pinafore* came across the cove. It was already well past four o'clock and he was keen to get the new arrivals settled into the hospital enclosure before it was dark. As the boatmen secured the vessel Captain Michael Maher leapt across to the jetty. He had twenty-seven people on board, he told Carroll, and more than half of them were children. Some of them hadn't eaten since breakfast. 'I hope you've got some tucker for them.'

Carroll didn't comment but stood back with his hands in his pockets as the new arrivals emerged from the cabin. As they watched the women and children assemble in groups on the jetty, Captain Maher told Carroll about the death of Edward Rout, who would have to be brought over in a coffin to be buried at the quarantine station. 'Superintendent Read said he needs us to take the longboat back and that you're to get the grave dug ready for Rout to be buried later this evening.'

Carroll already had enough on his hands so the burial would have to wait, but there was no need to say anything to Maher.

By this time the passengers had all disembarked and Carroll signalled for them to follow as he led the way up to the store. Some of the smaller children were tired and had to be carried but Carroll didn't offer to help. He was anxious to get home for his tea.

As he limped ahead up the steep path that led to the enclosure above the cove, he overheard someone behind him complain about the condition of the track. They'd learn soon enough, he thought to himself. They weren't exactly here for a picnic.

Once he had them inside the enclosure he took them to a long timber building surrounded on all sides by a veranda. 'This is where you'll be staying,' he said, as he opened the door. Several children crowded past, curious to see inside the building which was dark and gloomy, and very cold.

'You're not going to put us all in together?' one woman asked, looking around the bleak interior which was little better than a barn. There were no partitions, just one long room and no sign of a fireplace. The only furniture in the room was several dozen cast iron beds.

'It's freezing in here,' someone said. 'How are we supposed to keep warm?'

'Some of you better come with me and fetch some blankets from the store.'

'Hang on a minute,' someone said. 'I thought there'd be something for us to eat.'

Carroll was impatient to get them settled so he could get back to the *Pinafore*. 'I only heard that you were coming a couple of hours ago, so there was no time to organise any rations. Now who's coming with me to fetch the bedding?'

Three men stepped forward and went with Carroll to the store they'd passed on their way from the jetty which was where he kept his supplies. They waited while he counted out sufficient mattresses, blankets and pillows to allow each for each adult and all the children.

'Is this all you can spare?' one man said. 'What about sheets and towels?'

'There aren't any,' Carroll said. 'They'll have to be ordered in from Sydney.' He gave each man half a dozen candles before he showed them the door. 'You'll have to find your own way back.'

Once they were gone he locked up and went back down to the *Pinafore*, where Captain Maher was waiting to see him.

'When will the smallpox cases be coming?' Carroll asked.

'I have no idea,' Captain Maher said. 'All I was told when we left Cowper's Wharf was that there were three cases of smallpox coming as well as a couple of other people, including two doctors. But I suspect they might wait until the morning.'

Carroll went off to find one of his boatmen to take the longboat down to Stores Beach where the *Pinafore* crew could pick it up and tow it back with them to Sydney. Once he'd taken care of the longboat, he could go back home to have his tea.

### Thursday evening, The Rocks

Constable Thomas Cook arrived for his shift at Cumberland Street Watch House just before six o'clock that evening. For most of the day he'd been in bed, after spending the night outside John Hughes' place.

It was just two months since he and his family had moved from Minmi several hundred miles north of Sydney, where Cook had worked as the local postmaster. At first he'd enjoyed his new surroundings, especially working in The Rocks where there was always something going on. But the smallpox outbreak had changed all that. Suddenly he and the other police found themselves caught up in the panic that had gripped the city for the past few days. Having to stand guard on his own all through the night without so much as a hot cup of tea hadn't helped his state of mind, especially since he'd caught a cold. His nose was now dripping like a tap and his throat felt raw. He really should have been home in bed.

When he learned that he and another constable who was also fairly new to the job, had been chosen to go with the omnibus to pick up three of the smallpox victims – one of whom was already dead – his heart sank. Yet more dirty work!

But there was no point standing around complaining. Their first point of pick-up was from Underwood Street. Assuming Hughes didn't put up a fight – he'd been aggressive earlier that afternoon when the 'bus went to pick up his wife and children – they would take him down to Cowper's Wharf where the *Pinafore* should be waiting for him. After that, the sergeant told them, they'd be heading over to Botany Road to pick up Won Ping and several others. Then, once they'd dropped the Chinamen off, they were to stop by Shying the undertaker's to pick up a coffin for Edward Rout. A couple of gravediggers would be coming with them to help get the body down from the attic and into the coffin.

Cook looked at his fob watch. It was time to go. As he wiped his dripping nose on his sleeve he noticed the sergeant eyeing him off. 'You're not sickening with something, are you Cook?'

'No sir,' he said. 'It's just a cold.'

They set off with the 'bus for Underwood Street where to their surprise, Hughes was waiting for them, and came straight out to the 'bus. He was missing his wife and family, he said, and had decided to join them at the quarantine station where at least they would all be together.

Hughes took his seat in the back of the 'bus. As they set off in the direction of Cowper's Wharf, a soft misty rain began to fall, the drops glistening in the glow from the lanterns that hung from each side at the front of the 'bus. As soon as they arrived at the wharf, Superintendent Read came over to take charge of Hughes. The *Pinafore* hadn't yet returned from its earlier trip to the quarantine station but they expected to see her any minute.

As the 'bus headed next for Botany Road, the rain set in. Unfortunately Cook and his companion were forced to ride on the top of the 'bus where they were exposed to the rain. The thought of several more hours in the rain was all Cook needed on top of his cold.

They reached the warehouse in Botany Road where the constable on duty came out to meet them. He led them upstairs to where Won Ping was lying and they organised Ah Home and another man to carry Won Ping down to the 'bus. His companions climbed in after him. By this time the streets had turned to slush and the horses made slow work of the return trip back to Cowper's Wharf. The *Pinafore* was there when they arrived, tied up at the wharf with the long boat behind. The superintendent took charge of the men and ordered the Chinese to carry Won Ping from the 'bus to the *Pinafore's* engine room, where they were to join John Hughes.

Now there was one more trip to go. First they went via George Street, where Mr Shying the undertaker had a coffin loaded onto a cart. The undertaker's men who were waiting outside, hitched the cart to the back of the 'bus before climbing on board. They would come with the 'bus to Surry Hills and from there back down to Cowper's Wharf to load the coffin onto the long boat.

Things had gone smoothly up to this point, but that was all about to change. Nora Rout, the wife of the dead man, was very distressed when they arrived at her house. She told them she'd been waiting all afternoon for the doctor who was supposed to come and issue her husband's death certificate. But no one had been anywhere near the house and she and James Keene had been left alone with no idea what was going on.

When he realised the situation, Cook took James Keene to one side. 'You realise there's not a hope in hell of getting a doctor to visit the house. The best thing to do is to let us go in and remove the body, then we can get you over to the quarantine station. Do you think you could persuade Mrs Rout to let these men get on with the job?'

'Don't worry, I think I can talk her round.'

But when Keene went to Nora Rout to try and explain the situation, she still refused to budge. 'You told me what the police said this afternoon – they promised to get a doctor to see him.'

Cook decided to intervene. 'Mrs Rout, you could be here on your own for days and still not get a doctor to come. Why not let us remove the body so we can get you over there with your children?'

The reference to her children seemed to do the trick. James Keene led her off to the kitchen so Cook could get the gravediggers in to bring the body down from the attic. First they brought the coffin inside and laid it open in the hallway. Then one of the men took a brandy bottle from the pocket of his overcoat and took a swig.

'You'd better go easy on that stuff,' Cook said as the man passed the bottle to his mate.

'Don't worry,' the first man said. 'There's no way we're going to do this sober.' The two of them marched upstairs.

As Cook stood waiting in the hall, he could hear them banging about in the attic. There was a good deal of swearing and cursing before they appeared at the top of the stairs with Rout's body wrapped in a filthy sheet. The next stage was to get it down the narrow stairs and there was a good

deal more swearing and cursing before they got it into the hall. Then one of the men rushed outside and started to retch. As the smell hit him Cook felt his own stomach heave and he had to go outside as well. He stayed there while they placed the body in the coffin and added some quicklime before they closed the lid and nailed it down.

This time when they passed the brandy bottle, Cook didn't say a word. Once they'd fortified themselves, the men each took one end of the coffin and staggered outside and down the steps. As they were loading the coffin onto the cart Cook went to the kitchen to fetch the others. He helped them into the back of the 'bus, then climbed back up onto the roof. The two gravediggers followed.

By the time the 'bus got back to the wharf, Cook was soaked to the skin. He was ready to call it a night but they still had one more trip to do.



### Thursday evening, College Street

Michael Clune was completely exhausted after what had been a tumultuous day. Following his chance encounter with Dr Alleyne, he'd gone straight home to talk to Annie. As he had anticipated she didn't take the news of his prospective incarceration well at all. More than anything she was angry with him for having got himself caught up in the epidemic. There was little he could say in his defence, other than to remind his wife that Nora Rout was one of his patients and had every right to expect his help.

Around four o'clock that afternoon he had a visit from a police inspector, who came to tell him of a change of plan: he and Dr Caffyn wouldn't be going to the quarantine station until the next morning. When she heard this Annie's mood improved.

That night she helped him to pack his things. With no idea how long he'd be gone, he filled two trunks with clothing and linen, a spare pair of boots, some medical books and instruments, medicines, stationery, and a journal to help him keep track of events. Meanwhile Annie packed some food, including dried fruit, nuts, cheese and biscuits, and some powdered milk which she knew he detested. When he told her to leave it out, she insisted on packing it just in case there was no fresh milk at the quarantine station.

He wasn't in the mood to argue. There was still so much to do before he could even think about bed. As he was packing Annie asked him questions. What should she do about the mortgage? Should they tell their daughter where he was going? Did he want her to let his parents know? Several times she broke down in tears out of concern both for her husband and for herself and their daughter as well. In the seven years since they were married they hadn't spent a night apart.

'Don't worry,' he said to reassure her. 'I'll find some way to get back to Sydney. I promise I won't be gone for long.'

At least Annie wasn't angry with him: he couldn't bear to see her upset. He loved his young wife very much and was extremely protective

towards her. Several times since their daughter was born Annie had fallen pregnant again, only to suffer a miscarriage a few months into the pregnancy. Each time this happened it broke her heart and Clune had to hold himself together in order to support her through it. Much as he would have liked more children, he couldn't bear to see her suffer.

Annie was already dressed for bed when they heard someone knocking at the door. Clune went out to see who it was, and found himself face to face with a man who introduced himself as a plain clothes detective. Outside on the street, Clune could see two uniformed constables who'd accompanied the detective.

'Superintendent Read sent me to fetch you. He's been expecting you at Cowper's Wharf.'

'But a police inspector came by the house this afternoon to tell me that I wouldn't be going until the morning.'

'That's not what the superintendent said. He's expecting you down at the wharf tonight.'

At this point Annie Clune appeared, with a shawl draped over her night attire. 'Is there something wrong?' she said.

The last thing Clune wanted was a confrontation between the detective and his wife. 'Annie, please wait inside.'

But she stood her ground. 'Who is this man? What's going on?'

'Mrs Clune,' the detective said, 'I'm very sorry to disturb you like this but your husband is expected at Cowper's Wharf. The steamer has been held up waiting for him.'

Clune saw the stricken look on her face and was suddenly furious with the detective. 'Look here, you can't just turn up like this and expect me to leave at the drop of a hat. I suggest you go back to your superintendent and tell him I'll be ready to leave in the morning.'

But the detective stood his ground. 'If you refuse to come with me, I've been given orders to take you by force.'

Clune glanced at the constables waiting outside. It was obvious that the detective meant business. 'Very well,' he said, 'but I will need some time to finish my packing.'

The detective agreed to give him some time and Clune took Annie back inside. By this time she was beside herself. 'Why didn't you stand up to him? They have no right to push you around like this.'

'You heard what the detective said. Do you really want to see me arrested?'

It was difficult to calm her down, especially when he was trying to pack. Finally he was ready to leave and he took Annie in his arms. There were tears in his eyes as they said goodbye. 'Remember what I told you,' he said. 'I promise I'll be back very soon.'

He heard her sobbing as she watched him go.

When Clune arrived at the wharf with the detective, he was surprised by the number of people about. There were at least a dozen uniformed police, as well as boatmen from the *Pinafore*, and a group of bystanders who'd gathered to watch as the *Pinafore* was loaded with goods, including a number of empty coffins.

Clune was standing beside the two heavy trunks when he saw Superintendent Read making a beeline in his direction.

'My men will take care of those for you,' the superintendent said.

Clune was just about to try a last appeal to the superintendent when Read spotted Dr Caffyn and headed off in his direction.

As he stood there unsure of what to do, Clune became aware of an argument taking place nearby. Curious, he went to take a look and recognised Shying the undertaker, who was being abused by two rough-looking men, one of whom was obviously drunk. It was then that Clune

noticed the coffin, still on the cart attached to the bus. When he heard someone mention Edward Rout's name everything fell into place. So Edward Rout had passed away and it was his body which lay in the coffin. But what was all the fuss about?

As he watched the scene unfold, the more vocal of the two drunken men hurled an empty bottle at Mr Shying. The bottle only just missed its mark but it seemed to have the desired effect as Mr Shying reached into his pocket and handed some money to a constable nearby, who disappeared up the street. He soon returned with a bottle of brandy which he handed to one of the men. The man put the bottle in his pocket, and glaring at the undertaker, he and his mate took the coffin from the cart and carried it to the side of the wharf. For the next ten minutes the onlookers watched as the two men struggled with the coffin, trying to get it into the long boat. At one point it seemed to Clune that the coffin might end up on the harbour floor, but they somehow managed to get it on board. Once they positioned the coffin in the middle of the longboat, the men climbed aboard as well and proceeded to sit on top of the coffin where they passed the brandy bottle between them.

Now that the drama was apparently over, the crowd dispersed and attention turned to loading the last items onto the steamer. Clune checked his fob watch. It was close to midnight and it looked like the rain had set in for the night. It was time for him to board the steamer.

The *Pinafore* was quite a small vessel – it was only about thirty feet long – and as he went down the steps into the cabin he was hit by the blast of heat from the boiler. In the dim light from the kerosene lamp, he recognised Dr Caffyn sitting on one of the two wooden benches. As Clune went over to sit beside him, he saw Nora Rout on the opposite bench beside a man he recognised as one of her lodgers. She was drawn and tired and looked at him with the barest flicker of recognition. He inclined his head towards to her as he sat down.

As the four of them sat there lost in their thoughts one of the boatmen came down the stairs and went to the doorway to the engine room.

As he pulled the blanket aside Clune was startled to catch a glimpse of John Hughes who appeared to be sleeping where he sat leaning up against the hull. What on earth was he doing here? In the red glow from the boiler's furnace Clune caught a glimpse of some Chinese men before the blanket fell back into place.

The steamer was moving. As they glided into the night Clune's thoughts turned to the longboat trailing behind, with Nora's husband in the coffin and the two drunken gravediggers sitting on top. It was hard to believe this was happening to him.

### Thursday night, quarantine station

Carroll's mind was still churning over the day's events when he went to bed. It was much later than his normal bedtime, but the boatload of stores from Sydney hadn't arrived until after dark and he and his son had to go back down to the jetty after their tea to get the stores in out of the rain. His left hip and knee were aching badly: it was a long time since he'd had to do so much walking in the one day. He climbed into bed and his feet sought out the warmth of his wife's ample calves.

As he lay in bed unable to sleep he wondered about the new arrivals, up there in the hospital enclosure. The pavilion was a cold old place. Perhaps he should have taken them the makings for a cup of tea, but there hadn't been time. Still, it wouldn't hurt them to go without – they'd soon get used to the ways of the place.

The rain was pattering on the roof. He turned on his side and moved closer to his wife who was snoring softly. He was glad for her warmth.

He had no idea how long he'd been sleeping when he was woken by his barking dog. For a moment he lay there, undecided as to whether or not to get out of bed. Sometimes the bandicoots upset the dog. Then he thought he heard someone calling his name. He got up and felt his way through the dark. One of the boatmen from the *Pinafore* was on the doorstep with his lantern. He'd been sent by Captain Maher to fetch Carroll back down to the jetty. They'd brought back another boatload of people who were waiting to be taken to their quarters. They'd been down there for close to an hour already.

'What time is it?' Carroll said, annoyed at being hauled out of bed at some ungodly hour of the night.

'It must be half after one in the morning. 'We would have got here sooner, only we couldn't get away. But I thought you'd been told to expect us? You could have at least left a lantern burning, it was pitch black down there when we arrived.'

'Wait here for me,' Clune said and went back inside to get dressed.

It was still raining as they made their way down the hill. As they walked, Carroll asked the boatman to describe to him who was on board this time. There were five Chinamen the boatman told him, one of whom had the smallpox. There was one other smallpox case as well, a man named Hughes.

They could all go on the *Faraway*, Carroll decided. 'Anyone else?'

'Yes, there's Mrs Rout. Her husband's the one that died of smallpox. He's been brought over in a coffin. Then there's her lodger, Mr Keene. Both their families are in the enclosure already. There are two doctors on board as well.'

As the two men approached the jetty Captain Maher came out to meet them. He was upset about the drunken gravediggers who'd staggered ashore and passed out cold on the sand. When the captain was unable to rouse the men to unload the coffin from the longboat, he tried to get his boatmen to do it but they didn't want to touch the coffin for fear of being infected with smallpox. Another argument had broken out and was only brought to a halt when Mrs Rout appeared on deck, concerned to see what the fuss was about. When she heard them arguing over the coffin she became quite distressed, so much so that the boatmen relented. Not only did they transfer the coffin ashore, but they took it up to the burial ground. They hadn't yet returned from their task.

'But I'm warning you,' the captain said, 'that's as much as they're prepared to do. The gravediggers will have to do the rest, and it's supposed to be done tonight. You can't leave that coffin lying about.'

'I realise that,' Carroll said. 'But the burial will have to wait until we get these other people settled.' He decided to get the group together who were staying in the hospital enclosure and get them fixed up with some bedding. Once they were assembled on the jetty, Carroll looked them over briefly. Both the doctors had brought large trunks. 'You'll have to leave those for the morning unless you're prepared to carry them yourself.' Then without giving them time to argue, he set off, beckoning them to follow.

The new arrivals followed behind as he led them up to the enclosure to show them where they would be staying, then took them back down to the store to collect their bedding for the night. To his annoyance both the doctors demanded bed linen and some towels. He told them what he'd told the others: there were no towels or linen in the store, they'd have to be ordered in from Sydney.

'What about some drinking water?' one of them asked.

'There's a rainwater tank attached to the cottage,' Carroll said as he showed them to the door.

He sent them to find their own way to the enclosure, while he went back down to *Pinafore* to get Hughes and the Chinamen off the steamer and onto the hulk anchored out in the cove. By this time the captain was losing patience, it was past two o'clock and his boatmen were tired.

'Can't we leave these men on board for now and get them to the *Faraway* in the morning?'

'No, we'd best get it over and done with.' Carroll stayed on board the steamer as the captain steered them out into the cove. Just as they were leaving, John Hughes came up onto the deck. 'Where are we going?' he said. 'I thought I'd be staying with my wife and children – they came over yesterday afternoon.'

'You must be Hughes,' Carroll said. 'From what I've been told you've got the smallpox. You'll have to go and stay on the hulk.'

'No way! Do I look like I've got the smallpox to you?' He began to unbutton his shirt, but Carroll interrupted him.

'You can talk to Dr Walsh in the morning. He'll get you sorted out.'

By now they were alongside the *Faraway*, and Carroll began calling out to Walsh. It was some time before the doctor appeared. While they waited, Carroll sent the captain down to bring the Chinese up from the engine room and get them onto the landing platform that was attached to the *Faraway*. As soon as Walsh appeared on deck with his lantern, Carroll left them to it, and the *Pinafore* headed back to the jetty. Once Carroll had



disembarked, the captain headed back into the cove and lowered the anchor for what was left of the night.

Carroll now faced his final task which was to try and rouse the gravediggers from where they'd passed out on the beach and get them to go and bury Rout. He found them and nudged at them with his boot. 'Come on you two,' he growled. 'There's a body waiting to be buried.'

They began to stir and eventually he got them on their feet, and led them up through the pouring rain to the burial ground at the top of the hill. Once they found where the boatmen had left the coffin, Carroll gave them a broken spade and prepared to leave them to dig the grave.

'We were told the grave would be dug already,' one of the men grumbled to Carroll.

'Well you were told wrong,' Carroll said.

'How are we supposed to dig with this?' the other man said as he held up the shovel with its broken handle.

'You'll have to do the best you can,' Carroll said. 'Whatever happens, I want that coffin buried by the time I come back.' With that he walked off and left them to it. He couldn't wait to get back to bed.

## **Quarantine Station – first week**

**Friday morning, hospital enclosure**

Michael Clune opened his eyes and looked around. For a moment or two he was confused, unable to recognise his surroundings. Then as he lay on the hard little bed, the events of the previous day came flooding back – the late-night summons by the detective, the macabre scene at Cowper’s Wharf, the ghostly trip across the harbour and the long wait at the jetty for the superintendent. The final straw was when he found he had no one to help him fetch his trunks. At some ungodly hour of the morning, he’d struggled to carry them one at a time up from the jetty to the enclosure.

Now it seemed he’d caught a chill: he had a temperature and every muscle in his body was sore. But it was no wonder he was feeling so poorly. The blankets were still damp from being exposed to the rain the night before. He pulled on his boots and overcoat and went outside. There were toilets on the hillside overlooking the water, and after he’d been to relieve himself, he went across to the large pavilion where he could hear the sound of voices. Inside he found a large group of people, there must have been twenty or more, it was hard to tell as some of them were still in bed.

He recognised Mrs Keene, one of the lodgers from Nora Rout’s place, who was making her way towards him. She was worried, she told him, and wondered if he could help them out, since none of them had had anything to eat or drink – other than food they’d brought themselves – since they’d arrived the day before. Could the doctor talk to Carroll for them?

Clune was tempted to tell her the details of his own sorry plight, but stopped himself. At least he’d had a decent meal at home with his wife the night before. He would see what he could find out, he said.

He left the pavilion and went to the gate that led down to the cove and Carroll’s store. To his surprise the gate was locked. Undeterred, he followed the double paling fence – which had obviously been built to prevent escape – in the hope of finding another way out. He soon came across a second gate, but to his dismay it too was locked. Frustrated, he marched back to the cottage where Dr Caffyn was still in bed, and shook him awake.

‘What is it?’ Dr Caffyn said.

'I think you should see what's going on. I had no idea we'd be treated like this, it's little better than a prison. Do you realise that the gates are locked, that there's now way we can get out of here?'

Caffyn sat up and rubbed his eyes. Like Clune he'd slept fully clothed and his suit was much the worse for wear. 'What time is it?'

'After seven.'

'So what are you suggesting we do?'

'We should write a letter to the Colonial Secretary, to tell him what's going on over here. This can't be right.'

'I should make myself decent, I suppose,' Caffyn said as he yawned and stretched. 'Why don't you go and begin the letter? I'll join you shortly to lend you a hand.'

Michael Clune went to his room and took out some notepaper and a bottle of ink. He set himself up on one of his trunks, and began to write.

Dear Sir,

We would like to protest in the strongest terms at the decision to send us to the quarantine station. We find ourselves sent over here in great haste and with little warning. How this decision came to pass has not yet been adequately explained to us. Rather, we were informed of the matter by the Police Superintendent yesterday afternoon. On what grounds we have been treated thus, we remain entirely ignorant. Nor have we been informed as to how we will be compensated.

We are also dismayed at the appalling conditions we find here in the quarantine grounds. When we first arrived it was well after midnight, and there was not a soul at the jetty to meet us. It was raining and we were very tired, but we were forced to wait for more than an hour while someone went to fetch Mr Carroll. It seems the superintendent was sleeping. He informed us later that he had not been told to expect our arrival.

Notwithstanding, he took us up to the hospital enclosure and showed us to our sleeping quarters. There was no one to carry our trunks for us and

to make matters worse we were forced to go down in the pouring rain to fetch our own bedding from the store. We were then informed by the superintendent that there were no sheets or towels for us to use. I couldn't even get a drink of water.

Then this morning when we went to speak to some of the families in the enclosure, we found that none of them had eaten since they left their homes yesterday afternoon. When they tried to speak to the superintendent, he insisted there would be nothing to eat until the arrival of the ration boat some time later today, and that he'd had insufficient warning to get provisions sent from Sydney.

May we respectfully suggest that you make urgent enquiries into these matters.

In addition, since the two of us have been brought here entirely against our will, we would be grateful if you could take the necessary steps to arrange for our immediate release.

We trust you will expedite matters and anticipate your earliest reply.

Yours, etc.

He blotted the page and read it through before showing the letter to Caffyn, who skimmed through it quickly, then signed with a flourish.

'Well put,' he said, handing it back. 'One question: how do you propose to post it?'

Clune was perplexed. He hadn't even thought about it. 'I suppose I'll have to give it to Carroll. He put the letter aside for the moment, and decided it was time to clean himself up. He went back to his room and opened the trunk that contained his razor and shaving gear, as well as a toothbrush and paste, a face flannel and a towel. Using water from the tank attached to the cottage he washed and shaved as best he could. There was no mirror or wash stand so he shaved by feel, trying not to nick his sideburns or to miss any whiskers as he shaved. Once he'd finished, he changed his shirt and socks. He was beginning to feel better already.

He went back outside, curious to see if anyone had managed to get a fire going – more than anything he craved a cup of tea. There was no sign of

a fire, however, and he went back over to try the gate. He got there just as Carroll arrived.

The superintendent let himself in and Clune followed him to the pavilion. 'Dr Caffyn and I would like to know why we appear to be prisoners here? Can you tell me why you've locked all the gates?'

'It's the regulations,' Carroll said. 'We can't have people wandering about, not when some of them could have the smallpox.'

'But where do you think we're likely to go? We're miles from anywhere over here.'

Carroll shrugged. 'Why don't I get you the regulations, and you can see for yourself.'

As Carroll was about to walk off, Clune followed him, intent on getting some answers to the conditions under which they were being kept. 'Why isn't there any food provided? You must realise there are women and children in that pavilion who haven't eaten since yesterday morning.'

At that point Carroll turned on him. 'Look, nobody warned me they were coming. Am I supposed to be a mind reader or something? As I told those people last night, the ration boat will be here later on.'

Clune decided that now was the time to give the letter to the superintendent. 'Dr Caffyn and I have written a letter. We'd like you to send it to Sydney for us.'

Carroll held the envelope away from him as he read the address. 'What's this about, then?' he demanded, clearly suspicious of the contents.

'It's a request to secure our release. Since we've both been sent her under duress, we're anxious to get back to Sydney – as I'm sure you can imagine.'

Carroll gave him a peculiar look as he slipped the letter into his pocket. 'Very well. I'll attend to it by and by.'

Later that morning, Clune went back down to the pavilion to see if any food had arrived. It hadn't, but he was pleased to hear that at least Carroll had unlocked the gate to allow the men to fetch some firewood from an old wreck down on the beach. Not only that, but he must have spoken to the police as

well, since they'd stopped by to drop off some coffee, some enamel mugs and some powdered milk.

Once the men from the pavilion had a campfire going, Mrs Keene came to invite Clune to join them for a cup of coffee. He accepted gladly and took from his trunk some dried fruit and biscuits that Annie had packed, to share with the people from the pavilion. It was only as he sat to drink his coffee that he realised that there'd been no sign of Dr Caffyn. It was Mrs Keene who told him that a contingent of police had arrived that morning to take up residence in the grounds. Several of them came to see Dr Caffyn, who'd gone with them on the *Pinafore* to bring back another smallpox victim.

**Friday morning, *Faraway***

John Hughes had woken early that morning to find himself in strange surroundings. The slapping of waves against the hull soon reminded him where he was. He looked around the gloomy compartment. Won Ping, the man who had the smallpox, was on a mattress on the floor nearby. He appeared to still be sleeping, thanks to the dose of opium that Ah Home gave him the night before. There were others still asleep as well.

Hughes went up onto the deck and relieved himself over the side of the hulk. Then he made his way to the galley where Ah Home had lit the stove and already had the billy boiling. Ah Home immediately offered Hughes a steaming mug of tea. He took it gladly: the hot drink would do him the world of good.

With the scalding brew in hand, Hughes went to explore his new surroundings. They were on the foredeck of an old timber barque which still had its masts intact, though there was no sign of any sails. They were about two hundred yards from shore, and from where he was standing Hughes could see the jetty and Carroll's store. Above the jetty he could also make out several buildings on the headland surrounded by a high paling fence. He could even see people moving about, and wondered if this was where Sarah and the children were staying.

He finished off his cup of tea and decided to look for Dr Walsh, the man who'd met them when they arrived and shown them to their sleeping quarters. He found the doctor asleep in the cabin, and stood in the doorway and cleared his throat several times before Walsh sat up with a start. 'Who are you?' he barked. He was unshaven and obviously in need of a bath: the smell of the cabin was very stale.

'Don't you remember?' Hughes said. 'I came on board with the others last night – you haven't forgotten already, have you?'

Walsh looked at him with bloodshot eyes. 'I thought you were a Chinaman, that's why I sent you to the forward section. You'd better move up here with me, there's a compartment between decks where you can bunk down.' He pointed to the open hatch, and Hughes went down to take a look.



The stench hit him straight away, but this time it was more than unwashed bodies, it was the smell of human excrement, and the terrible smell of sickness and death. He opened the windows on either side to try and get some air into the place. The compartment itself was large enough. There were single beds along both sides, each of them with a mattress and blankets.

He went back up to speak to Walsh, who was sitting smoking a pipe. 'So what's your story?' Walsh said to Hughes. 'You don't look all that sick to me.'

'Nor should I,' Hughes said, and told Walsh the story of what had happened since his visit to the doctor a few days before.

Walsh seemed very sympathetic, but when Hughes asked what his chances were of going to stay with his wife and children, the doctor shook his head. 'There's no way Carroll will allow it, not once you've been on board this thing.'

'Why not?' Hughes said in alarm. 'The only reason I agreed to come to the quarantine station in the first place was so that I could be with my wife and children. I wouldn't have come here otherwise.'

'That's too bad,' Walsh said. 'I tell you what, do you know how to cook?'

'What's that got to do with it?'

'Do you think you could cook a steak?'

Hughes shrugged. 'I suppose so, if I had to.'

'Then you can cook for the two of us. You needn't worry, you'll be paid for this. I just have to let Mr Carroll know and he'll take care of the details for you.'

Walsh took Hughes into the galley which was located just behind the cabin. It was a pokey little kitchen, and wasn't very well-equipped but there was a fuel stove and an oven, and several pots and pans of various sizes.

The bench was covered in dirty dishes and a frypan thickly coated with grease sat on the equally greasy stove.

That day Hughes asked a lot of questions. He was keen to learn whatever he could about the layout of the grounds and where his wife and children might be. From time to time he went out on the deck and scanned the shore for signs of his family. Despite Walsh's earlier comments, he hadn't given up on the possibility of moving to shore. But when he told Walsh what he had in mind, which was to try and talk to the superintendent, the doctor tried to warn him against it. 'There's no point asking, I can tell you that now. You may as well save your breath. I've been on this hulk for the past six weeks and not once in that time have I set foot on shore.'

**Friday afternoon, hospital enclosure**

For Clune the events of the past few days had taken a toll and as soon as he'd finished his coffee he excused himself and went back to the cottage. He had no idea how long he'd been sleeping when he was woken by Carroll.

'This just came for you,' Carroll said, handing him a small wooden crate. Then he propped himself in the doorway, obviously curious to see the contents. Clune deliberately put the box aside.

'Aren't you going to open it, then?' Carroll said, sounding surprised.

'No, not now. It will wait.'

Carroll soon took the hint and left him alone. As soon as he'd gone, Clune took a pen knife from his trunk and prised the box open. Inside he found a half dozen eggs, a bottle of brandy, two bottles of port, and a tin of home-made oatmeal biscuits. There was a note inside which read, 'I thought you might appreciate these'. It was signed by a medical colleague in Sydney.

His spirits lifted. Others had obviously heard of his plight. He ate a couple of the biscuits and then took some down to Mrs Keene. There was still no sign of the ration boat and the children were famished. As it turned out the ration boat didn't arrive until mid-afternoon.

Later on that afternoon as the temperature was beginning to drop, Clune decided to light a fire to warm the cottage for the night. He went out to gather some kindling and with some of the wood brought up from the wreck, set to work on building a fire. But the wood was damp from the recent rain and wouldn't catch light. He went out in search of some better kindling.

He returned to the cottage to find Dr Caffyn had just come back from Sydney. 'Here, let me help with that,' Caffyn said, and before Clune could say a word, reached out to take the bundle of kindling. As he squatted to re-arrange the fire he told Clune about his afternoon, and how he'd gone with the police to Cumberland Street to pick up Mr and Mrs Guildford. Jane Guildford was the woman with smallpox who'd been under observation for most of that week.

'You wouldn't credit the number of people who came to stand outside and gawk,' Caffyn said as he rearranged the kindling. 'There must have been a hundred or more – not that there was much to look at, her husband had her wrapped in a blanket.' Caffyn stood and stretched, then looked at Clune. 'I tell you what, why don't I take care of the fire while you go down and help Mrs Guildford?'

Clune frowned. 'I thought you'd been assigned to look after her?'

'Come on, now, do be a sport, I've been with the woman for most of the day.'

Clune was hesitant. There was something about Caffyn's manner that put him on edge, but he couldn't put his finger on what it was. Grudgingly he put on his coat. 'Where is she, then?'

'I left them both at the ward.'

Clune went down to investigate and found Mrs Guildford still on her stretcher on the ground outside. What had possessed Caffyn to leave her lying out in the cold like this? He could at least have stuck around until she was safely inside the ward. Clune went to take a look at her, but was careful not to touch her. Just like Edward Rout, she was suffering from confluent smallpox. Her chances of survival were grim.

He didn't linger by the body but went to the window of the ward, and peered inside. The ward had been divided in two by a thin partition which had several holes so you could see through to the other side. Inside a man he presumed was George Guildford was busy making up a bed. Clune went in to introduce himself to Guildford, a man of about his own age but taller and slightly overweight.

'What happened to Dr Caffyn, then,' Guildford said after the introduction as he continued to make up a bed.

'He said he was tired and needed a rest and asked me to take over for a while.'

'A rest!' Guildford snorted. 'Now that really takes the cake.'

Clune looked at him sharply. 'What do you mean?'

'I don't know why they bothered to send him, he didn't lift a finger to help.'

When Clune was silent, Guildford continued, relating how he'd first met Caffyn when he'd come to the house in Cumberland Street to check on his wife the previous day. 'Before he would even come into the house, he made everyone go to the sitting room and shut the door. Then he raced through the house and down the back stairs as though the devil was behind him.

'I was under the house with my wife. We moved her down there when she first got sick, to keep her away from all the others.'

As he talked Guildford went to up a second bed which he began to make up for himself.

'When I heard him coming down the stairs I had no idea who it was at first. So I went to the door to see what he wanted, and he looked as if he'd seen a ghost. Get back!" he says, and waves his stick, and then he was off, back up the stairs and out the front door. He didn't even look at my wife.'

This was sounding familiar to Clune who hadn't forgotten what had happened the day he took Caffyn to visit the Routs. 'And what about today?' he prompted.

'I was told he'd been sent to give me a hand but he just stood back and let me carry her up the back stairs, through the house and outside to where the 'bus was waiting. I very nearly dropped her twice when my foot got tangled in the blankets, but Caffyn didn't lift a finger. Then when we got down to the wharf instead of offering me a hand, he bolted and left me on my own. When I managed to get her into the cabin, I went to lay her on one of the benches. And do you know what that so-and-so said? He said, "Why don't you shove her under the seat?"

'As God is my witness, that's what he said. I wanted to flatten the mongrel – if it wasn't for the captain I would have.'

Clune opened both the windows while Guildford went out to fetch his wife. He brought her in and placed her on one of the beds. 'I suggest you keep the windows open,' Clune said as he prepared to leave. 'The fresh air will do her good. I'll be back later to check on you both.'

By the time Clune got back to the cottage the fire was well and truly alight. He headed over to warm himself, but as soon as Caffyn saw him he grabbed the metal pump beside him and began to spray Clune from head to toe. Clune recognised the smell – it was a mixture of carbolic solution – and tried to shield his face but Caffyn was like a man possessed and kept pumping the thing in his direction.

As the fumes got into his eyes and nose Clune felt like he was about to choke. The only option was to retreat to his room and close the door, but even then he could still hear Caffyn pumping the spray outside the door. He sat on the bed and mopped at his face. What was Caffyn trying to prove?

It was very clear to Clune that he had to get himself out of there and get back to Sydney as fast as he could. In the meantime he would have to keep his distance from the ward and from anyone who was infected with smallpox. That way he wouldn't compromise his chances of returning to Sydney. Whatever happened he mustn't do anything that might be used to prevent his release.

That night before he went to bed he made a brandy eggnog for Mrs Guildford, and took it back down to the ward, along with some biscuits and port for her husband. He passed them to Guildford through the window, then went to fetch a bucket of water which he left for the couple outside the door.

**Saturday morning, hospital enclosure**

The following morning Clune woke early but for some time he continued to lie in bed – at least that way he could keep himself warm – but his mind was working overtime. He decided to get up and check on the Guildfords. As soon as he appeared at the window, George Guildford got up and came over to see him. The poor man was in a wretched state and said he'd been up for most of the night.

'What do you think the chances are of someone coming to give me a break?'

Clune didn't know how to respond. He wasn't about to offer himself, not if he wanted to get back to Sydney. On impulse he decided to level with Guildford about his plans. He had to stay out of the ward, he said, it was his only chance of being released. To his immense relief, Guildford seemed to understand, especially once he heard Clune's story about how he'd been threatened with arrest if he refused to come to the quarantine station.

Relieved that Guildford understood, Clune promised to try and get him some help and in the meantime gave him detailed instructions on how best to take care of his wife. It was important to sponge her from head to toe, several times a day at least, to try and try and reduce the intense discomfort that she would be feeling from all the lesions. In addition, she should be kept upright in bed to stop fluid building up in her lungs.

Once he'd explained the procedures to Guildford, Clune went to fetch him a bowl of warm water and mixed in some carbolic acid. This should be used to bathe the skin and keep the lesions from turning septic.

As soon as he finished down at the ward he began to walk back to the cottage. He glanced across to the cove where a small steam launch was approaching the jetty, presumably bringing more supplies. Outside the pavilion several people sat by the campfire, and he stopped to speak to Mrs Keene who was toasting some bread over the fire. She invited him to join them for breakfast and he gladly sat down by the fire. Despite the fact that the bread was coarse and he didn't like powdered milk in his tea, once he'd

eaten he felt so much better. After breakfast he went back to the cottage to freshen himself up for the day.

Since the confrontation with Caffyn the previous evening, he'd done his best to avoid his colleague and was relieved to see Caffyn's door was closed. It looked like he was still in bed. Clune took care of his ablutions then made up his bed and jotted some notes in his journal on all that had happened since his arrival. Then he set to work with linseed meal and calico from his doctor's bag and made up some poultices for Mrs Guildford.

As he made his way back down to the ward he was surprised to see Dr Caffyn outside the gate that led to the cove. His suspicions were immediately aroused. 'Where've you been?' he demanded.

Caffyn was clearly embarrassed. 'I've just been speaking to Dr Alleyne. Now that Mrs Guildford is here, the healthy contacts will have to be moved. He's asked me to take them to the healthy ground.'

Clune felt a sense of panic. 'Dr Alleyne was here? I thought he was supposed to be sick.'

'I believe he decided to come back early since Dr Goode was out his depth. At any rate he came to tell me that I'm to take charge of the healthy ground. He's put you in charge of the hospital enclosure.'

'But that's absurd,' Clune said. 'Where is he? I have to see him.'

Caffyn pointed towards the cove. 'You might just catch him if you're lucky.'

When Clune went to the fence he could see Alleyne talking to Carroll outside the store.

'Alleyne!' he called out.

Both men looked up in surprise.

'I must speak to you,' Clune called out. 'You've got to let me go back to Sydney.'



There was a strong breeze blowing and it was apparent to Clune that the health officer couldn't hear him clearly so he tried again. 'I demand to be returned to Sydney.'

Dr Alleyne turned to speak to Carroll who then yelled something back at him, but he wasn't able to make out the words – only that it was something to do with the hospital enclosure.

'I can't hear you,' Clune called out.

Carroll called back and though Clune only caught part of the message, it was enough. He was to take charge of the hospital enclosure.

'You can't do this to me,' he called out to Alleyne. 'It's not me who should be staying here. You're the health officer, why don't you do it. Why make me do your dirty work?'

Some of his message must have got through because he could tell that Alleyne was angry. The next thing the health officer was stomping off towards the jetty where his launch was waiting.

'Wait!' Clune yelled. 'You can't leave me here.'

But he watched as Alleyne stepped into the launch.

'Please,' he begged, but the damage was done and the launch moved away from the jetty. He watched as it headed out into the cove, back in the direction of Sydney.

Later that morning he went outside to watch as the families from the pavilion began to file past with their rolls of bedding and their few possessions. Caffyn went with them, avoiding Clune's gaze as he passed by the cottage. At that moment Clune felt a surge of hatred. He believed he knew what had really happened, why he'd been left behind to take care of the Guildfords. Caffyn must have noticed the health officer's launch and somehow managed to get down to see him. Whatever it was that Caffyn had said, he'd obviously managed to convince Alleyne that he should take care of the healthy contacts.

Later that morning Carroll appeared with a telegram from Dr Alleyne. As Clune took it he was certain the health officer must have changed his mind about his earlier decision but he couldn't have been further from the truth.

'Your appointment as medical officer in charge of the hospital enclosure for women is hereby confirmed,' the message read.

'You'll have to tell him I can't do this, my health is not up to it,' Clune said to Carroll.

'I can try but I don't think it will do you much good.'

Carroll was back again a short time later with yet another telegram. Once again Clune's hopes were raised but again he was bitterly disappointed. This time Alleyne sent orders for Clune to move from the cottage into a tent to make way for the nurse and cook who were right then on their way from Sydney.

'He can't mean this,' Clune said, still reeling from the earlier events of the day. 'Surely this is some kind of joke?'

But Carroll shook his head. 'Dr Alleyne asked me to tell you that you can choose one of the gravediggers as your manservant. He will help you put up the tent.'

**Saturday afternoon, healthy ground**

Nora Rout and her four children were amongst the group who left the enclosure to take up residence in the healthy ground. As they made their way through the scrub with their rolls of bedding tucked under their arms, she stayed close to Lucy Keene and her family. Ever since Edward's terrible illness the two had become very close.

Dr Caffyn led them into a clearing that faced a row of timber cabins and then turned to address them. 'Those three cabins are for you to use.' He pointed to the ones at the northernmost end. 'The police are using another two and the cabin in the middle will be left empty for now. Any questions?'

There were none, but as he stood back to allow them to decide which families would share with which, no one seemed to know where to start.

It was Mr and Mrs Keats – a couple in their early fifties – who made the first move. They would share a cabin with their three male lodgers, which would add up to a total of eight in all – the couple and their daughters aged eleven and twelve, as well as the Guildfords' four-year-old daughter whom they'd taken under their wing. The idea seemed to make good sense, and suddenly there was an excited babble as the others tried to sort themselves out. Only Nora Rout was silent. She desperately wanted to share a cabin with James and Lucy Keene and their children, but the McKeown's – the young couple and their infant son – had obviously come to the same decision. Aside from Nora and her children, that only left Mrs Hughes and her six. That meant ten children in all.

As the others rushed off to lay claim to their cabins the two women stood and looked at each other. Then Sarah Hughes smiled. 'Let's hope this lot can get along.'

Nora Rout attempted a smile but it was difficult to hide her disappointment. 'I suppose we should go and see what's left,' she said quietly. As they gathered all their children together she looked around for Dr Caffyn but he seemed to have slipped away. She was relieved. She hadn't forgotten the way he behaved the day he came to check on her husband and

how he refused to come inside the house. If Edward had decent medical care, perhaps he needn't have died after all.

With her eldest daughter Lizzie taking her by the hand they followed Sarah Hughes up to the only cabin that remained, at the end furthest from the enclosure. The younger children rushed ahead and were already bouncing on the beds by the time the two women entered the room. The inside of the cabin was a bit of a shock. It was little better than a shed, cold and draughty with no fireplace or curtains and little furniture apart from the beds. They put down their bedrolls and went outside to see where the cookhouse and toilets were.

There were two cookhouses to service the cabins, situated at either end. The one closest to Nora Rout's cabin was an old timber hut with a stone chimney that had begun to crumble away. Inside apart from the stove, there was a meat safe and a wooden bench. The only cooking utensils were a couple of dirty old cooking pots and a frying pan that had seen better days.

'How are we all going to manage with these?' Sarah Hughes said, picking up the frying pan that was coated in a thick layer of grease. 'Surely they can do better than this.'

Nora Rout didn't know what to say. She was too tired, and after all that had happened in the past few days everything threatened to overwhelm her. 'I think I'd better go and lie down.' She left Lizzie to look after the younger children and walked slowly back to the cabin where she laid one of the bedrolls on a bed and lay down, pulling the blankets up around her chin as she closed her eyes. The children would be safe enough. She just needed time to gather her thoughts: it had only been two days since Edward's death and since then she'd been in a kind of daze, swept along by the tide of events.

Nora found out later from Lizzie that in addition to Mrs Hughes they'd have to share the cookhouse with Mrs Keats and her lodgers from the cabin next door.

'I don't like her,' Lizzie said. 'And Mr Keats is an awful old man. They came to the cookhouse while we were there and told us they should be first in line since they'd got to the cookhouse first.'

**Saturday afternoon, hospital enclosure**

Clune was packing up his things preparing to move out of the cottage when Carroll returned with the gravedigger Livesey. This was the man Clune had observed arguing with Mr Shying at Cowper's Wharf. He was a thin-faced man in his forties with a mouthful of rotten teeth. They went out to choose a site for the tent.

Clune's preference was for a spot on the southern side of the headland well back from the other buildings but Livesey disagreed with his choice, saying it would be too exposed.

'It doesn't matter, this will do,' Clune said since he wasn't planning to be there long. He helped Livesey to erect the tent, then the two of them made several trips to collect his bedding and the trunks. Once everything was in place Clune realised he was feeling hungry and that he'd almost forgotten the Guildfords.

He decided to go straight down to the ward where he found George Guildford bursting with news: the nurse had already been to the ward and planned to start work the following morning. Then Guildford described what had taken place when the nurse was confronted by his wife.

'First she pulls back the covers to have a look – I tried to warn her but she wouldn't listen – then she drops the blankets like a hot potato. "Isn't it awful," she says. She couldn't get away fast enough.'

From Guildford's description Clune was certain that the nurse had never seen smallpox before, which raised the question of vaccination. Could the nurse have put herself at risk? He decided to go and speak to her.

He went down to the nearby cookhouse which until now had been kept under lock and key. It was open and Clune stood at the doorway for a moment to get his bearings. There was a young girl at the table chopping vegetables who must have been about sixteen. Another woman sat at the table with her back to the door. She was reading some papers.

'Nurse Meyler,' Clune said, clearing his throat as he stepped inside to where it was warm and where there was the smell of cooking. It reminded him of home.

'Yes,' the nurse said without looking up.

He went to the table and Nurse Meyler looked up. She was a rather plain woman in her early thirties with a hard little mouth and no trace of a smile.

'Dr Michael Clune,' he said as he pulled out a chair and sat down to join her.

'So doctor, what can we do for you? I suppose you'll be joining us for tea?'

'Of course, but that's not why I've come. I just popped down to see Mr Guildford who tells me that you went into the ward and that you're planning to start work tomorrow morning.'

She nodded.

'May I enquire as to your vaccination status?'

'Of course. We both went to see Dr Egan this morning before we came over on the health officer's launch.'

'So you were only vaccinated today. Was this your first smallpox vaccination?'

'Of course not,' Nurse Meyler said. 'I was vaccinated as a child.'

'And nothing since then, until this morning?'

'Why do you ask?'

'Because today when you went into the ward you had direct physical contact with Mrs Guildford, is that correct?'

'What if it is?'

'Don't you realise you've put yourself at risk? Surely Dr Egan told you that you need to wait at least a week to make sure the vaccination has taken before you go anywhere near the ward.'

Nurse Meyler rolled her eyes to the ceiling. 'Of course. But what Dr Egan also told me was that the fact I've had the scratch before means I probably have some protection already.'

Clune saw the smirk on the face of the cook and flushed.

'Nurse Meyler, this is a serious matter. You saw the state of poor Mrs Guildford. I feel it's my duty to advise you not to go back into the ward until we can be certain that the vaccination has taken.'

'And if I decide to take the risk?'

'Then I shall take the matter to Dr Alleyne.'

'Very well,' the nurse responded, and he wondered at the sudden change of heart. 'I suppose I had better take your advice. But who's going to look after Mrs Guildford while I sit about with nothing to do?'

'Her husband has been able to manage so far, he'll just have to manage for a few more days.'

'And what about you?' the nurse said sharply. 'Why can't you give him a spell?'

The very suggestion horrified Clune. Then against his better judgment he tried to explain how he'd been sent to the quarantine station without his consent and how he was determined to return to Sydney as soon as he could arrange his release. In the meantime, he informed the nurse, he had no intention of entering the ward or of coming in contact with a smallpox case. 'It's the only way I can be certain that I won't have to be detained.'

Nurse Meyler didn't comment and he was suddenly self-conscious. 'Why don't you tell me about yourself,' he said to try and change the subject. 'How did you get caught up in this?'

'Miss Osborn from the Infirmary in Sydney asked if I was prepared to come and look after sick women and children. I said yes. That's all there was to it.'

'That's very admirable of you' Clune said. 'Do you realise you could be kept here for months?'



'I'm sure I'll manage, I usually do. Miss Osborn has asked me to keep in touch, I'm to send her a telegram every day and she says she will send us whatever we need.'

That evening after they'd had their tea Clune went back down to the ward with some laudanum for Mrs Guildford. If she was appropriately sedated her husband might then get a decent rest. But when he broke the news that the nurse wouldn't be starting in the morning as promised, he could see that poor Guildford wasn't too happy. He was tired and starting to feel unwell and desperately in need of a good night's sleep without having to get up and tend to his wife.

Clune felt for him, but didn't back down. There was no point putting the nurse at risk. As for himself, he explained to Guildford, he intended to return to Sydney as soon as he could make the arrangements. In the meantime he couldn't come into the ward but would talk to Guildford through the window.

'Don't worry,' he said. 'Nurse Meyler will be down to check on you and she'll see that you have whatever you need, and the cook will prepare your meals. I'll continue to do whatever I can, at least until a replacement is sent.'

**Saturday evening, The Rocks**

Constable Thomas Cook was suffering dreadfully from the effects of his cold and had gone to the watch house early that evening simply to let the sergeant know that he wouldn't be working the evening shift. To his dismay the sergeant insisted on keeping him there while a doctor was sent for. At first Cook couldn't understand why he needed to see a doctor, then the awful truth dawned on him. 'It's a nasty cold, nothing more.' But all his protests were in vain.

The sergeant ordered one of his men to escort Cook to the inspector's office where he was told to sit and wait. Although Cook was angry – his wife would be wondering where he was – he was so confident the doctor would find nothing wrong he decided to settle down and wait.

An hour or so later Dr Hodgson came and began to ask him a series of questions. How long had he had this cold? Was there a fever at any stage? Had his back been aching at all? And what about headaches? Then the doctor began to examine him, first looking closely at his mouth and throat, then checking his neck and upper torso and listening through a stethoscope to his chest.

'I don't think there's anything to worry about,' Dr Hodgson said, as he packed up his things.

Cook began to button his shirt. 'Does that mean I'll be allowed to go home?'

Dr Hodgson hesitated. 'I still think we need a second opinion, just to be sure. Assuming your first exposure to smallpox only occurred two days ago, the timing doesn't fit with smallpox. It usually takes about fourteen days before the early signs appear.'

'I don't understand. If that's the case why are you insisting that I need to be seen by another doctor?'

'We can't afford to take any chances. Smallpox can be difficult to diagnose, especially in the early stages, and since a sore throat is one of the

signs and your throat is actually quite inflamed I'd rather err on the side of safety than let you leave here and infect someone else.'

'But you just said yourself there's nothing for me to worry about. Why can't I go home to bed?'

Dr Hodgson picked up his bag. 'Once my colleague has been to see you perhaps the sergeant will let you go home.'

Once the doctor had gone, Cook lay down on the wooden bench against the wall and closed his eyes. He was just beginning to doze when he was aware that someone was in the room. He opened his eyes to see one of his colleagues by the door with a long-handled shovel.

'What's that for?' Cook sat up abruptly.

The other man didn't answer but placed the shovel on the floor and set light to a chunk of sulphur which began to smoulder. Then he left the room and locked the door.

Cook was angry and upset. Why were they fumigating the room especially when he was still inside? Then it hit him. They' were assuming he had the smallpox. What had the doctor said to them?

Soon thick smoke filled the room and tears began to stream from his eyes and he began to cough and to struggle for breath. In desperation he dragged the bench and placed it beneath the only window, a small space roughly twelve inches square which was set high up in the wall. He climbed up onto the bench and stayed there until the sulphur had burned down and the smoke had cleared away. He was feeling quite dizzy and sick to the stomach. Exhausted, he lay back down on the bench and drew his overcoat around him.

He was woken by the sound of voices in the corridor outside the office. 'Take him down to the *Pinafore*. He's to go on board the *Faraway*.'

Cook sat up. The *Faraway*! He'd never go on board that rotten hulk, not after all the stories he'd heard. He jumped up and crept across the room

to where two revolvers hung from the wall, each of them in a leather pouch. He took one of the revolvers from its pouch and slipped it inside his overcoat pocket. Then he grabbed some bullets from a drawer in the desk before sitting back down on the bench to wait.

The sergeant came in a short time later. 'Come on,' he said. 'I've got orders to take you to Cowper's Wharf. Do you think you can make it there on foot?'

'Hang on a minute,' Cook protested. 'Why are we going to Cowper's Wharf?'

'Superintendent Read has just sent the order that you're to be taken to the *Faraway*.'

'Wait a moment, that can't be right. Dr Hodgson said I didn't have smallpox but promised to send another doctor. Why can't we wait for a second opinion?'

The sergeant shrugged. 'I only know what I've been told.'

Cook was tempted to use the revolver but he realised this was not the place, not in the watch house. There would be too many other police about and it would be all too easy to overpower him, so he followed the sergeant out of the office.

'What about my wife?' he said. 'Has anyone told her what's going on?'

'Somebody's already been to see her. Your house is under quarantine.'

That sobered Cook up a bit. If he couldn't even get home to his wife, what other options did he have? 'How long will I be in quarantine?'

'I've no idea,' the sergeant said.

Things seemed very quiet outside when he followed the sergeant onto the street. It was cold and he hugged his coat around him. As they walked through the dark, deserted streets, he struggled to come up with some kind of plan. Should he try to escape at Cowper's Wharf? Once again he wasn't sure how many police would be at the wharf but it didn't seem like a good

idea. Perhaps he should use the revolver now before they even got to the wharf, but at this time of night and with nowhere to hide it wouldn't take long for the police to find him. He was no Ned Kelly, that much was certain, and he didn't fancy a life on the run and a hangman's noose at the other end. He'd rather take his own life first.

The captain and crew of the *Pinafore* were waiting on the wharf when Cook arrived. He was taken straight on board so there was no opportunity to try to escape. As the steamer set off across the harbour, he kept trying to come up with some kind of plan. What did they have in mind for him? Would he be taken straight to the *Faraway*? Surely not at this ungodly hour.

Unfortunately he'd never even been to Manly let alone to the quarantine station so he had no idea what to expect. There was only one thing he knew for sure: there was no way they'd get him on board the hulk.

About half an hour later the *Pinafore* slowed and he heard the sound of the anchor chain. Then the captain and crew came downstairs. 'We're going to try and get some sleep,' Captain Maher told him. 'You should get some rest as well.'

'I don't like my chances,' Cook said glumly. 'Do you know when I'll be taken to the *Faraway*?'

The Captain sat on the opposite bench. 'As far as I'm given to understand Mr Carroll the superintendent will be out here first thing in the morning.'

'Then perhaps I ought to warn you now, there's no way I'll be going on that hulk.'

The captain seemed surprised. 'Do you want to tell me what's going on? I must say you don't look too sick to me.'

'Of course I'm not, it's just a cold. But you try telling that to the sergeant. Everyone seems to have lost their marbles.'

The captain got to his feet. 'Sorry but I need to get some rest, we haven't had much sleep these past few days. I suggest you get some rest as

well, and let's see what happens in the morning. If I can find a way to help you I will, I give you my word.'

Once everything was quiet on board, Cook went up onto the deck and tried to get some sense of the place. They were several hundred yards from shore and about the same distance from the *Faraway*. He could make out its masts against the sky. Should he try and swim to shore? He shivered at the thought. He wasn't a very competent swimmer, and besides what was he going to do when he got there? Even if he managed to escape and somehow find his way to Manly, there weren't enough people living there for him to hide from the police.

He went back down into the cabin and stretched out on one of the wooden benches. With his hand resting lightly on the revolver that he had in the pocket of his greatcoat he fell into an uneasy sleep.

He was roused from sleep by the sound of voices. The gentle rocking of the boat and the waves that lapped against the hull soon reminded him where he was. He got up from the bench and went to stand at the foot of the stairs.

'Get him up here.' It was a voice he didn't recognise but he decided this must be the superintendent. Without stopping to think what he planned to do, Cook went charging up on deck. 'You'll not get me on that stinking hulk.'

The superintendent – who was still in his rowboat – seemed surprised by Cook's appearance and even more so by his reaction. 'We'll see about that, my lad,' But he made no attempt to come on board. Instead he began to row back to shore.

An hour or so later he was back with a telegram from Dr Alleyne. 'It's official,' Carroll told Cook. 'You're to be transferred to the *Faraway*.'

'And who do you think is going to make me?' Cook was feeling a little bit cocky since he sensed Carroll's unwillingness to come on board.

For a moment the superintendent seemed stuck for words, but then he said to Cook, 'If that's the way you're going to behave you give me no choice but to take you by force.'

He took up the oars and began to row back towards the jetty once more.

'What do you think he meant by that?' Cook said to the captain as they stood and watched.

'I'd say he's gone to fetch the police.'

While they waited to see what would happen next, Cook took out the revolver to show the captain. 'It looks like I might have to use this.'

The captain was alarmed. 'Are you mad? You'll get yourself hung.'

'What else am I supposed to do? There's no way they'll get me on that filthy old barque.'

Captain Maher reached for the revolver. 'Let me have a look at that.' But Cook pulled it back out of his reach.

'Surely you don't intend to use it?'

'Why not? What have I got to lose?'

'But think about your wife and children. How do you think they're going to feel? There's got to be another way.'

'I've been thinking about this half the night, I don't know what else I can do.'

'Is it loaded?' Maher said, staring at the pistol.

'No. I've got the bullets in my pocket.'

'Then I suggest you leave them there, unless you want to get yourself in a lot more trouble than you're in already.'

'Don't worry, I'm not going to shoot anyone unless I have to use it on myself!'

The captain seemed concerned. 'You really mustn't think like that. There has to be something we can do.'

Before they could come up with another plan they saw the superintendent back on the jetty, this time with half a dozen police. One of them held up a pair of handcuffs. 'Are you going to make us take you by force?'

When Cook saw the handcuffs he was enraged and put the revolver to his head. 'By Jesus Christ I'd rather die first.'

There was a sudden hush, then the police huddled around the superintendent.

At that point Captain Maher came to Cook. 'I think I've come up with a solution. What if we were to say to Carroll that if he can find another doctor who's prepared to swear that it's the smallpox you'll willingly go on the *Faraway*?'

Cook thought Maher's idea was sound, so the captain scribbled out a note and had one of his boatmen take it ashore. They watched anxiously as Carroll read the note then handed it over to the sergeant. For the next ten minutes or so the police conferred amongst themselves before the sergeant went back to Carroll. It was clear they'd come up with their decision.

Instead of coming back out himself, Carroll decided to send one of his boatmen out to deliver the news that the stand-off was finally over. He agreed to speak to Dr Caffyn and have him re-examine Cook, but for the moment Cook was to stay where he was.

Cook was so relieved he almost cried and couldn't thank Captain Maher enough. 'I don't know what I might have done if you hadn't come up with your idea.'

The captain was very pleased with himself and brought out a bottle to celebrate.

As they sat on the deck that afternoon, Cook marvelled at how close he'd come to landing himself in serious trouble. Things could have turned out so much worse.



Just before dark Carroll sent his son out in the rowboat with some bedding for Cook, whom he said was to stay on board for the night. He'd be taken ashore the following morning where he'd be allowed to stay in a tent on the beach. Dr Caffyn could examine him there.

**Sunday afternoon, hospital enclosure**

Michael Clune saw and heard most of what was happening in the cove, thanks to his new manservant Livesey who made it his business to let everyone know as each confrontation was taking place. When Clune saw the constable with his revolver, he had a good idea how Cook must be feeling. This was someone who like himself had been caught up in all the panic and fear and was desperately trying to maintain his freedom. As Clune watched the drama unfold, however, the thought crossed his mind more than once that perhaps he hadn't resisted enough when it came to his own incarceration. He only hoped it wasn't too late.

When the confrontation appeared to have been resolved the group at the fence dispersed once more and Clune went back to his tent. He was lying down when Carroll arrived with yet another telegram from Dr Alleyne.

'He said to tell you he's very sorry that he moved you out into the tent, and that you should move into the large pavilion with Livesey,' Carroll said.

Clune frowned. 'Why can't he make up his mind? This is my third move in as many days.'

Carroll shrugged. 'You can always stay out here if you want.'

'That's not what I meant.'

For the second time in as many days he packed his trunks and rolled up his bedding. The pavilion was a cold and draughty place but at least he'd be sheltered from the wind and rain, though the thought of sharing a room with Livesey was not a prospect he relished.

He chose a corner in the pavilion that was furthest from the door and as he arranged his things once more, he wondered how much longer he'd be forced to spend at the quarantine station. Hopefully not too much longer. He'd been so positive when he left that he'd somehow get himself back to Sydney, but he'd probably raised Annie's hopes too high. Now after three days in the enclosure he couldn't stop worrying about her. How was she

going to manage for money? His father-in-law might offer to help but he lived in Bombala, a long way from Sydney.

Clune had already considered approaching his family but he and his father had barely spoken to one another for the past ten years. Though his mother tried to keep in touch with Clune and his wife and her only grandchild, this wasn't easy, not when she had to hide the fact from his father who watched her movements like a hawk. Clune sighed. The very thought of Annie and Madeline being subjected to his father's moods and to the drunken outbursts and violence soon put paid to the whole idea.

He would have loved to write to Annie and tell her what was going on, but a letter from the enclosure was out of the question because of the risk of contamination. Everything had to go by telegraph but the effort of having to try and distil what he wanted to say into a few brief words was enough to put Clune off the thought. Not only was it impossible to convey anything of a private nature, but in order to get the message from the enclosure to the telegraph operator he had to find someone up at the fence who was prepared to convey the message for him. This might be a constable standing guard, or Carroll, or even one of the gravediggers. Assuming that they had pencil and paper – and more often than not they didn't – Clune would then have to dictate his message for the person to take to the telegraph office, which was down behind Carroll's store. If the messenger didn't have a pen and paper the message had to be trusted to memory, a most unsatisfactory state of affairs.

Nevertheless he did eventually send Annie a message. After many failed attempts to find the words to convey his situation, the message he sent her simply read 'Sincerely hope this finds you well. Am confined to hospital enclosure, and treated like a prisoner. Please make every effort to secure my release. Yours, etc.'

A short time later he was called to the fence where the telegraph operator was waiting to see him to discuss the wording of his message, in particular the reference to being in prison. 'I just thought I should let you know that Mr Carroll may object when he sees it.'

'Are you telling me Carroll will see what I've written?'

The operator seemed embarrassed. 'That's not what I said. All I came to tell you was that your telegram may not be sent unless you decide to change the wording.'

'Thank you for your concern,' Clune said. 'As you suggest I shall speak to Mr Carroll about it. In the meantime I would appreciate it if you could continue to keep me informed. If I don't hear any further from you I shall assume that the telegram has been sent.'

The next few days were fairly quiet. Each day Clune wrote several telegrams to various friends and colleagues in Sydney, asking their help to secure his release. While he waited for some kind of response he continued to keep an eye on the Guildfords. Mrs Guildford's illness had now progressed to the pustular stage and her hair was so badly matted from the sores on her scalp that she had to be shaved. Only then could George Guildford bathe the scalp. Clune instructed Livesey to burn the hair along with other infected items such as the cloths that were used to bathe her each day.

Fortunately Nurse Meyler had come equipped with a good supply of linen and towels and items of clothing for the patients. But when Mrs Guildford complained one day about the night dress she was wearing which was coarse and painful against her skin, the nurse donated one of her own.

As for medicines Clune had almost exhausted the supply of laudanum he'd brought from Sydney. He spoke to Carroll about ordering some more and Carroll in turn asked Dr Alleyne, who responded to his telegram the following day: 'Tell Clune to order whatever he needs and these will be sent with Mr Kidman when he delivers the daily rations.'

Clune duly drew up his list, which included laudanum, calomel, colocynth, and tonics. There was no need for him to order such items as poultices and feeding cups since Nurse Meyler had brought a stock of these. Once Clune was satisfied with his list he dictated it to the telegraph

operator. Several days passed and there was still no sign of the items he'd tried to order from Sydney. He resolved to speak to Carroll about it.

In the meantime as a way of keeping busy while he waited for news about his release Clune wrote in his journal every day, noting his activities and observations, including Mrs Guildford's state of health. He kept copies of his telegrams as well, including the date on which they were sent. So far he'd had not one reply, but he didn't allow this to slow him down. Each day he drafted several more, sitting on the floor beside his trunk which he'd set up as a desk beside his bed.

The arrangement in the pavilion was working quite well. Clune was amused to see how Livesey managed to ingratiate himself with the cook. Each day he went down to fetch the rations as well as chopping wood and carrying water. Whatever the girl needed, Livesey would fetch it. In return Livesey gained access to the kitchen, which was the warmest place in the enclosure. But as Livesey intimated to Clune, it wasn't so much the cosy kitchen as the chance to enjoy some female company that drew him down to the cookhouse at every spare moment.

When three days had passed since Clune wrote his order, and with his supply of laudanum almost exhausted, he decided to talk to Carroll about it. It hadn't escaped his attention that the nurse could get whatever she wanted within a matter of a day or two by sending a telegraph to Lucy Osborn. If that were the case, Clune said, he too should have his medical supplies within a couple of days of sending the order.

But Carroll shrugged him off. 'Dr Alleyne's a busy man. You'll get your order by and by.'

## **Quarantine Station – second week**

### Quarantine Beach

Constable Cook had been in his tent for two days before Dr Caffyn came to see him. It was an uncomfortable couple of days. The tent had been set up on the beach at the opposite end to Carroll's store where it was fully exposed to the wind and spray. Cook had never been so cold and was certain that this was Carroll's intention as a means of punishing him for his refusal to go on the *Faraway*. Other than the usual issue of bedding (two blankets, a pillow and a thin mattress) Carroll provided nothing else – no cooking utensils, no fresh water, and no means of lighting a fire. As if that wasn't punishment enough, Carroll issued a warning that no one was to go anywhere near either Cook or his tent. Even the police avoided him when they delivered his food, which they placed on a piece of tin nearby.

Left completely to his own devices Cook had to scavenge whatever he could from the beach and the rocks above the tent. The first day he found an old billycan which though rusted didn't have any holes and he was able to use this to collect the fresh water that trickled down from the nearby rocks. There was plenty of firewood close to the beach but lighting the fire really posed a problem. In the end Cook used an old bush method and managed to set some kindling alight and eventually got a campfire going.

As for food, on the very first day the police left him a piece of meat as well as some bread, tea and sugar and a dirty old frypan for him to cook in. His throat was far too sore to eat but he boiled up the billy and made some tea. Then he fried the beef to extract the fat which he mopped up with a piece of rag. This he buried beneath the sand with enough exposed to form a wick. In this way he'd made himself a lamp.

His first night on the beach was by far the worst. His throat hurt and his head was so congested he could hardly breathe. But the worst part of all was trying to get warm. The two blankets simply weren't enough. Not surprisingly his cold got worse.

On the third morning Dr Caffyn came to see him. He stood quite a distance away as he talked to Cook about his health. When Cook complained that he couldn't eat Caffyn agreed to provide him with a bottle of ale every

morning at least 'til his throat was feeling better. He also promised to see if he could procure a washing bowl, towel and soap for Cook, but since no one in the healthy ground had been able to get hold of some of these items he wasn't at all optimistic.

Caffyn came back the following day with only one of the items Cook requested. It was a piece of coarse hessian sacking that Carroll insisted he use as a towel. Cook held up the miserable piece of sacking which looked like the bags used to carry sugar. 'He expects me to dry myself with this?'

Caffyn gave him a rueful smile. 'I'm afraid it's the best I could do. I don't know what his problem is. I would have thought in a place such as this that towels and soap were essential, but there you have it. There are none in the store.'

Cook threw the piece of hessian aside. 'I suppose I'll be able to use it for something.'

Once Caffyn was confident of Cook's state of health – that he had no signs of smallpox at all – he agreed to make representations to Carroll to allow Cook to move into one of the cabins in the healthy ground with the other police. Carroll refused.

'He said you have to stay in the tent. I think he's trying to punish you,' Caffyn said when he told Cook the outcome.

Cook wasn't at all surprised. If ever a man needed to be in control of other people it was Carroll. Cook was familiar with his type: a small-minded man with something to prove who seemed to delight in inflicting his unreasonable rules and regulations for no good reason other than to prove to them that he was in control.

Once word got out that Cook was safe his police colleagues began to pay him a visit, usually after dark when they knew that Carroll had gone home for the day. In this way Cook was able to hear news of what was happening in Sydney and to get a letter smuggled out to his wife without having to pass Carroll's scrutiny. He'd been anxious to hear about his family



and through the intervention of his colleagues he learned that once the news was passed on to Sydney that he didn't have smallpox in the first place, the house was released from quarantine. When he heard this Cook was greatly relieved.

**Healthy ground: second class cabins**

Nora Rout woke with a start. A terrible sense of panic gripped her as she tried to make out the shape of the room. Which way was she facing? Where was the door? What was the cause of the sense of dread? Then it all came back. For almost a week she and Sarah Hughes and their children had been sharing a cabin in the healthy grounds. With ten children between the two of them and Nora still grieving at the loss of her husband, it had been a challenge at times. But the children had quickly made friends with each other and with the help of the two eldest girls – Nora's Lizzie who was twelve, and Sarah's girl Emma, who was ten – the children mostly took care of themselves.

Mealtimes were always difficult, however, as the younger children began to fret while their mothers queued for their turn in the cookhouse. Not only did the women have to wait but when they eventually got to the stove they had to make do with one pot each to prepare a meal for themselves and their children. No matter how many times they asked if they could have some extra utensils to prepare the food, Carroll's answer was always the same: the order still hadn't arrived from Sydney.

As Nora lay there in the dark she heard one of the children coughing. Perhaps that was what had woken her. She lay there listening and sure enough there it was again. It sounded like her daughter May so she got up and went over to the bed that the child had been sharing with Maud Hughes. She felt May's forehead which was very hot and gathered her daughter up in her arms and took the child back to her bed. As she stroked the child's forehead and brushed back the hair that stuck to her face, she murmured 'Mummy's got you, it's all right.'

May settled into a restless sleep but Nora lay there wide awake. It hadn't been an easy time since they'd arrived in the healthy ground, especially with some of the goings-on. In the cabin next to theirs were Mr and Mrs Keats and their children and their three male lodgers from Cumberland Street. There'd been several run-ins between the two cabins, chiefly over the children's behaviour. The Keats couple were both in their

early fifties and seemed to think themselves above everyone else. Time and again, Nora sensed that the couple were looking down their noses as they watched the rabble of children next door. She could just imagine what they were saying. But as she'd said to Sarah Hughes, if they were so much better off than the rest then how come they had to take in lodgers?

Even so Nora was the first to admit it was difficult to keep her children in line especially with Edward gone. So much had happened since his death, and since they'd been brought to this awful place.

May was restless and began to moan and she was hot and clammy to the touch. Nora felt fear stir within her. What if May had caught the smallpox? Like all the others from Bellevue Street she'd been given the scratch by Dr Caffyn through the back fence in Bellevue Street. That was more than a week ago. Now Nora couldn't even remember what she'd been told about the scratch such as how long it would take to work. Was it seven days? She wasn't sure. But what if the child had the smallpox already, even before she was vaccinated?

Nora's mind was far too active for sleep. As she lay there beside her little girl she heard another child cry out. This time it sounded like Maud Hughes, the child with whom May had been sharing a bed, and an awful thought began to take hold: Sarah's children had been vaccinated only days before by Dr Caffyn, using lymph he scraped from her own children's sores. If one of her children was infected with smallpox despite having been vaccinated since, did that mean it could have been passed on to others?

As little May tossed and turned in her sleep Nora knew what she had to do. First thing in the morning she'd have to send Lizzie to fetch Dr Caffyn to see the two girls. Much as she dreaded the very thought – she'd never forgive him for what he'd done, or rather what he hadn't done, for her poor husband when he lay dying – but she knew she had no other choice. She couldn't bear to lose this child, or to see someone else lose his or her child either, not if it could be avoided.

### **Hospital enclosure**

A week had now passed since Clune arrived and his determination hadn't faltered – he would get back to Sydney whatever it took. He wrote to everyone he could think of, including a Member of Parliament named Dr Renwick, and told them how he was badly treated and pleading for help to secure his release. Each morning without fail he went up to the fence to dictate his messages to the telegraph operator or to one of the constables at the gate.

Time and again the telegraph operator brought his messages back to him, saying Carroll wouldn't allow them to go. 'If you say you're unwell or badly treated, Mr Carroll won't allow them to be sent,' the telegraph operator told Clune. Sometimes his messages were sent back by Carroll on a crumpled piece of paper with a line drawn through the offending words, and 'I can't send this' scrawled beside them. But not all his telegrams were rejected by Carroll which led Clune to believe some were getting through.

When the first letter finally came from his wife he took it back to the pavilion to read. No doubt she'd been expecting him home which is why it took her so long to write. His hands were shaking as he opened the letter.

My beloved Michael,

This is my first letter to you, since I assumed you would be home by now. I want you to know that Madeline and I are fine, apart from the fact that we are missing you. Madeline has been home from school for much of the time since you went away. You may not have heard the news that most of the schools in the area were closed early because of the smallpox scare.

There's so much going on in Sydney and so much in the papers each day about how the Government has let us down and all that's being done to try and curb the disease.

Have you heard of a doctor called Le Gay Brereton? He's been arguing very forcefully in numerous letters to the newspapers against the benefits of vaccination. He seems to be of the belief that it actually causes many diseases, and insists besides that it doesn't work very well.

From what I can gather from the papers everyone in Sydney has been affected in one way or another by the epidemic. There's even talk of closing the libraries. Do you think smallpox can be spread this way, through the pages of a book? I must say I'd never thought about it. The benevolent asylums are also worried and have closed their doors to visitors.

By the way, I meant to ask you what you meant in your telegram when you said you were in the hospital enclosure. I hope you are not ill, my love.

I am doing all I can to lobby the Government on your behalf. I have also tried on several occasions to get in touch with Dr Alleyne but so far I have had no success. I did manage to speak to Dr Renwick, however, who tells me he's doing all he can to help get you released from that awful place.

As for Father, I wrote him a letter as well and told him what had happened to you. He sent me a telegram yesterday. He is coming to Sydney as soon as he can and will stay with us as long as we need him.

Madeline sends you all her love. Since you've gone she's taken to sleeping with me, at least it's some comfort for the both of us.

Take care, my darling, and please write soon. I'm longing to hear that you are well and that you will be home again very soon.

He reread the letter several times then folded it and held it to his lips. If only he could write to Annie and tell her what was going on and how much he was missing them both. He placed the letter inside his journal out of the way of prying eyes.

Later that morning Livesey came to tell him some disturbing news. Two of the children in the healthy ground appeared to be coming down with the smallpox and Dr Caffyn was planning to send them both to the enclosure.

'What should I tell him?' Livesey said.

Clune couldn't give an immediate answer. It would be several more days before Nurse Meyler's vaccination status could be confirmed. To send two young children into the ward with no one to care for them was out of the question. The only answer was to send their mothers so that they could take

care of the children. He sent Livesey back to Dr Caffyn with a message to this effect. Then he went to find Nurse Meyler. At the back of his mind was a niggling concern. If he didn't handle things the right way he could ruin his chances of returning to Sydney.

He found Nurse Meyler in the cookhouse and told her about the two new cases. Could she make up some beds for them and their mothers on the unoccupied side of the ward?

'And who do you suppose will look after the children?' Nurse Meyler said sharply.

'I'm sure their mothers will be able to manage, we can instruct them what to do.'

He saw her mouth tighten. 'You might be content to stand by and watch but I've had enough of twiddling my thumbs. I shall send to Miss Osborn for another nurse. That way we can take alternate shifts.' She rolled up her sleeves as she spoke.

Clune was about to argue the point – after all it still wasn't seven days since Nurse Meyler had been vaccinated – but she wasn't about to give him the chance. Instead she strode off towards the ward. For a moment he stood there undecided, then headed back up towards the gate. He got there just as Livesey appeared with one of the children in his arms. Just behind him was Sarah Hughes who was carrying another child.

'Don't tell me this is one of yours?' Clune said to as he looked at the child.

She nodded, unable to speak.

Then he realised that the other child was Nora Rout's youngest daughter, May. 'I don't understand,' Clune said. 'Why didn't Mrs Rout come too?'

'She had to stay behind to take care of the other children,' Livesey told him.

Rather than waste any more time Clune led the way down to the ward where Nurse Meyler was preparing their beds. He took Sarah Hughes as far as the door where Nurse Meyler came to meet them.

'I'll take over from here, thank you doctor.' She took Sarah Hughes and the child inside. Livesey followed with the other girl.

As Clune stood watching from the veranda he realised how he must look to others. If only he could make them understand that it wasn't cowardice that held him back but his determination to return to Sydney. At all costs he had to ensure that he had no direct contact with a smallpox patient.

### **Hospital ship *Faraway***

John Hughes was sunning himself on the deck when Carroll came out to the hulk to tell him that his youngest daughter Maud had smallpox and was in the hospital enclosure. Hughes' first reaction was disbelief, then he demanded to be taken ashore to see her.

Carroll refused. 'The regulations don't allow it,' he said to Hughes from the landing platform, which was the closest he ever came to the hulk.

As soon as the superintendent had gone Hughes went straight to work on Walsh. 'What's to stop me swimming ashore, I could wait until dark and no one would see me.'

'You heard Carroll, it's not allowed.'

'Come on Walsh, you're a family man. What if this was one of your children? You'd do anything to be able to see her.'

'That's not the point,' Walsh said. 'No one's allowed ashore from the hulk so long as there's someone with smallpox on board – unless they leave here in a coffin.'

'But what harm can I do if I go to see her? The enclosure's no different to the *Faraway* – there's smallpox cases there as well so it's not like I'd be putting someone at risk.'

He could see that Walsh was beginning to waver. 'Come on, you don't have to worry about Carroll, there's nothing much he can do. If I swim ashore after dark he doesn't even need to know.'

For the rest of that day he paced the deck and kept a close eye out for his wife. From the *Faraway* he could clearly see the paling fence of the enclosure and sometimes – depending on the tide and on which way the hulk was facing – he could see some of the hospital buildings as well. All that day he willed his wife to come to the fence where he could see her but she didn't appear and this worried him even more. Every instinct in his body told him he had to go to his daughter, had to be able to see for himself just



how sick the poor child was. Please God, he prayed, don't let her die. Just the thought of losing his little girl, with her soft pink skin and her pretty curls made his heart contract with fear. None of this would ever have happened if he hadn't gone to see Dr Clune in the erroneous belief that he might have the smallpox.

At one point as he was pacing the deck Walsh came out with a bottle of brandy. 'Here, take a swig of this,' he said, 'it will settle your nerves a bit.' But Hughes pushed the bottle away. 'I have to keep my wits about me.'

Walsh came and sat on the deck beside him. 'I can see you're determined to go ashore, but I tell you if Carroll hears of it, he'll put you in irons, you mark my words.'

'Don't worry, he'll have to catch me first.'

That night after they'd had their tea Hughes kept a close eye on the shore. As soon as he thought the coast was clear he took off his overcoat and boots and went down to the landing platform. One of the planks was loose and he pulled it free. Then he slipped into the chilly water, using the plank to keep him afloat. For a moment the cold took his breath away. Then he began to paddle, trying not to make too much noise as he made his way towards the shore. It was only a few hundred yards away but it seemed to him to take forever.

When his feet finally touched the sand, he hid the plank beneath the jetty then headed up past Carroll's store, to the track that led up to the enclosure. It was hard going in the dark, and the sharp rocks hurt his feet, but he took little notice of the pain. Nothing was going to stop him now.

Just as he neared the top of the track, he thought he heard several voices up ahead. He stopped and squatted behind some bushes. In the gloom he could just make out several figures standing up near the fence. The police! He hadn't counted on them being there.

He was breathing hard from all the exertion and began to try and slow his breathing in case the two men overheard him. For what seemed like

a very long time he squatted there in the dark waiting for the police to leave, but he was shivering so much in his sodden clothing he couldn't stand it a moment longer. He decided to go back to the hulk, and come back again the following night. Before he left he took one last look. He was determined to find his way in; they wouldn't keep him from his little girl. At least now he knew what to expect.

Quietly he made his way downhill, and retrieving his plank from beneath the jetty, made his way back to the *Faraway*.

**Healthy ground: second class cabins**

Nora Rout sobbed uncontrollably as she took her youngest daughter, May, and handed her over to the very same man who'd helped bury her husband the week before. Then she watched as the gravedigger took her child, and with Sarah Hughes and her daughter Maud, headed towards the hospital enclosure. Several people from the cabin next door – including Mr and Mrs Keats – came out to watch the children go. She glared at them and they looked away but she heard them whispering amongst themselves.

She took all the children back inside and was startled when Lizzie burst into tears. 'What do you think's going to happen? Do you think they'll die too?'

The girl sat on the side of her bed and Nora went to sit beside her. 'I don't know,' she said, and felt the weight of the world on her shoulders. She felt drained of emotion.

Just then they heard someone at the door and Nora went to see who it was. William Keats stood outside. 'I've got a bone to pick with you,' he said sternly.

Nora was too stunned to speak.

'How long have you been wearing that filthy dress?' He had such a look of disgust on his face that Nora felt instant shame. 'It's no wonder those little kiddies are sick, you ought to be ashamed of yourself.'

'But what am I supposed to do?' Nora was completely bewildered. 'I've asked Mr Carroll a dozen times to get us all a change of clothes, but he keeping saying there's nothing in the store.'

'I don't give a damn what Carroll says, those clothes of yours have to be burnt before another of the kiddies gets sick.'

Nora didn't know what to say.

'And since we're on the subject isn't it time you had a bath and cleaned up those filthy brats of yours?'

She felt her face go red with shame. The next thing she knew her daughter Lizzie came flying to the door and went to stand in front of her mother. 'You think you're so good, you silly old man. Well why don't you try and get us some clothes and some soap and towels while you're at it?' Then she slammed the door in William Keats' face.

'That ought to teach him to mind his own business.' But her mother didn't say a word. She was quietly stripping off her clothes and throwing them in a pile on the floor. When she was completely naked she crawled into bed and pulled the blankets around her chin. The other children stood watching in silence.

'He's right you know,' she said to Lizzie. 'You should throw all my things into the fire.'

'I'll do better than that,' Lizzie said and she stooped down and picked up the pile of clothing and marched with it straight to Keats's cabin. She dumped the pile outside the door. 'I hope that makes you happy,' she called out from the doorway, then turned on her heel and went back to the cabin.

That afternoon she went to the cookhouse to boil some water, then helped her younger brother and sister to take a bath. It wasn't easy without any soap and she had no towels to dry them with, but there was nothing she could do about that. Once each of them had taken their turn she put them to bed to keep them warm. Then she took the dirty clothing outside where she washed the items as best she could and spread them on the bushes to dry.

After they were tucked up in bed she brought some more water up from the cookhouse. Then she led her mother from the bed and helped her into the steaming tub. Once Nora had soaked in the tub for a while, Lizzie helped her back into bed once more then stripped off and bathed herself before wrapping herself in one of the blankets.

Later that day they were disturbed once more by someone knocking at the door. Lizzie went to the door still wrapped in her blanket. It was William

Keats and she steeled herself, prepared for yet another attack. But this time Keats didn't seem so angry. He had with him a bundle of clothing.

'I managed to get these from Mr Carroll. I don't know if everything will fit, but at least it's something. And my wife and daughters have sent you these.' He handed Lizzie a couple of dresses and several items of underclothing.

'Please tell your mother I'm very sorry,' Keats said. 'I shouldn't have spoken to her like that.'

### Hospital enclosure

The morning after the two sick children had been admitted to the enclosure, Michael Clune woke early as usual and went down the ward to see them. Nurse Meyler was outside on the veranda smoking her pipe after spending most of the night tending the children. Both of them had a very high fever, she told him, but at least Mrs Guildford was on the mend though she still faced a long slow convalescence. George Guildford on the other hand was coming down with something that looked very much like it could be smallpox.

Clune was worried for the nurse, who was looking very drawn and tired. 'Why don't you go and get some rest. I'll keep an eye on things for a while.'

For once Nurse Meyler didn't argue. 'I've been in touch with the Infirmary,' she told him before she went for breakfast. 'Miss Osborn is sending another nurse. She should be arriving some time today.'

Clune went over to the window to look in on the two sick girls. As soon as Sarah Hughes noticed him she jumped up from her daughter's bedside and came to the window. 'Dr Clune, thank heavens you're here. They've both had the most awful night. Do you think they're going to be all right?'

'I'm afraid I really have no idea,' he said before going through all the details to try and establish the chain of events. When he learned that Maud had been vaccinated arm-to-arm by Dr Caffyn using lymph obtained from Nora Rout's little girl, his heart sank.

Though he would never know for certain he believed he had a fair idea of when Maud Hughes had been infected with smallpox. If his calculations were correct, May Rout must have been infected presumably when her father was sick and before being vaccinated by Dr Caffyn. Then when Caffyn used lymph from May Rout's arm to vaccinate some of Sarah Hughes' children when they were all together in the healthy ground, that's when Maud Hughes must have been infected.

When he explained all this to Sarah Hughes she burst into tears. 'It's so unfair,' she cried. 'We should never have been sent here in the first place. If only John had listened to me.'

This was the first time Clune had heard the story of what had happened to Hughes following his visit to College Street. It was such a tragedy, all the more so since John Hughes didn't even have the smallpox. Now he and his family were stuck in this place and there was a very strong chance of losing their daughter.

But there was something that Clune didn't understand. 'How did the police get to hear about it?'

Sarah Hughes looked surprised. 'To tell you the truth we thought it was you. There was no one else who could have known.'

'But the only person I informed was the man standing in for Dr Alleyne.'

'Then he must have told the police about it,' Sarah said.

'But why on earth would he tell the police? The only reason I informed him was to arrange for another doctor to visit to confirm my belief that it wasn't smallpox.'

It was too late now to repair the damage but he resolved to pursue it later on. In the meantime there were two little girls to look after. 'We'll do everything we can,' he said though he knew that their situation couldn't be worse. Small children were more vulnerable to smallpox than adults and from what he'd seen of the two in the ward there was little hope that they'd survive. Nevertheless he instructed the cook to make up some sherbet out of red wine, lemon and sugar to provide them with some sustenance. He would also get the nurses to try some cupping and perhaps some bleeding might be worth a try. Some colocynth might help as well. Purgings was always a good idea.

That raised the issue of the missing order, which still hadn't arrived from Sydney. He determined to speak to Carroll about it.

Once he'd set everything in place and done all he could for the little girls, Clune turned his attention to the Guildfords. George Guildford was still in bed when he went to the window, but as soon as he saw Clune he got out of bed.

'I think I'd better have a look at you,' Clune said and Guildford came out to the veranda where Clune could take a closer look. He was able to detect a very faint rash that had appeared on Guildford's forehead and neck. 'It's the smallpox all right, but fortunately you were vaccinated before it got a decent hold so it looks like a very mild infection. Still, you're going to need lots of rest. The question is where are we going to put you?'

'For God's sake, not the *Faraway*,' Guildford said. 'Please don't send me away from my wife, not now.'

The *Faraway* hadn't crossed Clune's mind, even though it would be the most obvious choice. 'Don't worry' he said. 'I'll give this some thought, but I'd like to discuss it with Nurse Meyler as well.'

By the time he caught up with Nurse Meyler he'd already come up with a solution. Why not let Guildford stay in a tent close to the ward where he and his wife could see one another? It seemed to him that both of them would benefit from one another's presence.

Nurse Meyler had no real objection other than to make the point that the nurses had enough on their hands without having to worry about Guildford as well.

'Don't worry, I'll attend to him,' Clune reassured her.

That afternoon he instructed Livesey to set up a tent outside the ward and move Guildford's bed into the tent. As soon as everything was in place Guildford went out to the tent where he lay down and quickly went to sleep. When Clune went to check on him later the poor fellow didn't even stir. He was obviously exhausted from his illness and from weeks of caring for his wife. Clune left a bottle of port for him just inside the flap of the tent. He was sure that Guildford would appreciate that.



As soon as he had his tea that evening Clune went back to the pavilion. He was looking forward to an early night. Just as he was preparing for bed he heard a scream from somewhere nearby and went out to investigate. It was the cook who was frightened out of her wits. A strange man had accosted her, she said, looming up out of the dark to confront her as she was walking back to the cottage. 'I think he had a gun and a knife, he asked me where he could find Mrs Hughes – I do believe he's about to kill her.'

Clune sent the cook to wait inside the pavilion while he went to the ward to investigate. He had a fair idea who the intruder might be and it wouldn't be someone intent on murder. Why would anyone try to break into this place especially when there were people with smallpox? He went to the window of the ward and sure enough John Hughes was inside talking quietly with his wife.

'Hughes! What are you doing up here? Did anyone see you, apart from the girl?'

Hughes came to the window. 'Dr Clune. For God's sake please don't send me away. I just want to see my little girl.'

'Well you'd better be quick. If the superintendent hears about this he's very likely to have you flogged.'

Clune went back to the pavilion hoping he would catch the girl before she told anyone else about her strange encounter in the dark. She was already gone. No doubt she'd tittle-tattled already and Carroll would soon be on his way.

Sure enough a half-hour later Carroll came up to the enclosure and sent Clune down to the ward to fetch Hughes. When he realised what had happened Hughes came quietly to the fence and listened as the superintendent threatened to have him placed in irons. Then to Clune's surprise Carroll seemed to have a sudden change of heart.

'You can spend an hour with your little girl but whatever you do don't touch her hand. And be warned that if you try this again I'll throw you in irons, you understand?'

\* \* \*

Leaving his wife and daughter that night was the hardest thing Hughes had ever done. Maud looked so fragile lying there. All her beautiful hair was gone and her face was covered in hard little bumps, like grains of rice beneath the skin. They had formed on her eyelids and in her ears and were all over her scalp. He felt so helpless as he kneeled beside her willing her to fight this thing, to hang onto life no matter what. But all the time his heart was heavy. Something about the way things had happened and his family had been caught up in the outbreak had a sense of inevitability about it. Up to this point in their lives together he and Sarah had been lucky. They had six healthy children and unlike many others they hadn't lost a single child.

He let himself out through the gate and stumbled downhill in the dark, barely conscious of his still-wet clothing. On the beach below someone had a campfire burning. He assumed that it was Constable Cook but as he got closer to Carroll's store he saw four men sitting by the fire, several of them in uniform. He realised they were waiting for him and was about to slip into the water when one of them spotted him and called out. Hughes walked over to the fire.

'Why don't you come and dry yourself off?' one of them said. 'You must be frozen.'

Hughes thought he must be hearing things but then two of the men moved to make room for him to sit near the fire. As he sat down he recognised Constable Cook.

'What's Carroll going to say about this?'

'I don't think you need worry about him,' one of the other constables chuckled, 'he'll be all tucked up in his nice warm bed.'

Someone passed a blanket to Hughes and invited him to remove his wet clothing and put it by the fire to dry. He stripped and wrapped himself in the blanket and accepted the bottle that was passing round. He took a couple of mouthfuls of brandy and closed his eyes as he felt the warmth

spread from his throat through his chest and from there into the rest of his body. It was a moment he would never forget.

**Quarantine Station – third week**

### Quarantine Beach

The fire had died by the time Hughes woke to find himself alone on the beach. It was light, but the sun was yet to appear. He felt his clothes: they were still quite damp, but they'd have to do. Once he'd dressed he went in search of some wood to try and build the fire back up. There was no sign of Cook but Hughes found some matches just outside his tent.

An hour or so later as Hughes sat by the fire Dr Caffyn came to see him. Hughes recognised him straight away as the doctor who'd come to their house and without even taking a close look at Hughes, had diagnosed him with smallpox.

'What do you want?' Hughes said as Caffyn stopped some distance away.

'Mr Carroll has asked me to come and see you. He says to tell you he'll be down here shortly. In the meantime is there anything you need?'

Hughes glared at him. Where was the top hat and tails now, he wondered? But he put his misgivings to one side. 'As a matter of fact there is. I'd like to see my children,' he said.

'I don't know about that,' Caffyn said. 'I'll have to go and ask Mr Carroll.'

'Tell him from me he needn't worry, I'm not going to do anything stupid, I just want to see them for myself.'

Caffyn nodded. 'I'll do what I can.'

When he came back down a short time later, he had Hughes' children with him. They stopped a good five yards away. 'Just wait there a moment,' Caffyn said as the children stood staring at their father. Then Caffyn took an onion and a knife from his pocket and bent down to lean on a flat piece of rock as he chopped the onion in half.

'What's that for?' Hughes said.

'It will help to protect the children. Haven't you seen this done before?'

'Can't say I have.' Hughes was beginning to lose his patience. Then Caffyn stood between him and the children holding out the stinking onion while Hughes spoke to each of the children in turn. Once he'd satisfied himself that the children seemed to be in reasonable health and were being cared for by Mrs Rout he turned his attention to their feet.

'Can't someone get them some boots to wear? I don't like the thought of them running around out here in the bush without any shoes.'

'Let me talk to Mr Carroll,' Caffyn said. 'He may be able to order them from Sydney though I very much doubt it.'

At that point an awkward silence fell and Caffyn tossed the onion away. 'I think it's time we got back to the cabin.'

Hughes and the children looked at each other, then his eldest daughter spoke. 'We heard that you went up to see Maud last night. Is she going to be all right?'

Hughes hesitated. Should he tell them the truth? 'She's got the smallpox very bad,' he said. 'It would be good if you could say a prayer for her.'

Now that the children had gone back up to the cabins, Hughes was ready to return to the hulk. It was Carroll's son who took him back. Later on that afternoon Carroll came out to talk to Hughes about his visit to the enclosure.

'Don't get me wrong, I feel for you,' Carroll said. 'But if you abscond from the hulk again, I'll have no choice but to put you in irons.'

Hughes was silent. He wasn't about to let Carroll know of the foray he was planning for that night. Nothing would keep him from his little girl.

Once it was dark and things were quiet Hughes jumped overboard again, ignoring Walsh's attempts to stop him. This time he made no attempt to be discreet, but emerged from the water and strode onto the beach where the

sergeant and some of his men were waiting. The sergeant had his men detain Hughes while someone went up to let Carroll know.

The superintendent appeared a short time later. 'I thought you and I had an agreement,' he said. Then he turned to the sergeant. 'Handcuff him.'

'I can't do that I'm afraid,' the sergeant said. 'Not without orders from Superintendent Read.'

Hughes was surprised by the response, but not half as surprised as Carroll. 'What do you mean, orders from Sydney. I'm the superintendent here, and I'm telling you to handcuff the man.'

But the sergeant refused to budge. 'If you insist on detaining this man, you will have to send a telegram to Superintendent Read in Sydney. Without his permission I'm afraid I can't do it.'

Carroll could see he had no support, that everyone's sympathy lay with Hughes. 'All right then,' he said to Hughes. 'You can go up and spend the night with your wife, but I'll be waiting for you in the morning. You're not going to get away with this.'

The following morning Hughes left the ward and went to the gate of the enclosure where the police were waiting for him. They took him in handcuffs down to the jetty where half a dozen police were assembled. Carroll ordered them to apply the leg-irons and Hughes didn't mount any resistance. It was only when he realised that Carroll intended to leave the handcuffs in place as well that he began to protest. 'How am I supposed to do anything with these things on?'

The sergeant had a quiet word with Carroll before one of his men removed the handcuffs. Then Hughes was rowed back out to the hulk.

That night on the *Faraway* Hughes sat up for most of the night, sawing through the chain with a rusty pen knife that he found in the galley.

### **Hospital enclosure**

As the children battled for their lives Clune had troubles of his own. For some reason he didn't understand Nurse Meyler's attitude had hardened towards him. This troubled him especially since she'd taken to spending so much time at the fence with Carroll. Clune grew to dread the sight of them, Nurse Meyler standing up on one of the coffins that were left lying about up near the gate and leaning over the paling fence as she chatted to the superintendent. To Clune they behaved like long-lost friends. Sometimes when he heard them laugh he was sure it was him they were laughing at, and he cringed at the thought of what they were saying.

He tried to talk himself around, but each day he felt more isolated. Even the cook's attitude had changed. She was more disrespectful by the day and the way she slung the food on his plate he was sometimes tempted not to eat it. The new nurse was caught up in conflict as well. Though Nurse Hollis seemed a decent soul, she took her cue from the other two women and her manner was very cool towards him.

It wasn't helping his state of mind that he'd had no replies to his telegrams. The only letters he received were from Annie who continued to do whatever she could to try and get him back to Sydney, obviously to no avail.

With each day that passed his mood grew bleaker. He was angry at the government and especially with Dr Alleyne who hadn't been anywhere near the place since their confrontation weeks ago. Alleyne hadn't even kept his promise to see that medical supplies were delivered. By contrast, as Clune had observed more than once, Nurse Meyler just had to say the word and she was sent whatever she needed, usually within a day or two.

The more isolated Clune became the more he began to appreciate Livesey. Although the gravedigger drank too much and took little care of his appearance, at least with the gravedigger Clune knew where he stood. It was Livesey who kept Clune informed about what was happening in the rest of the grounds. For some reason Livesey was able to move very freely about the place. He loved nothing better than to come back to the enclosure from one of his trips to the healthy ground with some titbit of gossip or with news



from Sydney that he'd managed to pick up from one of the constables or one of the boatmen on the *Pinafore*. At other times Livesey would return with a message for Sarah Hughes from her children, and take messages back to them in return. It was Livesey who told Clune about the growing resentment in the healthy ground towards the niggardliness of the superintendent. 'They can't even get soap or towels, or clothing for the women and kiddies.'

According to Livesey, William Keats had resorted to making threats to Carroll that he would write to the newspapers in Sydney and tell them what was going on if certain items weren't supplied. 'That made Carroll sit up and listen.'

Meanwhile Livesey had begun to help himself to the supplies of alcohol that were kept in the pavilion. Though these were intended for medicinal use, there was always much more than they needed, and since Clune drank very little himself he took no notice of what was there or how much was used on the ward by the nurses. The fact that Livesey sometimes smelt of the grog hadn't slipped his attention but Clune preferred to turn a blind eye.

As the third week in the enclosure progressed Clune continued to keep an eye on the patients. Maud Hughes and May Rout were approaching the end of the eruptive stage and each day the nurses counted the number of lesions as a way of gauging the severity of the infection. For the moment the fever had abated and the papules and vesicles were breaking down. They were entering the most infective stage as layers of skin began to shed and papules on the skin filled with fluid. What Clune was most concerned about was trying to avoid respiratory infection which meant keeping them propped up in their beds. Their noses and mouths also had to be cleansed several times a day with a diluted solution of hydrogen peroxide to try and reduce the fetid smell.

But even as they worked to save the girls Clune knew from the number of smallpox lesions that the chances of saving either child were growing slimmer by the day. As Maud's temperature began to rise once more he knew it was a dangerous sign. Soon she became delirious and had to be

restrained by the nurses as she tossed and turned and tore at her skin. Fortunately the laudanum arrived. Clune kept her sedated from that point on.

### Healthy ground

The situation in the hospital enclosure affected everyone in the grounds as they waited to hear news of the girls. As the tensions began to mount Carroll was under increasing pressure, as residents vented their frustration and anger at the fact that at least one of the girls had been infected since she'd arrived at the quarantine station. Why had it taken Carroll so long to get Mrs Rout a change of clothing? Didn't he know she was still wearing the clothes she had on when her husband died?

Carroll protested. How was he supposed to have known when no one had told him the situation?

'But it's your job to find out these things,' Keats said when he went to the store to demand the clothing for Mrs Rout. 'It shouldn't have been up to me or any of the others in my opinion, not when you're paid to look after such things.'

Carroll was used to being attacked. The families in the healthy ground were always at him for something or other. At first it was sheets and towels they wanted, then it was cooking utensils. Lately it was tins of jam or chutney or bacon, or even coffee. He resented their demands especially when some of them were so poor that they'd been barefoot when they arrived. Now some of them even had the hide to demand that he order their children some boots.

There was also the problem he had with John Hughes, who kept absconding from the *Faraway*. For some reason everyone sympathised with him and when Carroll had tried to deal with Hughes and punish him the way he deserved, even the police took the man's side. This more than anything upset Carroll. How was he going to keep control when the police themselves were going soft?

When he discovered that Hughes had sawn through his leg-irons Carroll didn't involve the police, but went to speak to Hughes on the quiet. If Hughes agreed to wear the leg-irons for the next three days and didn't cause any further trouble, Carroll would remove them for him. Otherwise he'd

have no choice but to use the madman's muffs on him. That seemed to do the trick as Hughes settled down after that.

The hospital enclosure was a different story. The nurses were no trouble at all but Dr Clune and his telegrams and his constant whining to go back to Sydney really got under Carroll's skin. Clune must have written dozens of telegrams in the first two weeks alone. Why didn't the man just settle down and get on with the job like everyone else? He'd be paid eventually for all his troubles so why did he have to make such a fuss?

When Carroll discussed the matter with Dr Alleyne during one of their meetings on Stores Beach, the health officer was incensed as well, especially when Carroll relayed Clune's comment that he was treated like a criminal. From that point onwards, Alleyne told Carroll, he should check all Clune's telegrams before they were sent and delete any offensive comments. Carroll didn't bother to tell him that he was already doing this anyway.

Another issue he discussed with Alleyne was in reference to the growing pile of empty coffins in the enclosure: each time the *Pinafore* went to Sydney the captain brought back several more. Now there were so many lying around, there was nowhere left to store them. The deadhouse in the enclosure was full. What should he do about them, he asked, especially since they upset the nurses who were worried about the effect on their patients.

'Tell Clune he should take care of them, he's to get the gravediggers to stack them in a tent or somewhere out of sight.'

As if Carroll didn't have enough on his plate there was another problem brewing. Earlier that week the steamship *Ocean* arrived in Spring Cove unannounced. Carroll had heard about the *Ocean*, which was already on its way from Hong Kong when the government of New South Wales had decided to issue an edict that no ships from infected ports would be allowed to enter the colony. At that stage there was nothing that could be done to divert the *Ocean* from her course. To avoid embarrassment to the government, the *Ocean* had been sent to the quarantine station where it was assumed that

Carroll would take care of things. The problem for the government was that there were hundreds of Chinese immigrants on board, more than half of them destined for Sydney. They simply couldn't be allowed to land, not in the current political climate.

When Carroll received no instruction from Sydney he decided to simply ignore the *Ocean*. He was already stretched to the limit with so many details to attend to each day. Several days passed and the *Ocean's* captain made no attempt to contact the shore. Then one evening as Carroll and his wife and son sat at the table to have their tea a brilliant red glow lit up the sky. All three of them rushed outside where they realised that the *Ocean* had set off a flare which illuminated the whole of the cove.

Why the *Ocean's* captain had done this was a mystery to Carroll. Surely if the captain wanted to see him, he could have sent someone ashore.

There was nothing he could do that night, but the following morning he sent one of his boatmen out to speak to the *Ocean's* captain. The boatman returned with the news that the *Ocean* had no fresh water and there were four hundred and fifty people on board who needed water for cooking and drinking. Was the superintendent able to help?

Carroll had no idea what to do so he sent a telegram to Alleyne. 'The captain of the *Ocean* requires fresh water at once. How is he to get it?'

By the time the telegraph office was closed, there'd still been no response from Sydney so Carroll went home for his tea as usual.

The following morning Alleyne responded: 'Tell the captain to use his condensing machinery for supply of water.'

Carroll sent his boatman out to deliver the message to the captain, only to have his boatman return with another message from the captain. The ship's condenser had broken down and the passengers were desperate for some water.

Again Carroll passed on the message to Alleyne and once again there was no response by the time the telegraph office closed. That night their tea was disturbed once more, this time by a loud explosion that sent echoes

right around the harbour. The captain had set off one of his guns. Carroll was relieved when some time later he saw the water pilot arrive. Relieved that the matter was out of his hands Carroll went back inside his house.

Next morning there was another telegram from Dr Alleyne: 'Will send Mr Dunn, the water tank proprietor, to deliver water to the *Ocean*.' Once more Carroll sent his boatman out to the *Ocean* to deliver the message. Dunn's barge arrived later that day with a tankful of water for the *Ocean*. A couple of days later the *Ocean* was gone, with no word to say where she was headed.

### **Hospital enclosure**

In the early hours of Saturday morning after lying comatose for several days Maud Hughes finally passed away. Nurse Hollis was with the child when she died and came to break the news to Clune. He splashed some water on his face, then went to the ward where he found Sarah Hughes sitting outside on the veranda. She was very still as he sat beside her.

'I'm so sorry,' he said quietly and Sarah Hughes began to sob, softly at first, then her grief erupted into heart-wrenching sobs that he was sure must be audible around the cove.

When she eventually began to calm down, Clune left Nurse Hollis to take care of her while he went to the ward to examine the body. He didn't stay there very long: there was no questioning the cause of death, and the sight of the child was too distressing as the face and body were hideously bloated. He rushed from the ward and went to find Livesey to arrange the burial without delay.

While Livesey went to fetch a coffin Clune went back down to the ward. This time he found Sarah Hughes by the fence staring silently down into the cove and once again went to her side. In the early morning light, he could see John Hughes still in his leg irons staring wordlessly up at his wife. Clune retreated to the ward where a small coffin lay open on the ground outside. Just then Livesey emerged from the ward, with the child's body wrapped in a sheet. He placed it gently into the coffin and sprinkled quicklime over the body before he nailed down the lid.

Another gravedigger arrived to help and as the two men lifted the coffin between them, Clune went to fetch Sarah Hughes. Together they walked behind the gravediggers as they carried the coffin up to the gate where two policemen were waiting for them. They would escort the coffin through the healthy ground and beyond it to the grave where Maud would be buried.

Before the gravediggers passed through the gate Sarah Hughes ran up and laid her cheek against the coffin. Then she stood back to watch as the two gravediggers passed with the coffin through the gate.

Later that morning Clune went down to speak to Nurse Meyler about Sarah Hughes. They had to decide where to put her now that Maud was dead. Because of her exposure to smallpox she would have to stay inside the enclosure, but he didn't want her left in the ward. 'I suggest she be moved into a tent.'

Nurse Meyler was quiet. And he got the sense that she didn't much like the idea.

'Do you have a better suggestion?' he said.

At that point she flashed him one of her looks. 'I don't know how you can hold your head up after the death of that poor little child.'

He was stunned. 'What more could I have done for her? I've been down to see her at least three or four times a day and left detailed instructions for her care...'

'How very noble of you,' she said. 'But I never once saw you go to her bedside. How can you call yourself a doctor? You ought to be ashamed of yourself.'

'But I've told you my reasons several times.'

'Oh yes,' she sneered, 'that's a great excuse for neglecting the patients under your care. I've met your type before, you never get your own hands dirty. Well let me tell you, when the truth gets out you'll never hold your head up again, not if I can help it you won't.'

It was pointless to try and defend himself. The nurse clearly had it in for him and nothing was going to change her mind.

'Do I take it that you have no objection to removing Mrs Hughes to a tent?'

'I suppose not. But you mark my words, if you're not prepared to pull your weight I'll be taking charge around here and there'll be some changes, believe you me.'



**Healthy ground: second class cabins**

It was Dr Caffyn who came to tell them that poor little Maud had passed away. He also came to warn the adults that the children should be kept inside, as Maud's coffin would soon be coming through.

When Lizzie told her mother the news Nora Rout sank onto the bed. 'This is all my fault,' she cried.

Lizzie came to sit beside her and took hold of her mother's hand. 'You mustn't blame yourself.'

'How can you say that? If only I'd brought a change of clothes none of this would have happened.'

They were distracted by the commotion outside – the coffin was about to arrive and the children had gone outside to watch. They'd obviously overheard the news about Maud and wanted to catch a glimpse of the coffin. Lizzie went out to bring them back inside where she did her best to distract their attention but there was little point. They wanted to go to the window to watch.

'Let them look,' Nora said, and the children went and stood at the window and watched in silence as the coffin went past. Then all Maud's brothers and sisters went out and began to follow their sister's coffin.

Nora felt powerless to stop them. When her own two youngsters wanted to follow she could see no point in holding them back. They were naturally curious and it could do no harm. 'You'd better go as well,' she told Lizzie, 'someone should keep an eye on them.'

Once they'd gone she lay down on the bed. These days she was always tired and all she wanted to do was sleep.

When the children returned an hour or so later, they wanted to tell Nora what they'd seen, how they'd watched from a distance as the two gravediggers dropped the coffin into the grave. 'It made a bang when it hit the bottom,' one of the younger children said.

'Didn't they use any ropes?' Nora said. 'There should have been ropes to lower the coffin.'

'No,' Lizzie said. 'They couldn't find any ropes, I overheard them talking about it.'

Then Lizzie went on to describe to her mother how the gravediggers sat beside the grave and passed a bottle of brandy between them. 'I think they were drunk,' she said in disgust.

Nora looked at Maud's brothers and sisters. 'Poor kiddies,' she said and went to the youngest and picked him. 'Perhaps we could make a posy for Maud and take it down to put on her grave. What do you think?'

That afternoon she went with the children as they gathered some flowers. There wasn't very much in flower other than some dandelions and some native bushes, some of which had tiny blooms of blue and white. They took some of these. Then one of the boys began to gather some flat stones to decorate the grave. Soon they had enough to make a small shrine using the rocks and flowers around the grave. When they'd finished Nora had them all hold hands and close their eyes as she said a prayer for Maud.

**Faraway**

John Hughes could feel the pressure building: he was so angry about his daughter's death he felt he could have strangled someone. The strength of his anger frightened him. Why hadn't Carroll allowed him to stay with his daughter in the enclosure? What harm could it have possibly done? More than anything he hated Carroll with his petty rules and his punitive ways.

Walsh had been trying to calm him down as usual by persuading him to have a drink but drink was the last thing on his mind. He wanted revenge – that and to be with his wife and children.

That morning in the cabin with Walsh, he expressed his frustration with the shackles. The three days were up and he wanted them off but Walsh couldn't help, he said to Hughes, it was up to Carroll to remove them. Without warning Hughes felt the anger erupt and began to punch at the walls of the cabin. He bashed at the timber until it splintered and the knuckles of both hands were bloody and swollen. Then he sank to his knees and began to sob.

In the days that followed his daughter's death Hughes kept very much to himself. Carroll had eventually removed the leg irons so he was able to move about. He continued to cook meals for himself and Walsh but ate his meals alone on the deck rather than in the cabin with Walsh. Often he would stand and stare up towards the hospital enclosure in the hope of seeing his wife. Carroll told him she'd been moved into a tent outside the ward. Sometimes he saw her by the fence and the two of them would wave then just stand and look at each other.

Then something happened on the hulk that took his mind off his problems for a while. Three Chinese men from the forward section – he recognised Ah Home amongst them – came to the cabin to talk to Walsh. As Hughes listened to the exchange with Walsh he realised the men were upset about something but Walsh couldn't be bothered with them and sent them back to their end of the hulk with the admonition that they were not to trespass beyond the cabin.

'What did they want?' Hughes asked.

Walsh shrugged. 'Don't ask me! No savee,' he grinned.

'But shouldn't you make of effort to find out what it was they were trying to tell you?'

'I've been in this game long enough to know how to handle them. They'll settle down, they always do.'

Hughes was tempted to argue but bit his tongue. Still he was curious to know what had brought the three men to try and talk to Walsh. It had to have been something important since the Chinese usually kept to themselves. They did all their own cooking and cleaning as well as scrubbing down the decks for Walsh. Perhaps they'd run out of opium and needed some laudanum for Won Ping.

That night as usual he sat on the deck long after Walsh had gone to bed. He was finding it hard to sleep and rather than lie awake in the smelly compartment he would wrap himself in a blanket and sit on deck to watch the stars. That night as he sat there puffing on his pipe and listening to the waves against the hull, he thought he heard someone moving about. He got up to take a look around and spotted three Chinese men who were trying to sneak up to the cabin. Something glistened in the dark. One of the men had a knife.

Hughes discarded his pipe and blanket and moved swiftly across the deck, intent on disarming the man with the knife. This wasn't difficult to achieve since Hughes' height and bulk was a big advantage. Once the scuffle settled down, he escorted the three men back to their quarters. He was determined to find out what was wrong. By a series of gestures he soon got their drift – the men had no medicines for Won Ping and nothing suitable for him to eat. They wanted some rice and vegetables and, if possible, a supply of opium.

Next day Hughes spoke to Walsh about the incident the previous night. 'Can't you ask Carroll to get them some rice and something other than potatoes and cabbage?' he said. 'It's hard enough for us to eat the rubbish he keeps sending over. Imagine what it's like for them.'

But Walsh looked doubtful. 'They think they're hard done by,' he said. 'I still haven't got those medicines I ordered weeks ago.'

'Why don't you stand up to the man?' Hughes said. 'Can't you send a complaint to Dr Alleyne? You can't just sit there and do nothing about it.'

'I've already told you my hands are tied.'

'But can't you sneak something to the telegraph operator? Carroll wouldn't have to know. I'll even take it over for you if it will help those poor beggars. How would you like to be in their shoes with no one who can understand you, and be treated like you're some kind of vermin?'

Once again Walsh shook his head. 'The telegraph operator wouldn't send it, not without Carroll's approval. He'd be risking his job if he did.'

Hughes decided to drop the subject but later that day he overheard a loud discussion between Carroll and Walsh. This time he was glad to hear that Walsh wasn't backing down like he usually did. Instead he demanded the medicines he'd ordered. If he didn't get them in the next few days he warned it would be on Carroll's head if something went wrong. Carroll didn't sound too worried but he agreed to check with the telegraph operator and get back to Walsh. He sent his son out later that day with a message for Walsh to rewrite his order: because it had been written in Latin the operator had been unable to make sense of it.

A few days later a second group of Chinese men arrived from Sydney. Amongst them was a man named Su Chong who was transferred to the *Faraway*. Su Chong was one of the men who'd helped hide Won Ping from the authorities, and now he too had come down with smallpox. He'd been hiding out at Druitt Town in Sydney's west, where he'd gone to stay with some market gardeners.

When Su Chong was placed on the landing platform by the boatmen from the *Pinafore*, Walsh ordered the Chinese down to fetch him and take him to the forward section. Once again they were expected to look after the man without any help.

Now that there were two Chinese patients, Walsh decided to tackle Carroll about the request for rice and greens. He also reminded Carroll about the need for medicines, not only for the Chinese but in the event that there were other smallpox cases from Sydney. Once again Carroll was vague but later on that afternoon he sent his son out with a bag of rice. Hughes took a small amount of rice for himself and Walsh and passed on the remainder to the Chinese.

## **Quarantine Station – fourth week**

### Quarantine Beach

Constable Cook remained in his tent until the day before Su Chong arrived from Sydney along with eight other Chinese men. For the first week he'd been unable to eat, but survived on a daily bottle of ale that Dr Caffyn brought to him. Like the others in the healthy ground he had to make do with a single frypan for all his cooking and despite repeated requests he'd never been issued with a proper towel or a bowl to wash in, but had to manage as best he could.

When Carroll came in person to tell him that he could pack up his things and move to the cabins Cook was pleasantly surprised. It was the first time he had spoken to Carroll since their confrontation three weeks earlier. Carroll offered no explanation and Cook didn't bother to ask. From what he'd heard about Carroll from others it was better to leave well enough alone rather than give Carroll an excuse to change his mind.

Cook rolled up his bedding and took it with him as he followed Carroll up to the cabins. There he was issued with a new uniform and after having a decent wash, Cook dressed in his first clean clothes for weeks. After the best sleep he'd had for many weeks he woke refreshed and optimistic and went out to join the others for breakfast. But his new-found freedom wasn't to last. No sooner had he finished eating than Carroll came to tell the sergeant that there was a group of Chinese market gardeners on their way to the quarantine station. These were the men from Druitt Town who'd been harbouring Su Chong, the man with smallpox. Since none of the others had the smallpox they'd be housed in tents in the healthy ground. A policeman was needed to guard the men.

The sergeant decided in the interests of fairness to let the available men draw straws. When Cook found he'd drawn the short straw he was sure he must have been duped by the others, but they protested it was all done fair and square. Without proof Cook had little option but to pack up his bedding once more and prepare to move back into a tent. It was only later in the day that he discovered what Carroll had in mind. He wanted Cook to move into one of the tents with the Chinese men.



'No way,' Cook said. 'I've got this far without getting sick, I'm not going to risk it now. I must have my own tent away from the others.'

When Carroll insisted that Cook share a tent, he decided to go and talk to the sergeant who agreed to contact Superintendent Read to see what he had to say on the matter. Word came back that same afternoon: there was no reason why Cook shouldn't guard the men, but he must have a tent of his own at a suitable distance from the other men.

Now that the issue had been settled, Cook moved his things into a tent that was set up a short distance from the others, a few hundred yards below the cabins. This time Cook took an extra blanket and cadged some tobacco from the others, who promised to keep him well-supplied with whatever they could get their hands on including coffee, ham, pickles and so on that they managed to get sent over from Sydney.

### **Hospital enclosure**

Since Clune's run-in with Nurse Meyler on the day that Maud Hughes died, he'd done his best to avoid the nurses. He began to take his meals to the pavilion where he preferred to eat alone. At least then he could avoid the raised eyebrows and the strange looks that passed between the women.

Despite the tensions within the enclosure, he continued to keep an eye on May Rout who despite his dire prediction was still hanging on. For her mother's sake he was glad, though he dreaded the thought of the effects on the child of such a devastating infection. There was every possibility her hearing and vision would be affected, and possibly her bone development.

When he discovered a coffin outside the ward that was obviously intended for the child, he went to Livesey for an explanation. Who had told him to put it there?

'Nurse Meyler said we should get it ready, she doesn't expect the kiddie to last.'

Clune ordered Livesey to remove it at once. It was only later that Livesey told him he'd also been told to dig the grave, so certain had Nurse Meyler been that May Rout would not survive the illness.

When Nurse Meyler noticed the coffin was gone she came to the pavilion looking for Clune. 'I've got a bone to pick with you,' she said when Clune answered the door. 'What makes you think you've got the right to interfere with my instructions?'

'I don't know what you're talking about.'

'That coffin for a start. I told Livesey to prepare that coffin and you have the nerve to interfere.'

Clune felt himself go red in the face. 'What sort of effect do you think it will have, a child's coffin waiting at the door? Just think about poor Mrs Hughes.'

'As if you cared,' Nurse Meyler said. 'I suggest in future you keep your nose out of matters that have nothing to do with you.' She turned on her heel and walked away.

When Clune saw her later at the fence with Carroll he sensed that they were discussing the coffin and particularly his order to have it removed. The look of spite Nurse Meyler cast him made him wonder what he'd done to make her despise him the way she did.

It wasn't just the nurse's behaviour that was troubling him since Maud Hughes' death. Ever since the gravedigger had returned from disposing of Maud Hughes' body, his drinking seemed to have escalated. More and more often he reeked of spirits. At times he completely lost control and became abusive towards Clune and others.

As tensions mounted inside the enclosure Clune increased his efforts to secure his release but as usual with little result. More than three weeks had passed since he'd first been brought to the quarantine station and he was beginning to wonder if he'd been forgotten: out of sight out of mind, as his mother used to say. But he was still determined to persist in his efforts to get back to Sydney. The alternative was just too grim.

One day as he was taking a walk Clune came across a woman who'd been left on a stretcher inside the gate that led from the cove. From a quick examination he could see she had confluent smallpox and that the disease was very advanced. She was in such a low state that there was little to be done for her. Death would occur in a matter of days. But why on earth was she left in the rain and why hadn't anyone been informed?

He went to fetch Livesey from the pavilion to get him to carry her down to the ward but Livesey wasn't in the mood. 'Why don't you carry her down yourself?' he said.

'I thought that's what you were paid to do. Come on Livesey, it's raining out there, we can't just leave her in the rain.'

Livesey gave him a filthy look. 'It's all very well for you,' he said, 'at least you've got a change of clothes. I only brought three suits with me and this is the last. The others had to go on the fire.'

'Have you spoken to Carroll about this?'

'What do you reckon? A man might as well talk to the wall.'

Clune was anxious to get back to the woman. 'Look I'll have a word to Carroll for you but let's get this woman inside out of the rain.'

Livesey obviously wasn't too pleased but he grabbed his hat and they went to the gate. By this time Nurse Meyler had arrived along with another stretcher which had been placed beside the first. Clune took a quick look at the second patient, a girl of about twelve years old who appeared to be in a bit better shape.

Meanwhile Livesey took one look at the scene and announced he would have to get someone to help. He went to find the other gravedigger, a man by the name of Charles Cornelius, and returned with him a short time later. Between them they made short work of the job.

When Clune went down to the ward that morning he found Nurse Meyler was rearranging the beds. Mrs Guildford was sitting outside on the veranda and was about to be moved into the tent where her husband had been recovering for the past two weeks. Clune quickly assessed the situation and decided to intervene. 'The last thing they need is to be outside the ward where they'll be exposed to all the goings-on, not to mention the smell.'

'And what do you suggest,' Nurse Meyler said. 'Perhaps they can go to the pavilion with you.'

Clune was horrified. 'Not at all, I was thinking they could go into my old tent. It's still standing as far as I know and it's far enough away from here for them to have some peace and quiet.'

He thought Nurse Meyler was about to argue but she must have thought better of it. Instead she sent Livesey up to check that the tent was still sound and to arrange an extra bed. Meanwhile she had work to do she said rather pointedly to Clune.

Before Clune left the ward, however, he checked the background of the two new arrivals. Mary Anne Fisher, the sicker of the two, was twenty-one years old. She'd been living in Glebe with her husband and child and a brother and sister-in-law and their children. The rest of the family had been taken to the first class cabins in the healthy ground. The other patient, twelve-year-old Gertrude Monaghan, had arrived with her mother and infant brother who was still at the breast. The mother was waiting down on the jetty to hear whether she and the infant would be allowed to stay with her daughter in the enclosure.

Clune strongly advised against it. There was no point exposing the infant to smallpox and besides they could potentially run out of room in the enclosure as the number of smallpox cases increased.

Nurse Hollis was sent down to the jetty to tell the woman of their decision. It wasn't until later that Clune discovered how Carroll placed the woman and child into Cook's old tent on the beach for the night, with no fire and no means of preparing food. When her husband and their children arrived on the *Pinafore* the following morning, Mrs Monaghan had caught a chill. She and her family were moved into one of the first class cabins, where she spent the next two weeks in bed recovering from a chest infection.

Meanwhile Clune had Livesey assist him to move the Guildford's up to the tent. He went back to see them later that day with a flask of brandy and some biscuits. They seemed happy to be away from all the noise and activity of the ward.

Two days later in the afternoon, Clune saw dark clouds beginning to gather. It was obvious they were in for a storm. His first thought was for the Guildford couple whose tent was very exposed to the weather. How would it hold up in a storm? He sent Livesey up to check on them and to see that the tent was well-secured. Livesey came back a short time later to say that George Guildford had sent him away. 'He said we should have checked on the tent before, and they didn't want to be disturbed.'

Clune was uneasy. As the wind began to howl and heavy rain lashed the grounds he was fearful for the couple's safety but there was nothing to be done at this late stage. They'd already sent Livesey packing so clearly they didn't want any help.

Next morning when he went to the ward, Clune was surprised to see the Guildfords each propped up in separate beds. When George Guildford saw Clune at the window he raised his fist. Clune was shocked. When he heard from Livesey what had happened – that the tent had leaked and then collapsed, forcing the couple to return to the ward in the middle of the night, drenched to the skin – he was horrified.

When he went back to the ward later that morning to try and see what could be done, Guildford challenged him. 'Why can't we stay in the pavilion with you? I'm sure there's plenty of room.'

At that moment the cook arrived with a tray of breakfast for the Guildfords, but Guildford told her to take it away. 'You don't expect us to look at food! This place is enough to make anyone sick.'

At that point Clune slipped away. He would come back later to talk to Guildford when perhaps he'd be in a better frame of mind. But Livesey returned to the pavilion later to tell him what had since transpired, how Nurse Meyler had sent Livesey to the superintendent to ask if she could have the pavilion for the smallpox convalescents.

'And what did Carroll say?'

'He wouldn't have a bar of it. He said the Guildfords had to choose – they could stay in the ward or go back to the tent.'

Even though it was raining heavily, the Guildfords chose to move back to the tent.

### ***Faraway***

John Hughes sat on the open deck and watched the sky turn a menacing grey. There were lightning flashes in the distance and the low growl of thunder as the storm approached. The water turned a deep shade of grey and thousands of white caps flecked the surface. Large drops of rain began to splatter on the timber deck and gusts of wind buffeted the cove. The timbers of the hulk were creaking.

The impending storm held no fear for Hughes. The *Faraway* was solid enough and even if it broke its moorings he was confident they'd still be safe. It was Sarah he was worried about. How would her tent stand up to the storm? Not only that, but his wife was terrified of lightning – a tent was the last place she'd want to be.

As the rain began in earnest Hughes got up and went into the cabin. As usual Walsh was lying down and had a half-empty bottle beside him. Hughes sat on the opposite bunk. Lately he'd lost all patience with Walsh. What was the use of having a doctor who was always drunk? From everything that Hughes had witnessed Walsh did little to earn his keep. He completely ignored the poor Chinese, assuming they'd look after themselves, and even when they came to him for help he brushed them off. He was too lazy to find out what they wanted.

Now they had another sick man on board, a European by the name of Verdich whom Walsh had put in the compartment with Hughes. He obviously expected Hughes to take care of the new arrival but Hughes was angry at the imposition which didn't seem fair to him at all. Although Verdich had only a mild case of smallpox he was very restless during the night. A couple of times the previous evening he got out of bed and wandered about, and kept bumping into things in the dark. Several times Hughes had to get up and help the sick man back to his bed.

When he finally dragged himself upstairs next morning after a night where he got little sleep he was furious to find Walsh still expected to have his breakfast prepared for him. He was supposed to take care of Verdich as well – not that Verdich was eating much. His throat was too sore. All he

seemed to want was custard but Hughes had no idea how to make it so he took Verdich some broth instead, made up from boiled beef and potatoes.

Apart from the lack of adequate food the medicines that Walsh had ordered from Sydney still hadn't arrived. Hughes urged Walsh to complain, but each time he said something about it Walsh brushed him off. It was all too hard.

When Hughes eventually went to Walsh after another night without much rest he was to find Walsh sympathetic. 'Why don't you go down and fetch your bedding. You can sleep up here in the cabin with me.' Hughes didn't need to be asked twice.

The bad weather continued for two more days and despite his move into the cabin Hughes was restless and irritable. There was nothing to occupy his mind and it was too wet to go out on the deck, especially when he had no change of clothes. When he wasn't busy attending to Verdich or preparing a meal for the three of them, his thoughts inevitably turned to Maud and to his surviving children in the healthy ground. What must it be like for them to be away from their parents at a time like this? He knew from having talked to Sarah when he visited her in the enclosure that they were in the cabin with Nora Rout, but she'd only recently lost her husband and her daughter, May, was still very sick. Nora obviously had enough on her plate without worrying about his children as well.

By the time the weather finally broke after four days of almost constant rain, Verdich was feeling better as well and ventured up to the deck for breakfast. After so much time in bed with a fever in the same clothes he'd been wearing when he arrived, Verdich was badly in need of a wash. Walsh told him to go and clean himself up but when Verdich asked for some soap and a towel as well as a change of clothes, Walsh shrugged. 'Hughes will get you a bowl of water.'

'But how must I dry myself?' Verdich said.



Walsh was clearly annoyed as he got up and went into the galley where he grabbed a piece of greasy rag that Hughes had been using to wipe out the frypan. He took it out and slung it at Verdich. 'This will have to do,' he said. Hughes could see the look of disgust as Verdich took the piece of rag between his fingers and took it outside. He hung it from a piece of rigging and there it would stay. 'Don't worry,' he said, 'I will use my shirt.'

Once he'd cleaned himself up a bit, Hughes took Verdich into the galley to get him out of Walsh's way. 'You'd better teach me how to make that custard,' he said. He liked Verdich: the two were good for each other and from that point on they shared most of the cooking.

### **Hospital enclosure**

The days of unrelenting rain made life very difficult. Even inside the pavilion, things were damp and clammy to touch. Clune did his best to dry his clothing by suspending it from nails that stuck out from the walls, but nothing dried. Soon the air in the pavilion was dank with the smell of musty clothing, a smell which Clune found very oppressive.

As the rain continued day after day he was less inclined to go to the ward. When he did go down to check on the patients the nurses barely spoke to him. One morning as he stood outside the ward, he heard Nurse Meyler telling someone that she was forced to take control because the doctor had let them down. He was tempted to defend himself: he'd never agreed to take charge in the first place and had been sent over here under duress. But what was the point? It sounded weak even to him.

The combined effect of the inclement weather and his increasingly bleak state of mind since the confrontation with the Guildfords soon began to tell on his health. The headaches returned and his throat was inflamed as his body succumbed to more aches and pains. Over the next few days his temperature soared and he stayed in bed to try and keep warm, his body racked by bouts of the rigors. Whenever he had to get out of bed the cold air hit him like physical pain. His jaw ached, his head ached, every part of his body ached. Even to sit on the rough wooden seat of the toilet seemed to sear his flesh.

He craved warmth more than anything. If only Annie had been there, she would have taken care of him, would have used her own body to keep him warm, but here there was no one who seemed to care whether or not he lived or died. It seemed everyone had turned against him.

How had things progressed to this point? Was there something in his nature that turned people against him? The Guildfords were a prime example. He thought back over all that had happened in the time since he'd first met the couple. Right from the start he'd gone out of his way to make sure they were comfortable, and up until the last few days he believed he enjoyed their respect. But now they too had turned against him and he was

even more confused. It was as though all his earlier kindness counted for nothing in the end.

He could blame it all on Nurse Meyler of course. She'd taken such a set against him and was always denigrating him to others, but that still didn't explain why other people were so easily swayed. Was he really such an unlikeable fellow? All the evidence pointed that way.

One afternoon while he was in bed he was disturbed by an unfamiliar sound. It sounded like someone was standing outside and throwing pebbles against the wall. He got out of bed and went to the door. Nurse Hollis stood some distance away.

'What is it?' he said, confused by her reluctance to approach the pavilion.

'It's Mrs Fisher,' Nurse Hollis said. 'She's just passed away. I thought I should come and let you know.'

'But why didn't you come and knock on the door?'

She looked embarrassed. 'I wasn't sure what state you'd be in.'

Her answer didn't make any sense but this was not the time to pursue it. He went to get dressed. He had to go down and examine the body before it could be removed from the ward.

By the time he got himself down to the ward Livesey and the other gravedigger were already there with a coffin which was lying open on the veranda. Clune went straight into the ward. The smell of vomit and excrement hit him like a slap in the face. As he went across to the bed he noticed a pile of hair and some filthy rags which were lying in the corner. They must have belonged to Mrs Fisher but they shouldn't have been left lying around, they should have been thrown straight on the fire. He would have to speak to the nurses about it.

He turned to the body on the bed. The poor woman didn't have a chance, he'd known that the first moment he saw her lying on the stretcher

up at the gate. There was no questioning the cause of death so he wasted no time examining the body but got out of there as fast as he could, glad to be out where he could get some fresh air.

As soon as they saw him come out of the ward the gravediggers went in to remove the body. As Clune walked slowly towards the pavilion he realised he should have taken a moment to check on May Rout and the other girl but he couldn't bring himself to do it. He was too sick at heart. He walked slowly back to the pavilion and took to his bed for the rest of the day.

### Hospital enclosure

It was late in the evening when Livesey returned from helping to bury Mary Anne Fisher. After listening to him stumbling about and cursing as he kept bumping into things, Clune got up and lit a candle. Livesey was dressed in his underwear and had a blanket around his shoulders.

He staggered over with a bottle and sank to the floor with his back against one of Clune's trunks. Then he offered the half empty bottle to Clune, who shook his head.

'What's the matter?' Livesey said, his speech slurred. 'Might do you good, you never know.' He took a swig from the bottle and the alcohol ran down his beard. 'Want to know what's wrong with you? You're weak as piss,' Livesey said. '...got to learn to stand up for yourself.'

Clune didn't want to hear any more. He got up and offered his hand to Livesey 'Come on, you should get some sleep.' He took the bottle and put it aside then taking both of Livesey's hands, tried to pull him to his feet. Eventually he succeeded and somehow got him across the room to his bed, where Livesey collapsed. Clune threw a blanket over him. He went back to his own cold bed and pulled the covers up under his chin.

Weak. Was that what everyone thought of him? He remembered a comment Carroll had made just after Nurse Meyler arrived. 'She's a real nipper,' Carroll said. 'You'll have to show her who's the boss.'

Perhaps he'd made a mistake in not standing up to Nurse Meyler's tactics from the very beginning. But as soon as the thought crossed his mind he knew he was no match for her. She had no respect for doctors, she'd told him so many times in the past, and she was the type who would bow to no one.

But if she really was so competent why leave the mound of filthy rags and hair in the ward when it should have been disposed of? He'd also noticed the scabs on the floor around Mrs Fisher's bed. It wasn't a very good sign. Perhaps he should take more of a hand in the way things were

managed in the ward. But did he really want to take it on now, after all that had transpired between himself and the nurse? It was out of the question.

Within days of Mary Anne Fisher's death, another two women from Sydney turned up at the hospital enclosure. Livesey was so concerned about them that he came to the pavilion to talk to Clune. 'They don't look sick to me,' he said, adding that both the women were well enough to make their own way from the jetty.

Clune decided to see for himself. If there was one thing he wanted to avoid it was another unnecessary death.

When he got to the window of the ward he saw the two women inside the ward. Each of them sat on an unmade bed looking decidedly uncomfortable. There was no sign of either nurse. He called the two women to the window and introduced himself. 'I'd like you to come out onto the veranda where I can take a good look at you.'

They didn't hesitate. As they came out of the ward he could see from their dress that they were very poor. One of the women had bare feet and neither of them was warmly dressed.

As he checked them for signs of smallpox they told him their stories. Both had been seen by Dr Spencer, an elderly man who'd been on the *Brisbane* when it arrived in Sydney with a case of smallpox. He'd been sent by the government to examine them and it was on the basis of his diagnosis that they'd been sent to the quarantine station.

One of the women, Elizabeth Bonnor, had only recently become a widow. She told Clune how she'd been forced to leave her five young children alone in her Ultimo house which had been placed under quarantine. She was desperately worried for their welfare. Though the usual promises had been made that someone would keep an eye on the children, and arrange for food to be delivered, she'd heard too many stories to the contrary of residents under quarantine who'd been left alone with no way of going out to get food.

The other woman, Mary Kelly, told him how she'd been reported by a neighbour who noticed a suspicious eruption on her face. Dr Spencer confirmed it as smallpox. 'I tried to argue the point with him but he wouldn't listen. He was very rude.'

'Well I'm afraid Dr Spencer has got it wrong,' Clune said. 'Neither of you has any sign of smallpox. I want you to wait out here, you mustn't go back into the ward. I'll see if I can arrange some tents.'

'Can't we just we go back to Sydney?' Mrs Bonnor said.

'There's no way they'll let you out of here, not once you've been inside the ward.'

He went to find Livesey to send him down to ask Carroll for some extra tents. When Clune eventually returned to the ward he found Nurse Meyler with the women, who sat on the grass to wait for him. Nurse Meyler came straight at him.

'You've got a nerve,' she said, 'interfering with my instructions. Those two should be inside in the ward.'

Clune glanced at the women and lowered his voice. 'Neither of those women has smallpox and I won't allow you to put them at risk.'

'And what would you know?' Nurse Meyler sneered.

'I've seen a damn sight more of smallpox than you have, and I know a smallpox case when I see one.'

'Well let me tell you now, I won't be responsible for your mistakes.'

'If you're half the nurse you seem to think, then why is the ward in such a state? I've seen that pile of putrid rags and that dead woman's hair that you've shoved in the corner, not to mention the scabs on the floor.'

'I'd be careful if I were you,' she hissed.

Just then the cook interrupted them. 'Leave them things,' she said to Nurse Meyler, with a disparaging look at the new arrivals. 'Come and get your breakfast, it's getting cold.'

As Nurse Meyler flounced off with the girl, Clune felt bound to apologise. 'Don't take any notice of them,' he said. 'They're getting a bit too big for their boots.'

The two women had been up since five that morning and had nothing to eat or drink since then, so he offered to make them a cup of tea. They gladly accepted and he went to the cookhouse where the nurse was sitting having breakfast. He tried to ignore the dirty look and the smirk that passed between the two as he poured the tea. He made a cup for himself as well and took it back to have with the women as they sat on the grass outside the ward.

As they drank their tea Clune learned how they'd been told by the police not to bring any personal items with them when they came to the quarantine station. 'We were told we'd be given whatever we needed once we got here,' Mrs Bonnor said.

She was alarmed to see his sceptical look. Neither of the women had brought any clothes, they'd arrived with just what they had on their backs.

He promised to see what he could do about getting them a change of clothes, as well as some boots for Mrs Kelly whose bare feet were blue with cold, and he promised to send a telegram to Dr Alleyne in Sydney as well, and ask him to look out for Mrs Bonnor's children.

He was about to leave them to go and find Livesey when Mrs Bonnor made a face. 'What's that awful smell?'

'It smells like burning hair to me,' Mary Kelly said. They looked to Clune for an explanation. 'Don't worry,' he said, 'One of the patients had to have her head shaved. It's the only way we can treat the scalp.' He omitted to tell them the woman had died.

Once Livesey returned with the tents and set them up next to Sarah Hughes, Clune sent Livesey to fetch some bedding and some washing bowls and a tub for the women. He was keen for them to wash their clothing after having been inside the ward. That afternoon he pitched in to help carry the



hot water from the cookhouse, and gave them each some carbolic soap so they could disinfect themselves and their clothes. Then he managed to procure a couple of night dresses from the nurses for the women to wear until their clothing dried.

Later that evening Clune took some tonic he'd made up himself, a mixture of zinc sulphate and tincture of rhubarb to help strengthen the women against infection.

From then on he checked on them every morning, encouraging them to get outside each day and take in some fresh air and exercise. They seemed glad of his attention since neither nurse went anywhere near them. Their only visitor apart from Clune was the cook who brought them their meals each day, but she never bothered so speak to them.

There was little more Clune could do for the women other than trying to get them some clothes. When he spoke to Carroll about them and explained how they'd been told not to bring any clothing, Carroll sneered. 'If they had any sense they'd have taken no notice.'

It wasn't just the women who needed clothing, he reminded Carroll. The gravediggers had been asking for weeks for some spare clothing for when they handled the patients or had to bury someone who had died. Poor Livesey was still getting round in his blanket. But no matter how Clune tried to get through to Carroll the importance of providing them with some clothing, he could see it made little impression.

There was little Clune could do about the clothing, especially for the women, but rather than see Mrs Kelly suffer he loaned her a spare pair of boots. Out of gratitude for all that he'd done, the women offered to do his washing and to wash for Livesey as well.

## **Quarantine Station – fifth week**

### Hospital enclosure

In the week following Mary-Anne Fisher's death, two new cases of smallpox occurred, only this time in the healthy ground. One was the dead woman's sister-in-law, the other the woman's infant son. As usual the woman and her child were dumped at the gate on a stretcher and left for someone to stumble across them. This time it was Nurse Meyler who found them and came to get Livesey from the pavilion. Livesey refused to help, however, since he was still getting round wrapped in his blanket.

Clune went with Livesey down to the gate where the woman and child lay on a stretcher. The gravedigger Cornelius was there as well. He'd been summoned to help by one of the nurses, but was in the same situation as Livesey so he too was refusing to help.

Nurse Meyler vented her frustration on Clune. 'If you had a spark of manliness in you, you'd carry them down to the ward yourself.'

'On the contrary,' Clune said, 'if your friend Carroll would only do the job that he's being paid to do, and made sure these men got a change of clothing each time they came into contact with smallpox, we wouldn't even be facing this problem.'

As they stood glaring at one another George Guildford appeared, curious to see what the fuss was about. When he realised what was going on Guildford began to roll up his sleeves. 'I'll take them down to the ward myself even if I have to crawl to get there.'

'Don't be foolish,' Nurse Meyler said. 'You're not well enough yet and you mustn't over-exert yourself. She decided to send for the superintendent and was about to talk to the constable who was standing guard outside the gate when the gravediggers had a change of heart. They each took one end of the stretcher and without further ado took the woman and child to the ward.'

Now that all the excitement was over, Clune was about to head back to the pavilion but noticed Carroll up at the fence. Nurse Meyler went over to

talk to him. Clune was uneasy. Every time he saw them together he felt a knot in his stomach. He went back inside the pavilion.

A short time later someone started throwing pebbles at the wall. It was Nurse Meyler. 'I've just been speaking to Mr Carroll and he says to tell you that from now on the cook will no longer prepare your meals. You and Livesey will have to cook for yourselves.'

It took Clune a moment to find his voice. 'This is your doing, isn't it?'

'Of course not, the decision was Mr Carroll's. But that poor girl has enough to do, what with all the patients to cook for and the washing and cleaning to be done as well.'

There was no point arguing with her, but he knew the nurse was behind the decision. It was her way of getting back at him.

'I take it we'll have access to the cookhouse?' Clune said as she was about to go.

'Of course,' the nurse said. 'But you'll have to arrange it with the cook.'

As if to prove the nurse was right, new cases kept arriving from Sydney. If the cook hadn't been kept busy before, she certainly was now and so were the nurses.

Clune was still smarting from the latest attack and had begun to avoid the ward once more. He was further humiliated by the fact that it was almost impossible to negotiate a time to use the cookhouse. Each time he went down to talk to the cook she made some excuse. In the end he and Livesey decided that they'd have to make do with a campfire instead. They couldn't even get hold of a suitable frypan in which to cook and had to use a piece of wire that they found lying about the grounds with which to skewer the meat.

Mrs Bonnor and Mrs Kelly heard about the difficulties they were having and came up with a plan. Neither of them liked the food anyway, so

they proposed to Carroll that they cook for themselves. All they needed was a supply of rations, some cooking utensils and some firewood. For once Carroll made no objection and soon the women were cooking for themselves as well as for Clune and Livesey. Still none of them had access to the cookhouse, despite the fact that it was fully equipped with more than enough stoves and equipment to handle two extra cooks with ease.

None of this was lost on Clune who kept to himself more and more. For the past five weeks he'd been determined to get himself back to his family and his practice in Sydney. Now that prospect began to look hopeless. He was exhausted and deflated, beaten down by the sense that his case appeared to have been forgotten by his friends and colleagues in Sydney, and by the constant conflicts within the enclosure.

### Healthy ground

With the growing number of smallpox cases, Carroll was under increasing pressure. Much of his time each day was occupied with the disputes that were springing up wherever he went. The cause of the trouble in his opinion was that some of the residents in the healthy ground didn't have enough to do and turned their attention to finding fault. Every where he went, it seemed that someone had a grievance to air.

In the second class cabins for example, there were constant complaints about the food – that and the behaviour of some of the children. With six different families competing for the woefully inadequate cooking facilities, there were always arguments breaking out over who should be first to use each of the cookhouses. The problem could easily have been resolved if the families would only take it in turns. A simple roster would have done the trick, but instead there was all kinds of nasty business. Mr and Mrs Keats were the worst. They always sent one of their lodgers down to the cookhouse before the others could get there to take possession for Mrs Keats. And since it was Nora Rout who had to share the same facilities as Mrs Keats she and the children invariably came out second best.

It was the same when the rations were delivered. Every day without fail as soon as the police set down the food there was a scrabble for the best cuts of meat and for a share of the vegetables and other items.

As for the children, once again it was Nora Rout who came under fire as the younger children – both her own and those of Sarah Hughes – roamed freely about the grounds and generally made nuisances of themselves. William Keats and his wife were constantly complaining to Carroll.

'They're no better than street urchins,' Mrs Keats said. 'And as for the way they get about so scantily clad – especially those girls – something ought to be done about it.'

There were other problems as well. Mrs Rout came to speak to him several times about the smell that she said was coming from the burial ground. Depending on the direction of the wind sometimes it was

overpowering, as Carroll knew only too well. To try and keep the woman happy he promised to do something about it as soon as he could find the time, but in fact it was the least of his worries.

There were problems in the first class cabins as well. It had all started when he put the Monaghan woman and her child in Cook's old tent for the night. Unfortunately it was wet and cold and the woman had caught a chill. When her husband arrived on the *Pinafore* next morning he kicked up a hell of a fuss, and threatened to write to the newspapers about the way his wife was treated. In particular he was peeved to find that he now had to take care of both his wife and children without any help. But in Carroll's mind the Monaghans had no idea how lucky they were to have a whole room to themselves. If they'd seen conditions in the second class cabins they would realise how well off they were.

On the *Faraway* there were problems as well. Fortunately Hughes had settled down since the drama with his daughter had ended, so he made no more attempts to swim ashore. But as for Walsh, Carroll was growing tired of his constant whining. Every time Carroll went to see him Walsh asked about the medicines that he insisted he'd ordered from Sydney. But Carroll couldn't even remember seeing the list that Walsh described. He was far too busy to sort it out and kept trying to put Walsh off by keeping him supplied with brandy.

As far as Carroll was concerned it made little difference to the patients whether they had medicines or not. They'd either survive the disease or not. The only reason Walsh was on board was to act as caretaker, to see that there was sufficient food and that those who succumbed to the disease were sent ashore without delay so their bodies could be buried.

The enclosure was a different matter and took up much of Carroll's time. Each day he would go and speak to Nurse Meyler for whom he had great admiration. She never complained of the isolation or whined about things that couldn't be helped, unlike that poor sap Dr Clune. When he'd seen the way the doctor behaved he had no qualms about egging Nurse Meyler on with her plans to take control of the ward. She was the type of

person they needed: if she saw something that needed doing she'd find a way to get it done. When she decided she needed the large pavilion for convalescents to recover he agreed to talk to Dr Alleyne. It would have been different if Clune was pulling his weight but from what Carroll knew of the situation the doctor had become a recluse. It would be far better to put him in a tent.

As for the problem with the gravediggers and the way they demanded a new suit of clothes each time they had to bury someone or carry a patient into the ward, the matter had been taken out of his hands when Dr Caffyn raided his store and took several suits without his permission to give to Livesey and Cornelius. From Carroll's point of view it was such a waste to burn a good suit when they could have hung them from a tree to air, which was what he suggested.

That week on Stores Beach when he met with Alleyne, the health officer seemed preoccupied. He was also under tremendous pressure as things were not going well in Sydney, where new cases of smallpox kept appearing despite his efforts to keep it in check.

Now they had another problem, with the return of the *Ocean* from a trip to Melbourne to drop off several hundred immigrants. The *Ocean* was back in Spring Cove again with more than two hundred immigrants still on board, most of them waiting to land in Sydney. Alleyne was under increasing pressure to find a solution to the stand-off that had seen the *Ocean* refused pratique despite no evidence of infectious disease. She'd been back in Spring Cove for a couple of days and somehow the press had got hold of the story and were demanding answers from the government.

Carroll had enough on his plate already without having to worry about the *Ocean*. He would much rather have spent his time with Alleyne discussing his problems with Dr Clune and whether he could be moved into a tent, and what they should do about Dr Caffyn whom Carroll insisted had raided his store and stolen several suits of clothing. But those things would have to wait.



The day after his meeting with Dr Alleyne the Treasury Department made the decision to put the *Ocean* incident behind them and cut short the bad press for the government. They sent instructions to Carroll that he was to assist with the transfer of immigrants from the *Ocean* to Stores Beach. There they were to be stripped of their clothing and all their possessions before being handed a new suit of clothes and a blanket, courtesy of the Treasury Department. All their clothing and possessions would be burnt. Only then would the *Ocean* be given pratique.

**Quarantine Station – seventh week**

### **Hospital enclosure**

Clune's health continued to deteriorate as his body was racked with bouts of fever. These days he rarely went near the ward, afraid of crossing paths with Nurse Meyler who was always making derogatory remarks.

The final blow to his self respect was a telegram from Dr Alleyne ordering him to vacate the pavilion to make way for the convalescents. He was to move his things into the tent that had been vacated by the Guildfords, the one located outside the ward. Clune's spirits were at such a low ebb that he could hardly find strength to pack up his things. It was Livesey who moved his trunks and bedding and helped him get settled in the tent.

As he lay in his tent outside the ward he was privy to all the misery and distress, not to mention the flies and the terrible smells. His mind kept going over and over what had transpired between him and the nurse. What had he ever done to her? If only he could talk to Annie perhaps she could help him to understand, but Annie was a world away.

Day after day as he lay in his tent, all distinction between what was real and what was in his imagination became blurred by sickness and despair. Past and present began to merge, and now instead of Meyler he saw his father's face instead, as he let fly at Clune or one of his brothers. They were ignorant pigs, their father told them again and again, pigs at a trough, filthy swine. Meal times were by far the worst. While they were sitting at the table having a meal, their father would watch their every move. If he caught them whispering to one another or saw one of them reach across the table to try and get a piece of bread without having excused themselves first, he would lash out at them with his boot.

For much of the time their mother was silent, worn down by years of constant abuse. But sometimes she stood up to their father and let fly with something from the dinner table – a sugar bowl, a jug of milk, whatever was nearest at hand. Clune dreaded those times for his mother's sake. He knew she'd pay dearly for her defiance, usually once the boys were in bed. Clune would lie there in the dark and hear the sickening thump of his father's fists

and his mother's pleading for it to stop. Sometimes she came to the boys' bedroom to try and get away from their father, but he would invariably pursue her, swearing and punching her in the face. Clune often wished he was big enough to get up and defend his mother but he never found the courage to do it. He was terrified of his father.

Those years of his childhood seemed to drag on forever but for all that Clune hated the violence, it was the silent treatment that hurt the worst. He could still remember the awful feeling of isolation when his father ignored him for weeks on end and insisted the others do the same. Sometimes his father would come into the room and say to whomever else was present, 'What stinks in here?' At other times, if he caught Clune daring to look at him, he would punch him in the head. 'What do you think you're looking at?' he'd snarl, then it would be back to the silent treatment again.

All four boys had their share of this treatment especially as they began to mature. At any one point in time there was always one of them out in the cold. When it was one of his brothers who was being subjected to the silent treatment Clune always felt a sense of relief that this time he was being spared.

Even when Clune did well at school, his father managed to turn this into a fault and would fix him with one of his glares. 'Think you're clever, don't you,' he'd say. 'Well you needn't think you'll be staying at school. You can get a job and support yourself.' It was his mother who went to bat for him and enabled him to continue his studies. Now lying in his tent, cold, dirty and ashamed, he wondered if it had all been a waste.

In the days that followed his move to the tent Mrs Bonnor and Mrs Kelly still insisted on preparing his meals which they left it for him outside. His appetite had vanished however, and he often left the plate untouched. Sometimes Livesey came to see him and tried to get him to come outside and join them by the fire but he always refused. He couldn't bear to let others see him when he hadn't shaven or washed himself or changed his clothes for more than a week.

When three young children had arrived from Sydney within the space of a couple of days, Livesey came to try and persuade Clune to get up and come and see them, but by this stage Clune was too far gone. He couldn't even save himself let alone try and save someone else.

**Faraway**

Hughes was surprised at how quickly Verdich recovered. They'd been taking turns in the galley as they cooked for themselves and Walsh. Each day they went down to the landing platform to fetch the rations which were divided between themselves and the Chinese. Ever since the incident with the knife, Hughes had taken to smuggling them bottles of ale for Won Ping and Ah Home as they convalesced from their illness. Walsh didn't appear to notice since he was sozzled most of the time.

When a young man named William Douglas arrived from Sydney with a mild case of smallpox, it was Verdich and Hughes who looked after him. Within four days he was up and about and the two men helped him to clean himself up and showed him round the rest of the hulk.

Douglas was a lively lad who delighted in regaling them with stories such as how he'd escaped from his home in Sydney after neighbour reported him as a smallpox case. Although the house was under police guard, Douglas managed to slip through the fence and down the back lane and was gone before anyone noticed. He roamed the streets for several days before was apprehended while trying to board a 'bus. It was the bandage on his face that gave him away. Douglas couldn't get over the fact that the newspapers had taken up his case and insisted he'd been wrongly diagnosed. 'They said I was only wearing a bandage because my face was so deformed.'

Douglas was no sooner on the mend than another case arrived from Sydney. John Harris, a man in his early twenties, was the sickest man they'd seen so far, aside from Won Ping and Su Chong. Despite the gravity of his condition Walsh put Harris in the same compartment as Verdich and Douglas. Hughes tried to point out that this wasn't fair, and suggested Harris be put in a separate compartment but Walsh was insistent he stay where he was. Someone would have to take care of Harris so why not let Verdich and Douglas do it?

Hughes bit his tongue. Despite the fact that he and Verdich were doing the lion's share of the work, Walsh was still officially in charge.

Nevertheless he tackled Walsh about the medicines he'd ordered from Sydney which weeks later still hadn't arrived. If Walsh didn't do something about it, Hughes threatened to tell the newspapers how patients were being neglected.

'How do you propose to do that?' Walsh said with a grin.

'Don't worry,' Hughes said. 'Even if it has to wait until they let us go back to Sydney I'm sure the newspapers will print the story.'

His threat obviously had an effect on Walsh. Next day he overheard Walsh and Carroll arguing down on the landing platform. When Walsh returned he seemed to think that he'd managed to get through to the superintendent and that it would only be a matter of days before the medicines arrived.

As if things weren't bad enough already, yet another sick man arrived from Sydney. Once again Walsh placed him in the compartment with the others. Things got so difficult in the compartment that the next night Verdich and Douglas moved their beds up onto the deck. It was the only way they could get any sleep since both men kept getting out of bed and wandering about the compartment. But even once they'd moved, their sleep continued to be disrupted as Harris and the other man kept wandering up onto the deck and had to be taken back down again. This happened several times each night.

Within days John Harris deteriorated and lost control of his bladder and bowels. The other men did what they could to try and clean up the mess but there was no clean linen kept on board and no spare blankets either. They had no choice but to leave the poor man lying in his own excrement.

Hughes was so incensed by the terrible conditions that once again he tackled Walsh. Why couldn't Walsh demand that Carroll send over a supply of bedding? This was a hospital ship after all. But Walsh was past caring. For twelve weeks now he'd been stuck on the hulk and with no end in sight he'd given up.

One night Hughes went to check on the men downstairs and found Harris in a state of distress. 'My poor mother, my poor father,' he cried.

For some reason this really got to Hughes who went up to speak to Walsh about it. 'Can't we do something to help him?' he pleaded.

'If that man doesn't die tonight, I'll eat my hat,' Walsh declared and took another swig from his bottle.

Next morning, it was Douglas's turn to go down and check on the two sick men. He came back upstairs white as a sheet. 'Harris is dead,' he said to Hughes. 'He's already cold.'

When Hughes went to break the news to Walsh, all Walsh seemed concerned about was how he was going to dispose of the body. He would have to arrange for Carroll to send the *Pinafore* over with a coffin. Meanwhile he was going to need someone to carry the dead man's body up onto the deck.

'Don't look at me,' Hughes said. 'I'm not going to do your dirty work for you.'

Walsh went to appeal to Verdich. 'Would you do it if I give you a bottle of brandy?'

'You can keep your brandy,' Verdich said. 'I'll do it for you on one condition – if I can have a clean set of clothes.'

'It's a deal,' Walsh said and promised he would have the clothing brought over on the *Pinafore* with the coffin.

The coffin duly arrived and Verdich went down to retrieve the body. It was a struggle getting it up the stairs and through the hatch, and no one moved to offer a hand. He managed to get the body into the coffin and after adding the quicklime he nailed down the lid. Then he removed his trousers and shirt and threw them over the side of the hulk. It was only then that Walsh confessed that the promised clothing hadn't arrived.



Hughes got the boy to fetch some hot water and Verdich did the best he could to rid himself of the terrible smell. Then he wrapped himself in one of his blankets.

For the rest of that day the coffin sat on the deck as they waited for the *Pinafore* to return to the hulk to pick it up. Eventually Carroll's son came over to tell them it would have to stay on the hulk until the morning. There'd been three deaths in the hospital enclosure in the past two days and the gravediggers had had enough.

That night the other sick man was so disturbed by Harris's death he kept wandering up onto the deck to stand and look at the dead man's coffin. Twice Verdich took him back to his bed only to have him reappear. Desperate to get some rest, Verdich went to wake Walsh. 'Can't you give him something to help him sleep?'

Walsh got up and went to the man. 'If you come up on deck once more I'll have no choice but to tie you to the bed.' Walsh's threat did the trick: it was the last time the man came onto the deck. Three days later he was dead as well.

**Quarantine Station – eighth week**

### **Hospital enclosure**

That weekend as three children died in quick succession, Clune remained in his tent. His close proximity to the ward made it difficult to ignore what was going on but he couldn't bring himself to get up and go to offer his help. Even when Livesey came to see him and begged him to go to the ward to help, Clune remained resolute. It was already too late to save the children and he wasn't about to risk any more humiliation. Livesey cursed him for a coward but Clune was past caring what anyone thought. His reputation was in tatters and he felt his whole life, everything he'd worked for, had already been taken away from him.

For some days after that dreadful weekend when there were three deaths in the space of forty-eight hours, no one came near the tent. Clune managed to avoid all human contact by only emerging from his tent to use the lavatory or to get some water.

One day Livesey came to the tent to see him, this time with a message from Carroll who was waiting for Clune up at the fence.

'What does he want?' Clune said, as he tried to pull himself together. His hair was an unruly bush and it was a long time since he'd shaved or washed.

'How would I know?' Livesey snapped. 'All I know is he wants to see you. You'd better get yourself up there quick smart.'

Clune tried to quickly tidy himself, running his fingers over his hair and trying to flatten the busy sideburns. His clothes smelt stale even to him. As he emerged from the tent and made his way up to the fence, he was weak and shaky on his feet and his suit hung loosely from his frame.

As Clune approached the fence he saw Nurse Meyler up on the coffin as usual, quietly talking to Carroll. The sight of the two of them together was enough to make Clune retreat to the tent but Meyler spotted him and moved away. As Clune stepped up onto the coffin, he braced himself to speak to Carroll.

'This just came from Dr Alleyne.'

Clune's hands were shaking as he took the piece of paper and stared at the words: 'Move Doctor Clune to healthy ground, and place him under guard until further notice.'

Stunned, he read through the message again. What did it mean? Surely he wasn't under arrest? He began to feel dizzy and sank down on the upturned coffin. He could hear Carroll speaking as though from a distance, then a roaring sound filled his ears.

When his breathing began to return to normal he opened his eyes. Carroll was no longer up at the fence, but had gone to the gate and was standing talking to the police. Carroll saw that he was recovered and beckoned to him. 'Come over here.'

What was going on? Surely they didn't expect him to leave the enclosure straight away, not without collecting his things.

Carroll beckoned to him again and he stood and walked slowly towards the gate.

'Come on, we haven't got all day,' Carroll said as he approached.

'But what about all my things?'

'You can't take them with you. They'll have to be burned.'

'But my books and journal, and my instruments...'

'They'll have to stay where they are for now. You can take that up with Dr Alleyne.'

The constable held the gate open for him but Clune couldn't bring himself to leave. It was all too sudden. He wasn't prepared.

'Can't I go back to the tent for a moment?'

The constable shook his head. 'You heard what Mr Carroll said.'

Clune still hesitated, torn between the two trunks full of his personal items and the prospect of getting out of the enclosure at last, after eight long weeks of being locked away. Realising there was little point in trying to go back for his things he made up his mind and stepped through the gate.

They set off down towards the beach and came to the flat near Carroll's store. 'Over here,' the constable said and led him past the store to a clearing just above the beach. 'This is where we'll set up the tent. Wait for me here, I'll be back shortly.'

Clune sat on the ground to wait and began to take in his new surroundings. Above him on the hillside a hundred yards distant in among a group of tents, several Chinese men sat by a campfire. Below him in the cove was the *Faraway*, and from somewhere nearby he could hear children's voices. Somewhere in the distance a dog was barking.

Just then he heard someone coming towards him. It was Carroll. 'You'd better get changed,' he said, and dumped some clothing and boots on the ground. 'Your things have to go in the fire.'

'But why? I haven't been anywhere near a patient with smallpox for weeks.'

'Yes I know,' Carroll said, and sniggered. He picked up a branch and began to mark some lines on the dirt. 'See this area I've marked out? You're not to go outside these lines, you understand?'

'Does this mean I'm under arrest?' Clune said.

Carroll shrugged.

'How long will I be detained?'

'That will be up to Dr Alleyne.'

Clune saw he was getting nowhere.

Carroll left and a short time later the constable returned with a tent which Clune helped him set up in the clearing. Then Clune changed into the clothing Carroll had left him. Nothing fit him properly but this came as no surprise. His only regret as he looked at the pile of his discarded clothing was the boots which had been specially made for him. He was very attached to those boots and was sorely tempted to try and keep them but he knew there was little point. Carroll would be sure to notice. There was one item he might just get away with: the fob watch which was a graduation gift.

That night the constable cooked for them both, a fatty fry-up of beef and potatoes, but Clune couldn't stomach the greasy food. Next day he asked Carroll for some arrowroot and cocoa powder which would be much easier for him to digest but Carroll claimed there was none in the store. It was Mrs Keene who came to the rescue. When she heard from the constable what had happened she made some custard to send to Clune, and offered to cook for him until he was well. Carroll soon put a stop to that. None of the women was to cook for Clune or to have anything at all to do with him, on pain of an extra three weeks' detention.

Over the course of the next few days Clune slowly felt his strength return. As they sat together by the camp fire at night he and the constable got to know each other and Clune learned what was happening elsewhere in the grounds and on the *Faraway*. From all the stories he was hearing he realised that he wasn't alone in his difficulties with the superintendent. Everyone including the police seemed to have some kind of problem with Carroll, especially when it came to supplies.

It was during one of their conversations that Clune learned that he'd been replaced by another doctor from Sydney who'd arrived to take charge of the hospital enclosure.

'Does this mean I'm about to be released?'

The constable had no idea. All he knew was what he'd heard on the grapevine. It seemed that news of the conditions at the quarantine station had been leaked to the papers by some of the residents and there was mounting pressure for a public enquiry.

### Healthy ground

On Wednesday August 17, nine weeks since he'd been taken to the quarantine station, Michael Clune woke just before sunrise. For some time he lay there, hoping he might get back to sleep, but he was too uncomfortable and besides he'd been sleeping far too long already. He got out of bed and went outside to relieve himself in the nearby bushes. To the east there was just the hint of sunrise and everything was very still: not a single leaf stirred. He stood in the clearing for several moments enjoying the sense of peace and quiet but it was too cold to stay out there for long. He went into the tent and crawled back between the still-warm blankets.

He wondered how much longer it would be before he was allowed to return to Sydney. Several times he'd asked the superintendent but Carroll was evasive as ever. He was beginning to feel his strength return and in the week since he'd left the enclosure he'd heard enough to know that he wasn't alone. Dr Walsh too was in disgrace and had just been removed from the *Faraway*. Word was out that he would be replaced after reports that he'd been neglecting the patients. He was staying in Cook's old tent on the beach.

Clune was still wide awake. He threw off the blankets and went outside. It was time to get the campfire going. As he gathered some kindling, a pair of laughing jackasses began to cackle as they did each morning. He could see them in a tree nearby. He squatted to set the kindling alight. As the flames began to flutter he added some larger pieces of wood and before long he had the billy boiling and made himself a cup of tea. Then with his pannikin warming his hands he stood and watched the golden orb of the sun rise silent and majestic into the sky. For the first time in a long long time, he felt good just to be alive.

Later that morning Carroll came to bring him the news he was waiting for. He would be returning to Sydney later that morning. When Carroll didn't rush off as usual, Clune guessed there was something on his mind. As soon as the constable was out of earshot Carroll spoke up. 'Before you go,' he said, and Clune was surprised at the note of uncertainty. 'I just wanted to

remind you that I've treated you very indulgently and I hope when you get back to Sydney you won't speak too badly of me.'

Clune could hardly believe his ears. 'Indulgent' was hardly a word he'd use to describe the way he'd been treated by Carroll, who'd helped make his life a living hell.. Nevertheless he held his tongue: this wasn't the time to debate the matter. Instead he saw it as an opportune time to ask about his books and journal which he hoped had not been thrown in the fire.

Carroll's expression immediately changed. 'You go and see Dr Alleyne when you get back to Sydney and he will probably give you your books.' Clune knew then he would never see them. The contents of his journal would be a damning indictment of the quarantine station and of Carroll in particular.

Just before lunch Carroll came back with yet another change of clothing for Clune. Once again nothing fit him but Clune was too excited to care. Soon he would be home again with Annie and Madeline. He could hardly wait. At the last minute when Carroll wasn't looking he slipped the fob watch into his pocket, then walked with Carroll down to the jetty.

'You won't forget what I told you, will you?' Carroll said as Clune stepped aboard the steamer.

Clune took a long hard look at him, a bitter and twisted little man who delighted in wielding power over others. Now that power was being removed and Clune could see him for what he was. As the boatmen cast their ropes from the jetty and the steamer headed across the cove, he watched as Carroll turned away and limped back towards his precious store. Then Clune went to the front of the boat, eager to catch his first glimpse of Sydney.



**August 1881**

**August 17, Sydney**

Cowper's Wharf was almost deserted when the *Pinafore* arrived in Sydney. Clune stood on the deck to watch as the boatmen secured the vessel. So eager was he to get ashore that without so much as a backward glance, he leapt across onto the wharf. Then oblivious to his bizarre appearance in the trousers that were tied with string and a jacket several sizes too small, he climbed into the waiting cab that Dr Alleyne had arranged for him. As the driver headed away from the wharf Clune was on the edge of his seat. What if Annie wasn't at home? She could have gone to stay with her father for all he knew. It had been weeks since they'd last been in touch.

When the cab turned into College Street his heart was pounding as all kinds of thoughts raced through his mind. How would Annie feel about him after reading about him in the papers and hearing the gossip from his colleagues' wives? Had she been told he was coming home? He just hoped that she wasn't away.

The cab pulled up outside his house and he was about to alight when the front door opened and he saw Annie standing there. He was still apprehensive as he ran up the steps but then he saw the look on her face and he knew it was going to be all right.

There was so much for them to talk about but he had no idea where to start and anyway Annie wanted to talk. There would be plenty of time to tell her later what had happened to him these past few months.

He couldn't wait to get out of the ill-fitting clothes from the quarantine station. Annie drew a bath for him and he soaked himself in a steaming tub and shaved for the first time in many weeks before dressing in his own clean clothes.

That afternoon one of his colleagues called by to see him. Dr Read had somehow learned that Clune was back from the quarantine station and wanted to hear from him first hand all that had happened in the past two months. Clune was hesitant. He was too ashamed to tell anyone about those dreadful weeks in the enclosure but Read was insistent. 'We have to let

people in Sydney know about what's been happening over there,' he said. 'Think about all the good you can do.'

Clune still wasn't sure but eventually he capitulated. He badly needed to talk to someone. That afternoon in his office the two men sat for several hours and discussed his removal from Sydney and how he was threatened with arrest if he refused to go. Dr Read was particularly concerned to hear about the effect this had on his medical practice and his family. As Clune talked about the enclosure and how he'd been kept there under duress and how Carroll censored his telegrams to his wife and colleagues in Sydney, Read was taking careful notes. He told Clune how he was intending to feed the information to the newspapers. Clune talked freely, with one exception: he avoided the subject of his breakdown and his humiliation at the hands of the nurse and the superintendent.

Two days later he opened the *Sydney Morning Herald* to find a letter from Dr Read decrying the treatment of doctors at the quarantine station. Although Clune's name wasn't mentioned, much of the information was his. He was glad that he'd consented to talk. But there was another story in the paper that morning that really upset him. A question had been raised in the Legislative Assembly on behalf of Dr Caffyn who was seeking compensation for the time he'd served at the quarantine station.

'How can that man hold his head up?' he fumed.

Annie was puzzled by his reaction and prompted by the questions she was asking he began to talk about what had transpired between he and Caffyn in those first few days at the quarantine station. That was when Annie told him that the newspapers reports had said very little about his role at the quarantine station but had frequently quoted Dr Caffyn.

'I had the impression he was in charge,' Annie said.

This prompted Clune to talk about his confrontation with Dr Alleyne, and how he'd been forced to take charge of the enclosure when logically it should have been Caffyn instead. 'I'm sure Caffyn set the whole thing up,

somehow he managed to get to Alleyne when he came to the quarantine station that morning.'

With more prompting from his wife Clune talked about how he felt when he found himself locked inside the enclosure while Caffyn left for the healthy ground. 'I was determined to avoid the ward because I realised that once I went inside I'd have no hope of getting back to Sydney.'

But no one in the enclosure seemed to understand his reasons for avoiding the ward. Instead he was branded a coward, both by Carroll and the nurse. He told her how he was shunted about, first from the cottage into a tent, then into the pavilion for several weeks, then back into a tent once more. He would have tried to appeal to Alleyne but the health officer never came to the grounds. He left everything in Carroll's hands.

Over the course of the next few days they talked some more about what had happened. Clune was encouraged by the amount of coverage in the papers and the growing demand for a public inquiry.

In amongst all the excitement he hadn't forgotten about Mrs Bonnor and her children, who for all Clune knew were still on their own. Taking a leaf from Caffyn's book he contacted his colleague Dr Renwick, a member of the Legislative Assembly, and told him Mrs Bonnor's story.

Next day the question of Mrs Bonnor's wrongful diagnosis and the fact that her five children were left at home to fend for themselves for the past five weeks was raised in Parliament by Dr Renwick. There was a flurry of interest from the press, who couldn't get enough of the story. Now that he had their attention Clune told them about John Hughes as well and how he and his family were plucked from their home – again without proper diagnosis – and sent across to the quarantine station and how Hughes was sent to the *Faraway*, while his wife and children went to the healthy ground where his youngest daughter contracted smallpox.

When Hughes' story appeared in the *Herald*, it provoked a heated response from Dr Caffyn. As the doctor responsible for diagnosing Hughes, he was insistent that Hughes did indeed have smallpox.

Stung into action by Caffyn's denial Clune sent a telegram to Walsh, who was still in his tent at the quarantine station. Did John Hughes have any sign of smallpox when he arrived on the *Faraway*? Walsh replied by return. Not only did Hughes show no signs of smallpox but he immediately took on the role of cook, a role he filled for the next three months. Clune passed the telegram to the press.

Aside from catching up with his family and friends and dealing with enquiries from the press, there was another more immediate concern. Clune was in dire financial straits from the loss of income from his practice but this wasn't his only concern. Now the Sisters at St Vincent's Hospital had decided to put his position on hold pending the outcome of the expected inquiry into recent events at the quarantine station. In light of some of the claims being made about Clune's behaviour at the quarantine station, they were anxious for Clune to clear his name before resuming his duties at the hospital.

This was a blow. Not only was he faced with financial ruin but his reputation was at stake as well. How could he ever hope to recover?

Then he saw a report in the paper detailing On Chong's claim for compensation for loss of income due to the epidemic. Following the closure of his store when his child was diagnosed with smallpox, On Chong estimated his losses at two thousand pounds in the claim he submitted to the Colonial Secretary.

It was time for Clune to seek legal advice. Although his situation was less clear-cut – how could he possibly estimate the long-term effects on his medical practice? – with the help of a solicitor he eventually decided on a claim of two thousand five hundred pounds. This should be enough to cover his financial losses not only of the past two months but until Clune was able to resume his practice.

### ***Faraway***

By the time help arrived for the *Faraway* there'd already been two more deaths. Hughes, Verdich and Douglas were so disturbed by some of the things that were happening that they were seriously thinking about swimming ashore.

The man who'd been sharing the compartment with Harris died within days of Harris's death. Then two more men who came on board were placed in the beds where the others had died without so much as a change of blankets. When one of the men kept wandering up onto the deck during the night, Walsh pushed an ice chest over the hatch. It was Hughes and Verdich who found the man dead the following morning. He was lying naked on the floor, his arms and torso covered in welts and his fingers embedded in the flesh of his cheeks.

Fortunately for Hughes and the other men, an assistant by the name of Evans arrived from Sydney the same day they found the body. Evans was appointed by Alleyne who was under increasing pressure from the government over the stories emerging from the quarantine station. When Evans saw the conditions on the hulk and heard what the men had to say about Walsh, he sent a telegram to Dr Alleyne. Walsh was suspended the following day and immediately taken ashore by Carroll.

Two days later Dr Robert Beattie arrived to take charge of the *Faraway*. Having been warned by Evans about the conditions, he brought his own supplies of soap, towels and linen. Then with the help of Hughes and others, including the Chinese in the forward section, he began to overhaul the vessel. In return for the help of the healthy men he promised to let them go ashore as soon as the overhaul was complete.

First he had all the bedding replaced and the old bedding taken ashore and burnt. Then each compartment of the hulk was scrubbed and thoroughly disinfected and the walls and floors coated with lime wash. He rearranged the accommodation to provide a separate compartment for convalescents, and ordered medical supplies such as feeding cups, commodes and other items from Sydney.

On September 4, true to Dr Beattie's promise, Hughes, Verdich and Douglas were taken to shore along with four of the Chinese men. There they were placed in tents where they would stay for the next two weeks to ensure they were free of contamination. After that they'd be returned to Sydney.

The first thing Hughes did once things settled down was to go and look for his children. He had a fair idea where the second class cabins were located. Despite being warned by Carroll not to leave the area where the tents were set up Hughes went after them anyway, as soon as it was dark enough. He found them in the cabin where they were still being cared for by Nora Rout. Because of the risk of being caught by Mr and Mrs Keats next door, Nora Rout invited him in and he spent some time with the children who were overjoyed to see him. He was careful to avoid any physical contact: there was no way he'd put them at risk after what had happened to Maud.

After that initial visit Hughes made regular trips to the cabin while the children waited for their mother's release from the hospital enclosure. Rumours were circulating around the grounds that her release was only days away.

### **Late August, Sydney**

William Keats and his family were amongst the first boatload of residents to return to Sydney. The family was from Cumberland Street in The Rocks and had been sent to the quarantine station when one of their lodgers, Mrs Guildford, was diagnosed with smallpox in the middle of June.

When the boat arrived at the wharf in Sydney it was met by several newspaper reporters who were keen to hear all the details of their ten weeks at the quarantine station. Keats was happy to oblige. He told how the family and their lodgers were housed together in a one-room cabin with no curtains or blinds at the windows, no fireplace, and no furniture other than beds. For most of their stay they had to make do without basic items such as sheets and towels, soap and cooking utensils. Although she was cooking for a household of eight Mrs Keats told reporters how she had only one saucepan to cook their meal and because they shared the cookhouse with others, how she had to wait in line to get to the stove. The couple and their lodgers also complained about the length of time in quarantine even though it was evident that none of them had the smallpox.

It didn't help matters much when the Keats family went back home to find their three-storey terrace in a state of chaos. In their absence the fumigators and charwomen had been in and stripped all the wallpaper from the walls. The plaster was cracked and woodwork damaged when lime wash was applied to the walls and ceiling. To make matters worse their bedding was gone, and there was nowhere for them to sleep.

The second boatload who arrived next day all had similar tales to tell. In amongst them was Mrs Rout, who'd been sent back without her daughter May. The child was still in the hospital enclosure where she'd been confined for the past eight weeks after a near-fatal case of smallpox. Nora Rout was most embarrassed to arrive in Sydney only partially dressed – she'd been sent back without any underwear. Another man related how his fob watch had been destroyed when the superintendent insisted on opening the watch and dipping it in carbolic acid before the man boarded the boat for Sydney.



Clune was heartened to read their stories which for the most part confirmed what he'd been saying about the conditions at the quarantine station. Even so he was still on edge: so far no one from the hospital enclosure had been amongst those who returned. He dreaded to think what they might say about his behaviour in those awful two months.

Meanwhile, prompted by overwhelming evidence of mismanagement of the quarantine station, a member of the Legislative Assembly proposed a censure motion against the government for its handling of the smallpox epidemic. Speaking in support of the motion, Mr Copeland described the measures used to curb the spread of smallpox as tyrannical, cruel, and an infringement of civil liberties. He contended that the government's actions in removing people from their homes to the quarantine station were not only arbitrary but illegal. He went on to claim that the grossest outrage ever perpetrated in the colony in the name of the law had been committed against those involved.

The motion proposed by Mr Copeland caused an uproar in the House. As it was debated over the next two days, more stories continued to come to light not only about the quarantine station, but about the situation in Sydney as well. The case of Mrs Bonnor's children – who as it turned out had been left on their own for the past five weeks at their Ultimo home – was by no means an isolated case. There were other households in the same position, left without food or medical care, and cramped together in circumstances that were ideal for the spread of smallpox.

Clune followed the debate with rapt attention. For the most part evidence that emerged about the quarantine station corroborated his own allegations of mismanagement and neglect. One MP described the superintendent of the quarantine station as utterly unfit for the position and for the responsibilities that the job entailed. He described the events that had taken place on the *Faraway* as a disgrace to humanity. In amongst the debate that ensued, Clune's allegations came under fire when the treasurer, James Watson, accused him of seeking publicity in an attempt to bolster his compensation.

But there were broader issues that came up as well. One MP argued that the government had to shoulder the blame for not employing better doctors to follow up notifications of smallpox. He referred to one of the government doctors as 'an old and feeble man' who was out of his depth, and accused another of having lost his former position for incapacity to perform his duties. Another MP took it one step further, when he said that it was his belief that lives had been sacrificed by the failure of the government to consult men with sufficient scientific authority.

Though the censure motion was soundly defeated there was no way of preventing the mounting sense of public outrage over the handling of the epidemic.

Meanwhile, spurred on by some of the claims that were made against him in the Legislative Assembly, Clune prepared a written statement about his experience in the enclosure which he handed to the press. Unbeknown to him Constable Cook had returned to Sydney and had also prepared a written report. Cook's report was published alongside Clune's and provided further corroboration of Clune's account.

On September 7, 1881, two days after their stories appeared, a Royal Commission was appointed to investigate the management of the quarantine station and the hospital ship, *Faraway*. John Carroll, the resident superintendent, was immediately suspended from duty pending the outcome of the inquiry. In his place Police Sergeant Logan was sent to Spring Cove take over the management of government stores. In addition a new position was created. An advertisement appeared in the papers that day for the position of Medical Superintendent. It was an appointment that was long overdue as events of the past few months had shown.

**September/October, 1881**

### **September 7, Quarantine Station**

Despite the changes that had taken place at the quarantine station in the past few weeks Carroll was shocked when Sergeant Logan came to tell him that he'd been suspended –not only he but his son as well. For some reason he thought it would never happen. After living in the place for forty years he'd come to think of it as his own, to be run the way he saw fit. His whole life was in this place, including the house that had been built for he and his wife and their twelve children, most of whom had moved away. What was going to happen to him and his wife if they were forced to leave this place?

Sergeant Logan suggested that for the moment at least they stay where they were. But he warned Carroll that sooner or later he and his wife would have to move to make way for the medical superintendent who was expected to be appointed in the next few weeks.

That was when it really hit him that this was no temporary suspension: Carroll realised he was going to be replaced and went home to tell his wife the news. They should start packing, he told her, their life at the quarantine station was over.

His wife was in tears. Where would they go, how would they manage? Who'd be prepared to give Carroll a job after what was being said about him? Carroll was already in his sixties and with all the scandal of a Royal Commission he'd be lucky to find work ever again.

Carroll didn't know what to say. He was still in a state of shock himself.

A telegram from Dr Alleyne confirmed the terms of Carroll's suspension, which would eventually be reviewed pending the outcome of the Royal Commission. He, together with his wife and son, would be given assistance to find housing in Sydney, and they would each be paid a small allowance to see them through the Royal Commission.

At this point, Carroll began to see red. It was all very well for Dr Alleyne, he still had his job in Sydney. Yet hadn't Alleyne dumped him in it?

If Carroll hadn't been left on his own to try and manage all those people who'd been sent across at a moment's notice...

Within days of Carroll's official suspension the newly appointed medical superintendent arrived to take up his new position. Since the Carrolls still hadn't finished their packing he went to stay in the first class cabins. But the pressure was on for the Carrolls to leave.

Finally they finished packing and carted their things down to Stores Beach where a steamer was waiting to take them to Sydney. As the steamer set off that day Carroll and his wife stood together looking back at the grounds where they'd spent all the years of their married life. It was hard to believe that it was over.

Life at the quarantine station had everything Carroll could ever have wished for: fresh air, open spaces, a home of their own where they were almost self-sufficient with a vegetable garden, fruit trees and poultry and any amount of fresh seafood. Best of all in Carroll's mind, for much of the time he had to answer to no one. When there were no ships in quarantine he could do exactly as he pleased. Sometimes when things were very quiet he used to take the rowboat outside the cove where he would wait for the Manly ferry captain to tow him over to town. He'd spend the day in the city before being towed back home again. But for the most part he was happy just to potter about at home. Now that had been taken away and he had nothing to show for all those years.

**September 17, quarantine station**

One week after Carroll's suspension and within days of his departure from the quarantine grounds, twenty-three men, women and children were preparing to board the steamer for Sydney. These were the residents from the enclosure and from the hospital ship, *Faraway*.

Amongst them were John and Sarah Hughes and their five children who had only recently been reunited. For most of the previous week they'd been living together in one of the cabins in the healthy ground. It was the first time they'd been under one roof since the fateful day when they were removed from their home in Sydney – for no good reason as it turned out – and taken to the quarantine station. With them was Nora Rout's daughter, May, who'd also been released from the enclosure. She would travel back to Sydney with Sarah Hughes who for the past five weeks had taken care of May and the other convalescents.

Before they boarded the steamer for Sydney they went to visit Maud Hughes' grave. In recent weeks the burial ground had been cleaned up by Constable Cook and others, following complaints that some graves were not deep enough and that the stench from the bodies had sometimes been carried across to the nearby cabin area. Maud's grave was one of those that had been recently banked over with a fresh layer of soil. Thanks to John Hughes' handiwork it was now marked with a small white cross, with Maud's name and the date she died etched into the wood. He'd done the same for Edward Rout.

As John Hughes knelt by his daughter's grave he silently renewed his vow that he would find those responsible for her death and make them pay – one way or another.

That morning in another cabin, George and Jane Guildford were also getting ready for their departure from the quarantine station. Jane Guildford had almost fully recovered but she was so self-conscious about her face, which was disfigured by deeply pitted scars, that she insisted on wearing a voluminous head scarf which almost entirely concealed her face. As they prepared to board the steamer she clung self-consciously to her husband.

They were both looking forward to seeing their daughter whom they hadn't seen for the past three months. Jane Guildford's only worry was how her daughter – who was four years old – would react when she saw her mother's face. 'What if she doesn't know me?' she said to her husband as they prepared to leave.

George Guildford wasn't worried at all – May was their own flesh and blood, how could she not recognise her mother? If he seemed a little distracted it was because he was thinking about what he'd say to the press when they arrived. He hadn't forgotten Dr Caffyn and the disastrous trip on the *Pinafore*. He was determined to tell the reporters about it and see Dr Caffyn get his just desserts. But as for Clune he wasn't so sure. After seeing how he had been reduced to a shambling wreck in the weeks before he'd been replaced, Guildford now had mixed feelings about him. Unlike Caffyn who was arrogant and full of his own importance, Clune was a much more complex man. Some – like Nurse Meyler – would say he was weak. Yet Guildford hadn't forgotten the way Clune took care of him and his wife in those first few days in the enclosure when Caffyn wouldn't go anywhere near them.

Mrs Bonnor and Mrs Kelly were amongst those preparing to leave that day. Despite the fact that neither of the women had been infected with smallpox they'd been kept in a tent inside the enclosure for close to two months. It was only in the past few weeks that they'd been moved to the first class cabins in the healthy ground where they each had a room all to themselves. Now as they prepared to leave, none of that mattered any more. Mrs Bonnor couldn't wait to be reunited with her children, the youngest of whom was twelve months old. Having heard no word about them in all the time she'd been detained, she had no idea what had happened to them. She only hoped they were all right, that someone had been looking out for them.

The Chinese who'd been on the *Faraway* and more recently in the healthy ground were also getting ready to leave. Won Ping and Su Chong were amongst them. Both of them bore dreadful scars, but ironically, despite all the fear and animosity directed at the Chinese living in Sydney,

these two were the only Chinese who were known to have contracted smallpox – apart from the On Chong child – in the three months since the epidemic began. They and their compatriots were all too aware of what it meant to be singled out and made to suffer because of their race, and looked forward to returning to Sydney where they could blend into their own community once more.



### September 18, Sydney

Michael Clune read with interest the reports of people returning to Sydney. He was greatly relieved to see that George Guildford had confined his comments about quarantine to the incident on the *Pinafore* with Dr Caffyn, and to general conditions within the enclosure. He hadn't mentioned Clune at all.

The next test would be the Royal Commission which was to commence hearing evidence in a matter of days. Clune had already received a letter from the secretary of the Commission informing him of the terms of the inquiry. He would be notified in advance when his turn came to attend the hearings. To his relief the inquiry would not be open to the public, and the findings of the Commission would not be released until they'd been presented to the Parliament – a process which could take quite some time.

John Rendell Street, Vice President of the Sydney Infirmary, had been appointed to chair the hearings which would take place two or three days a week. Three Sydney doctors were assisting him as well as Captain Francis Hixson, president of the Marine Board.

The first person to attend the hearings was the health officer, Dr Alleyne. He was followed by Geoffrey Eagar, Under-Secretary for Finance and Trade, who'd been instrumental in the decision to use the quarantine station in the first place. In the weeks that followed other key figures from the government were called to give their version of events.

Week after week with little to do while he waited to be called before the Commission, Clune became more irritable and tense. His mind was working overtime trying to imagine what people might say. When he learned that Dr Caffyn had been called not once, but on three separate occasions, he was even more worried. Some of the people from the hospital enclosure had also been called in those early weeks, including George Guildford. Even Carroll had made an appearance, so why on earth hadn't Clune been called?

Finally on October 20, five weeks since the hearings began, he received a letter from the Commission. He was to make an appearance the following Tuesday. Now that the waiting was nearly over he wasn't sure what

to think or do. On the one hand he was filled with relief that the waiting was nearing an end at last. On the other he was deeply concerned. What had people been saying about him? And how was he going to explain himself – especially his reasons for avoiding the ward?

The night before he was due to appear he got very little sleep. His mind kept going over and over those two long months inside the enclosure. Several times during the night he got out of bed to make a note about some key point of evidence. Not for the first time he cursed the fact that Carroll wouldn't let him have his journal when he eventually left the enclosure. Without it he was lost. The journal contained all his telegrams and a record of the orders he'd sent to Sydney for medical and other supplies. It also contained all his notes about the condition of smallpox patients and the treatments he'd prescribed.

On the morning of Tuesday October 25, Clune rose early to prepare himself. He was anxious to get the thing over and done with. He and Annie had discussed at length some of the questions he might be asked and how he might best answer them, but now that the day was upon him at last he couldn't seem to remember a thing.

Annie tried to reassure him but he was frightened. Of what, she wanted to know? He couldn't even voice it to Annie but deep down what he was most afraid of was that others would agree with Nurse Meyler and see him as a weak pathetic man who had no right to call himself a doctor.

How could anyone understand his devastation at being locked away with no means of contact with the outside world? Whenever he'd tried to put into words how he'd suffered at the hands of Meyler and Carroll, he realised what he was up against. So much of what had been said and done obviously defied description – the sneers, the whispering up at the fence, the way they rolled their eyes at each other, and above all the terrible isolation, the feeling of being so totally alone.

It was time for him to go. Annie hugged him. 'Just remember it will soon be over. Imagine yourself a year from now.' She promised to be waiting for him when the hearings broke for lunch.

The address where the hearings were taking place was in Pitt Street, just a few blocks away, and rather than take a cab he walked. Even so he was fifteen minutes early. When it was time for him to appear, the secretary accompanied him into the room where the hearings were taking place. He was very nervous and as he made his way to the front of the room he stumbled and nearly lost his footing. He felt the blood rush to his face as he took the oath before he sat at a table to face his inquisitors.

The first question seemed innocuous enough. Could he elaborate on the circumstances under which he was sent to the quarantine station? He began to talk about Nora Rout when she'd first sent for him to attend her husband and was well into his version of events when he was interrupted by Mr Street. What the commissioners wanted to know was what action was taken by the government in connection with his removal to the quarantine station?

Clune hesitated, unsure where the question was leading, then went back to the train of events that had begun with his visit to Bellevue Street. They allowed him to speak uninterrupted then, up to the point where the plain clothes detective came to his home and ordered him down to Cowper's Wharf.

Was he removed by force, they wanted to know?

For a moment Clune had to stop and think. Of course he was! He told how the detective had warned him not to resist, that if he did he would be taken by force. Earlier that day, he added, Superintendent Read also threatened him that he'd be arrested if he refused to go to the quarantine station.

And what of the meeting with Dr Alleyne in those first few days at the Quarantine station? Was Clune of the understanding that he (Clune) was employed to take charge of the hospital enclosure? No, Clune said, he certainly wasn't.

But he'd been told, hadn't he, that he would be paid for his services eventually? Yes, Mr Eagar had said as much, but as Clune indicated at the time he had no desire to take charge of the enclosure or indeed to go to the quarantine station.

The subject of telegrams was next. Had any of his telegrams been censored or had they failed to reach their destination? Yes, he said. Asked if he had any proof of this, Clune shook his head. His journal which contained a copy of every telegram he'd tried to send had been confiscated by Carroll before he left.

Attention then shifted to the enclosure. Was it true that he'd gone to attend to Mrs Guildford when she first arrived from Sydney? Yes, he said, but only at Dr Caffyn's insistence. What he did for Mrs Guildford was motivated by feelings of common humanity, not because he was employed to do so.

Then had he consented to take charge of the enclosure? No, it had been forced upon him.

And so the questions continued. By the time they broke for lunch Clune's face was flushed and his head was pounding. He was feeling wretched. Annie was waiting for him outside and they headed down towards Circular Quay to a coffee house where they could talk in private.

Clune was desolate over lunch. He could sense how pathetic he must have sounded – how would he ever live this down?

Annie tried to reassure him. They could always leave Sydney if they had to, and set up practice somewhere else. It was hardly a consoling thought.

When the hearing resumed after lunch the questions took an unwelcome turn. Why had he refused to go into the ward? He tried to explain that he was unwell and that every time he went into the ward he was sick at once. Besides, he said, there was little need, as he gave instructions to the nurses.

Not only that but the windows were always open so he was able to see the patients without setting foot inside the ward.

And what of the patient Mary-Anne Fisher, the woman from Glebe who eventually died? Did he ever see her inside the ward? No, he said, he was too unwell. The nurses came to him for directions.

So did he inform Dr Alleyne that his health had broken down and ask to be relieved of his duties? Frequently, he said, especially to Carroll who told him that if he were replaced he'd still be kept inside the enclosure until the last case was convalescent and after that in the healthy ground for another forty-two days. And did Dr Alleyne attempt to replace him? No. In fact he was led to believe that Dr Alleyne was persecuting him by keeping him inside the enclosure.

The line of enquiry shifted to Nurse Meyler's attitude towards him. Was she disrespectful, he was asked.

Clune hesitated, not sure how much to say. 'I think her treatment broke me down more completely than anything else at the quarantine station,' he said, adding that Nurse Meyler and Carroll were extremely close. Hardly a day went by without close communication between the two, and the nurse had become grossly insolent towards him.

'She told me she had put down many doctors before, and she would take care I would not be master, that she had not gone down there to be under me at all.'

In the silence after he finished he saw that several of the commissioners were taking notes. There were a few more questions after that such as why he'd occupied the pavilion when it could have been better used for the patients, and what he thought had caused the lengthy delays in getting supplies. He was also questioned about the alcohol that had been supplied so liberally to the enclosure, and where he thought it might have gone. He avoided the question. He wasn't about to tell them how Livesey had taken to helping himself. Was there drunkenness in the enclosure? There was no drunkenness that he could remember.

Finally the questions were over. He was wrung-out when he left the building. He couldn't wait to get home to Annie who'd gone to fetch their daughter from school.

**November/December, 1881**

**November, Sydney**

In the days that followed his appearance before the Royal Commission, Clune's mind went over and over the questions he'd been asked by the Commissioners. How to rescue his reputation, that was what concerned him now. He was sure his journal held the key and racked his brain for a way to retrieve it, assuming that it still existed of course. But the quarantine station was still out of bounds since there were still several active cases of smallpox.

The following week when he saw in the papers that Livesey was about to give evidence, he had an idea. Perhaps Livesey would know what had happened to his journal. He waited for Livesey outside the Commission. As it turned out Livesey had no idea but there was someone else who might. Cornelius, the other gravedigger, had shown Livesey a notebook he'd kept. In it were several telegrams that Clune had dictated over the fence. Perhaps Cornelius still had the notebook. Livesey offered to track him down.

Two weeks later Clune appeared for the second time before the Commission, this time at his own request. As he sat in the foyer while he waited for the previous witness to emerge he went through the notebook one more time. Then the door opened and Nurse Meyler walked out. Clune was shocked. She was the last person he was expecting to see. He was about to say something to her but she looked at him coldly and without a word strode past him and out of the office.

He was thrown into confusion by the encounter and had to be reminded why he was before the Commission once again. He took out Cornelius's battered notebook. Of the handful of telegrams in the notebook he'd only been able to come up with one that he was able to prove had been significantly altered by Carroll before it was sent. He read the two versions to the Commissioners who were visibly unimpressed.

Didn't he wish to elaborate on his experience in the hospital enclosure, Mr Street prompted him. To Clune's horror his mind had gone blank. 'I broke down after the second week, and was thoroughly unfit and



quite exhausted,' he said then saw the look on several faces and stopped abruptly. It sounded pathetic even to him.

He thought he'd be dismissed at that point but instead he was questioned about Nurse Meyler. Could he tell them on what occasions Nurse Meyler was disrespectful towards him?

Yes he could. He began to describe an incident where he'd intervened with the cook on behalf of one of the convalescents. 'When Nurse Meyler heard about it, she came and told me I had nothing to do with the patient's food, and that I was a mean selfish fellow. I may say that I always looked upon her as being under the influence of Carroll, and whenever she left Carroll, after talking to him at the fence, I always expected her to return an answer not only displeasing but painful to me.

'One time when I spoke to her she said, "You ought to have an operation performed: your brain is too big for your skull." Those were the exact words she used.'

As he continued to give them more examples he was once again conscious of how he must sound. No words would ever convey what had gone on in those two long months between himself, the nurse and the superintendent. The Commissioners waited for him to finish before returning to the question about alcohol: how much had he drunk while he was inside the enclosure? Very little, he said. And finally the questions ended.

As he left the room that afternoon he was sure that instead of helping himself, he'd perhaps dug an even deeper hole.

The following week Clune read in the papers how Dr Alleyne had been recalled before the Commission, not once but several times. In addition Dr Robert Beattie, the man who'd replaced Walsh on the *Faraway*, and Dr Day who'd replaced Clune, were also called to give evidence. On November 18, the hearings ended and the Commissioners began the enormous task of sifting through the evidence.

## December, Sydney

As the smallpox epidemic continued, construction of a new smallpox hospital was nearing completion at Little Bay. The initiative had come from the Board of Health, appointed by the government in July to co-ordinate the response to the epidemic. The Board was made up of several doctors including Alleyne, as well as representatives from government departments.

On December 6, Clune read an announcement in the *Herald* that Nurse Mary Meyler had been appointed as Matron of the new hospital. When he learned a few days later that Carroll had been employed as a gatekeeper at the hospital as well, he was even more upset.

'Where's the justice,' he complained to Annie. Of all those who'd been caught up in the epidemic and sent over to the quarantine station, Clune felt that he'd come out the worst by far. Even Dr Caffyn had been re-employed by Dr Alleyne on his return to Sydney, and was part of a team of doctors appointed to follow-up smallpox notifications.

Clune was thoroughly disenchanted. He and Annie were in agreement, it was time for them to get out of Sydney. With the help of the compensation package that Clune was expecting some time soon they could perhaps go overseas for a while, and Clune could continue his medical studies. He sent off several applications to universities overseas.

While they waited to get a response, the Clunes went to stay with Annie's father. Once they left Sydney behind, Clune found he was able to relax away from the fear of all the gossip and speculation that was going around.

It was late January by the time Clune heard that he'd been accepted by the University of Brussels to further his medical studies. The family returned to Sydney to prepare for their trip. They were planning to be gone for at least two years and the house would be rented in their absence. In early March – just days after the announcement that there was an end to the smallpox epidemic – they boarded a steamer bound for London. As the steamship

made its way up the harbour the three of them stood on the deck together in anticipation of a glimpse of the quarantine station.

‘There it is!’ Michael Clune pointed towards Spring Cove where he could just make out the hospital enclosure.

But his wife and daughter couldn’t see it. ‘There,’ he said, ‘see that old hulk in the cove? That’s the *Faraway* where Hughes was kept. Now look up to the right and you’ll see some buildings – up on the hilltop.’

‘I can see it!’ Madeline said, pointing. ‘There, behind the yellow flag.’

At last Annie could see it too. She stared at the place for several moments. ‘It’s nothing at all like I imagined,’ she said. ‘It’s so small you can hardly see it.’

As Clune stood looking at the place that had so radically altered the course of his life he could well understand Annie’s reaction: from here it didn’t look like much but in his mind it still loomed large.

Yet it wasn’t the place that had done the damage, but rather the people in it. And while he’d been left with no outward scars from his recent encounter with the dreaded smallpox, he was sure he’d carry the invisible wounds of isolation for the rest of his life.

## **Epilogue**

## Epilogue

When the full report of the Royal Commission was made available to the public in August 1882, Dr Alleyne came under fire for having placed too much reliance on Carroll, especially when Alleyne himself acknowledged that Carroll was 'not very bright'. As to the situation on the *Faraway*, the Commissioners wrote: 'we cannot too strongly condemn the management which led to the results...described.' Nevertheless the Commission concluded that it was unable to endorse the sweeping charges of neglect and mismanagement which had been advanced in connection with the quarantine station. This was despite the fact that the second report of the Royal Commission contained evidence of serious problems with Carroll and his management of the quarantine station, in the years directly preceding the outbreak. These problems were well-known to Dr Alleyne.

Just prior to the release of the report, Dr Alleyne resigned from his position and was replaced by Dr Charles Mackellar. Within weeks of the findings being published, on September 9, 1882, Dr Alleyne collapsed and died. The cause of death was apoplexy (a stroke). He was buried at the Church of England Cemetery, St Leonards.



The decision by the Treasury to quarantine Dr Clune and the circumstances surrounding his appointment were found by the Commission to have been a mistake. They conceded that Clune had indeed suffered from great mental depression whilst confined to the enclosure. Nevertheless, the inquiry found that Clune had not discharged his duties in a manner which might have been expected from a gentleman in his position.

In 1884, Clune and his family returned to Sydney from overseas. Clune resumed his position as a senior physician at St Vincent's Hospital. He also managed to re-establish his private practice in College Street.

In 1886, Clune's mother who was living in Glebe, contracted typhoid fever and died. In order to have her buried at the Roman Catholic cemetery in Petersham (where burial of typhoid cases was prohibited) Clune falsified

the details of her death. His attempt at deception was discovered and he was fined the sum of twenty-five pounds. Some time later that year, Clune nearly succumbed to the same disease and never fully recovered.

In later years the family moved to 'Palmyra' in North Sydney, where Clune died on January 3, 1902, of complications from the typhoid infection. In an obituary published in *The Freeman's Journal*, he was praised for his role in exposing the mismanagement of the quarantine station and for the much-needed reforms which followed. An obituary in *The Australasian Medical Gazette* paid tribute to Clune's academic brilliance, and noted that his advice was frequently sought by younger practitioners and was readily given.

Michael Clune was buried at the Roman Catholic Cemetery in Petersham. He was survived by his wife Annie, and their only child, Madeline.



As with Dr Clune, the circumstances surrounding Dr Caffyn's removal to the quarantine station were conceded to have been a mistake. However the question of why Caffyn was not appointed to the hospital enclosure, rather than appointing Dr Clune, was never addressed by the Royal Commission. Caffyn was mildly rebuked in the report for his shortcomings in managing the healthy ground.

Once the epidemic was over, Dr Caffyn moved from Sydney but continued to work elsewhere in Australia for at least another couple of years. In 1883, his lecture *Quacks and Quackery. Being a short exposition of homeopathy, bone-setting, and other anomalies found in these colonies and elsewhere* was published.



John Carroll, the former superintendent, was found by the Royal Commission to have had duties imposed upon him that were altogether beyond his capacity. His brusque manner and want of consideration for the residents of the quarantine station showed that he was not fit to be

superintendent, nor was he suited to the role of storekeeper as his record-keeping was abysmal. As to his method of meting out stores, his attitude was described as niggardly, with one exception: he was found to have been far too liberal with stimulants. As to the censorship of telegrams, despite evidence that he did this with the full knowledge of Dr Alleyne and possibly Geoffrey Eagar as well, he was nevertheless found to have exceeded the intentions of the government.

Carroll's son was not called to give evidence, and was not mentioned in the final report.

John Carroll's employment as a gatekeeper at the new smallpox hospital at Little Bay only lasted for a couple of months. It is not known where he went from there.



The state of affairs on the *Faraway* under the care of Dr William Walsh was described by the report of the Royal Commission as in every way deplorable.

'Some of the patients on board this ship appear to have been left without nursing; to have been allowed to wander about and injure themselves at night, and even to go on deck in a naked state in their delirium; to lie for days in their evacuations; to be without any medical comforts, and indeed without any food, except such as was prepared for them by the voluntary and unskilled efforts of the convalescent patients – in short to have been without any of the comforts, attendance, or care which should have been accorded to sick people.'

The inquiry found that Walsh had only been employed because Dr Alleyne was unable to find someone who was more qualified and who was prepared to work on board the hulk.



On the question of whether John Hughes had smallpox when he was sent to the *Faraway*, the three medical men on the Commission, after having examined Hughes, declared they were satisfied that he'd had the disease in a modified form in recent months. They went on to observe that his conduct

and manner when giving evidence before the Commission were sufficient to convince them that he was 'a reckless and insubordinate man'. The events surrounding Maud Hughes' death were never properly investigated.



None of the Chinese who were quarantined – including Won Ping and Su Chong, the two smallpox victims – were called to give evidence at the Royal Commission.



The smallpox epidemic of 1881 marked a turning point in Sydney's health administration. Some of the changes which were introduced as a direct result of the epidemic include:

- The establishment of a special hospital for infectious disease. The smallpox hospital at Little Bay served Sydney for more than one hundred years. For some time it was known as The Coast, and later as Prince Henry Hospital. It was closed in 1988.
- The establishment of a Board of Health which would work to improve sanitation and living conditions in Sydney. The Board was also empowered to instigate and oversee administration of public health legislation such as the Infectious Diseases Supervision Act of 1881, which introduced compulsory notification of smallpox and other infectious disease.
- Sydney's first dedicated ambulance service, with specially designed vehicles to convey sick people, and personnel trained in infection control.



Dr Charles Mackellar was appointed as health officer for Port Jackson in July 1882. Upon inspection, Dr Mackellar found many aspects of the facility to be unsatisfactory, including one of the wards in the hospital grounds which he described as lamentably deficient. A new road from the wharf to the hospital enclosure was also needed to replace the dangerously steep



approach which was used by Dr Clune and others. In the healthy ground, six buildings known as the immigration quarters (the cabins used by Nora Rout and others) were in need of substantial renovation, including partitions, curtains and blinds. The two cookhouses near the second class cabins, which Mackellar described as worthless, would also have to be rebuilt, as would several storehouses. The upgrade was subsequently carried out at a cost fifteen thousand pounds.

The hulk *Faraway* was also overhauled. It was taken to Morts works at Balmain where it was fully refitted and converted into two large wards, capable of comfortably accommodating up to one hundred patients.



The land at North Head was originally known as Boree to the Aboriginal people of the Kameraigal Clan who lived there when Europeans first arrived. Ironically their numbers were decimated by an epidemic of smallpox which raged through the native populations in the Sydney basin in 1789, just one year after colonisation. By 1881 the original inhabitants seem to have vanished. The only traces of their existence were the shell middens located throughout the site, and rock carvings in the vicinity of Old Man's Hat.

During the smallpox epidemic of 1881, only one Aboriginal person was diagnosed with the disease – a man known as Jimmy who lived in Glebe. Jimmy was sent to the quarantine station where he died on the *Faraway*, on September 21, 1881.



The smallpox epidemic in Sydney, which began with the diagnosis of the On Chong child on May 25, 1881, ended nine months later, in February 1882. Of the one hundred and fifty-four cases notified to the authorities, there were forty deaths. Most of the deaths were people who had never been vaccinated. It is widely believed that there were many other cases of smallpox which were never reported, due to the draconian tactics that were employed in those first few months of the epidemic.

The original case of smallpox which set off the epidemic was never discovered. However several theories have been proposed. One is that the young nurse who was employed to look after the On Chong child had a mild case of smallpox which she passed on to the child. The question of how the nurse was infected remains unanswered to this day.

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## **The Essay**

## When the facts are not the story

A major dilemma in writing the story of *Smallpox in Sydney* was how to deal with some of the facts. While there were many sources of information – in the report of the Royal Commission and elsewhere – there were also omissions and contradictions. It was this realisation which eventually led me to switch from non-fiction to historical fiction as the best means of telling the story.

Margaret Atwood apparently faced a similar dilemma when she was writing *Alias Grace*, which like *Smallpox in Sydney* is based on events which actually took place. Atwood later described how she devised a set of guidelines for herself as a means for dealing with the facts, those that were available on the record, as well as those that were missing or only inferred:

When there was a solid fact, I could not alter it; long as I might like to have Grace witness James McDermott's execution, it could not be done, because... she was already in the penitentiary on that day. Also, every major element in the book had to be suggested by something in the writing about Grace and her times, however dubious such writing might be; but, in the parts left unexplained – the gaps left unfilled – I was free to invent. Since there were a lot of gaps, there is a lot of invention. *Alias Grace* is very much a novel rather than a documentary.<sup>1</sup>

These guidelines provide a useful framework for a discussion of how *Smallpox in Sydney* evolved from a factual version of events to a work of historical fiction.

### The solid facts

In May 1881, a single case of smallpox was notified to the authorities in Sydney. For some time the case wasn't confirmed. Three weeks later, it was apparent that the disease had spread, when four new cases were diagnosed within a space of two or three days. One of those cases was Edward Rout, who died of the disease a few days later. The same day, the authorities met and decided to transport the smallpox cases and their close contacts to the quarantine station. Amongst those who were quarantined were Drs Clune and Caffyn. Both these men were detained against their will at the quarantine station, where Dr Clune was placed in charge of the hospital enclosure for women and children, and Dr Caffyn was allocated to take charge of the healthy ground. There they were left at the mercy of the superintendent, a man by the name of Carroll, who was supposedly working under instruction from the health Officer, Dr Alleyne.

Two months later, when they were released, Dr Clune went to the press to expose what had happened at the quarantine station. He and others who'd been involved eventually had their chance to be heard when a Royal Commission was convened to enquire into the management of the quarantine station during the outbreak. The enquiry was later extended to hear evidence from the period leading up to the epidemic.

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<sup>1</sup> Margaret Atwood, 'In Search of *Alias Grace*: On Writing Canadian Historical Fiction' in *American Historical Review*, vol.103, No.5, December 1998, p.1515.

That, in essence, represents the factual basis for the story. Like Atwood in her novel about Grace Marks, I didn't meddle with these facts, which took many months of research to assemble. Having started out with no prior knowledge that there was ever a smallpox epidemic in Sydney, I was disadvantaged by the fact that for much of the time I was working backwards, using transcripts of evidence from the Royal Commission. My first task was to transpose the evidence onto a series of index cards before re-assembling it into groups to get a feeling for what took place. Once I had my groups of cards, I began to develop a series of timelines. There was the crucial first week of the epidemic, which for the most part took place in Sydney itself. Then there was what took place at the quarantine station over a period of several months. At this point the task became more complex as I grappled with the different locations. There was the hospital enclosure for women and children which was located closest to the jetty, on the promontory above the cove; the hospital ship for the sick men, an old wooden hulk named the *Faraway*, which was anchored in the cove; then there was the healthy ground which was made up of several different clusters of housing for second and first class passengers, as well as the superintendent's cottage, the boatmen's quarters, storehouses and so on.

Now that I had my geography in place, I began to look at the sequence of events, such as which people were sent where, how long they stayed, and how many others were there at the time. What was so valuable about these timelines was that they suggested a structure for the story. The first part would be set in Sydney, the second part at the quarantine station, and the third part would deal with the return to Sydney and the subsequent enquiry and other events.

In the meantime I'd got hold of some newspaper stories which added to the picture that was emerging, especially the key characters in the story such as Drs Alleyne, Caffyn and Clune, Nora Rout, the Guildfords and John Hughes.

As the writing began, the timelines provided a reference point which dictated the chronological structure. In the many subsequent rewrites, this linear structure became more defined to the point where the story as it now stands, deals in time frames rather than chapters. I've come to see this as one of its strengths, not least because the disease of smallpox is very much defined by time – from the first twelve to fourteen days when the disease was still inapparent, to the emergence of symptoms in week three. Those first two weeks of incubation were a key to the awful sense of panic that set Sydney people against one another once the epidemic was underway – because there was no telling who was infected, everyone was viewed with suspicion.

The course of the infection also dictated the pace of events as they unfolded: with a two to three-week window between successive waves of infection, politicians and newspaper reporters invariably predicted the epidemic was over, only to see it re-emerge as the next generation became apparent. This was also reflected at the quarantine station – with each new wave of infection in Sydney, another batch of patients arrived for either the enclosure or the *Faraway*, both of which were in isolation. Naturally with each new arrival into such a cloistered community, the human dynamics changed as well, and new tensions began to emerge.

Whatever else I might be tempted to say about this preoccupation with the facts, it would pay off eventually. On their own, however, the story was dead. No matter which way I tried to write it, none of the drama that I sensed was there was reflected in those earlier drafts. There was something missing: the facts themselves – those on record – obviously didn't tell the story. As Margaret Atwood had discovered: 'If you're after the truth, the whole and



detailed truth, and nothing but the truth, you're going to have a thin time of it if you trust to paper, but with the past it's almost all you've got.'<sup>2</sup>

### **Facts by inference**

This is the point in the story where we leave behind the solid facts and move into the realm of supposition. For example, Clune and his wife, who were Catholics, had only one child. For me this could hold a vital clue to Clune's concern to get back to his wife. Leaving aside the financial concerns and the possible fears for her physical safety, it was clear there was something else on his mind. Perhaps Annie's health was not the best, and he was worried about how she'd cope on her own. Since this may well have been feeding Clune's determination to return to Sydney, in the story it reads as fact.

Another question raised itself in relation to Dr Alleyne. When I learned that he'd died within a matter of weeks of the Royal Commission report being published,<sup>3</sup> I began to wonder about his health in those crucial first months of the epidemic. Might his health have played a role in his failure to properly supervise what was happening at the quarantine station? This, coupled with the fact that he held so many positions of responsibility, and rarely took a decent break, probably accounted at least in part for the fact that he'd taken his eye off the ball.

Another equally important question, at least as far as I was concerned, was why Clune was placed in the hospital enclosure to take care of the women and children. In reality it should have been Dr Caffyn, who was employed as a government medical officer from the outset of the epidemic. From the questions that were asked at the Royal Commission, it's clear that they too were puzzled by what was a rather odd decision. Yet each time they questioned Alleyne about it, he rather deftly changed the subject. Did Caffyn somehow get to him, and manage to convince him that it was for the best if he (Caffyn) was placed in the healthy ground? After a close reading of all the facts, it's my opinion that this was the case.

### **Inventing the truth**

For me the heart of *Smallpox in Sydney* is what happened to Michael Clune, especially once he was locked inside the enclosure. From various accounts – both his and others' – it's clear that he was ostracised, which was one of the factors in his downfall.

While I was working on the story, I heard about some new research on this very subject. In recent years social ostracism has been attracting a great deal of interest, for not only the social consequences, and the emotional pain it causes its victims, but also because it affects people's health.<sup>4</sup> Bullying can literally make people sick, especially when subjected to the silent treatment. From the available evidence it's pretty clear that this is what happened to Michael Clune. But why? What was it about Michael Clune that made him so vulnerable to being bullied? There was nothing on record to provide any clues.

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<sup>2</sup> Atwood, p.1514.

<sup>3</sup> Verbal communication with Jean Duncan Foley, author of *In Quarantine: a history of Sydney's quarantine station 1828-1984*. Sydney: Kangaroo Press, 1995.

<sup>4</sup> 'Ostracism: the Cruel Power of Silence', on ABC Radio National, *All in the Mind*, broadcast March 20, and March 27, 2004. Web version [www.abc.net.au/rn/science/mind/stories/s1071699.htm](http://www.abc.net.au/rn/science/mind/stories/s1071699.htm), accessed 15/7/05.

Another writer who has faced the dilemma is the historical novelist, Richard Lee, who says that the normal historical sources are not very good on people's minds:

They (historical sources) may be able to pin-point where someone is on a given day. They could tell you what that person did – who they met, what they bought, what it cost. Sometimes they can even tell you what people said – although reported speech is always extremely dubious. But historical sources – and indeed historians – are almost never able to say what people FEEL about what happens. Even though what we feel about what happens is often the most important thing about it.<sup>5</sup>

To make his character believable, I felt the need to invent Clune's past: a violent alcoholic father seemed to me to fit the bill.

The conflict between Nora Rout and William Keats when the two girls were found to be infected with smallpox required a different kind of invention. In this case, I could only imagine the recriminations that must have followed. Poor Nora – still reeling from the death of her husband – must have been in quite a daze. Of course she didn't stop to think that she might need to take some clothing with her when she was taken to the quarantine station, along with her husband in a coffin. Even had she requested some clothing once she was in the healthy ground, we know what Carroll would have said. But for the people in the cabin next door, who believed she'd infected the two little girls, a reaction such as Keats displays is not that difficult to imagine.

There were other invented 'facts' as well, such as when the Clunes departed for Brussels. With no way of ascertaining the date, I invented a time that would serve the story. Having the Clunes make their departure before the findings of the Royal Commission were made public, allowed me to bring the story to a close without labouring over Clune's reaction. I don't think it's asking too much of the reader if they have to draw their own conclusions about what Clune must have thought and felt when he eventually read the report. The fact that he returns to Sydney and eventually resumes his medical practice tells us something about his response.

### **Facts omitted**

Because of the structure of the novel, which focuses on events in the quarantine station, there were several key areas which were omitted. By far the most important of these was the vilification of the Chinese. Unlike most other people in Sydney, the Chinese were forcibly vaccinated, and their homes were subjected to regular inspection by the police and health officials. Why? Because they were widely blamed for having brought smallpox into the country. But of course this was only part of the story.

As for the quarantine station itself, through the evidence of Hughes and others,<sup>6</sup> it's apparent that the Chinese on the *Faraway* were even more neglected than the Europeans. So

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<sup>5</sup> Richard Lee, *History is but a fable agreed upon: the problem of truth in history and fiction*, [www.historicalnovelsociety.org/historyis.htm](http://www.historicalnovelsociety.org/historyis.htm), accessed July 14, 2005.

<sup>6</sup> *Report of the Royal Commission appointed on the 13<sup>th</sup> September, 1881, to enquire into and report upon the management of the Quarantine Station, North Head, and the hulk 'Faraway', together with minutes of evidence and appendices*. Legislative Council NSW. August 1882.

invisible and silent were they that they barely rate a mention, other than an enigmatic comment by Hughes that he'd somehow managed to intervene when three Chinese threatened Walsh with a knife. Typically, none of the dozen Chinese who spent time at the quarantine station was called to give evidence before the enquiry, nor were they interviewed by the press.

Then there was the steamship *Ocean* with hundreds of Chinese immigrants on board, which despite a proven clean bill of health was refused pratique by Alleyne and others, and was left in limbo for weeks on end. There's a resonance here with more recent events. Then there was the Chinese Restriction Bill, which the Government under Sir Henry Parkes had been waiting to introduce. The smallpox epidemic provided the political climate in which the Bill could be passed. It was a fore-runner to the White Australia Policy.

Aside from what happened to the Chinese, there was also a heated debate on the risks and benefits of vaccination. This debate was fuelled by a vocal anti-vaccination lobby, spearheaded by a Sydney doctor. Then there was the tremendous upheaval in public health as the epidemic progressed. Some of the descriptions of living conditions, and especially the state of Sydney housing, are enough to make one's hair stand on end. We can only imagine what it was like before there was a garbage collection service. No wonder there was an outbreak of plague two decades after the smallpox epidemic!

In hindsight it's very clear to me why many of these details aren't included – tempting as it might have been to somehow insert them in the story. Some of them are implicit in the story, simply by describing the way people lived. But for the rest, the focus of the story had to be on the individuals, and especially their experience at the quarantine station. In the process, many facts were excluded, including the wonderful cartoons and sketches which depicted the events of the epidemic in the *Illustrated Sydney News*, the *Sydney Morning Herald*, *Bulletin* and elsewhere.

### **The end result: a historical novel**

So, had I tried to stay with the solid facts, what would have happened to the story? I think it would have come to resemble one of those flaky dry old texts that we were forced to read in the fifties and sixties, when we were supposedly learning history.

Besides, there are factual accounts already, including Peter Curson's *Times of Crisis*.<sup>7</sup> While Curson looks at the epidemic from a scientific point of view, it still makes for a fascinating read, especially his comments on the role of panic and the part it played in the epidemic. But is it a story? Definitely not.

*Smallpox in Sydney*, by comparison, is a search for the meaning behind those events in terms of those who were most affected. It looks not at the science of what took place, but at the lives of those who were in amongst it. As such it provides us with an insight into the hearts and minds of those who were in one way or another caught up in the panic. It's a very human story, and one we would do well to heed. This government's attitude to refugees and the detention camps where they're locked away – out of sight and out of mind – is not much different to the way quarantine station was put to use well over a century ago.

Today the world is living once more with the fear of deadly new infections. In the last two decades alone, we've seen the emergence of deadly new infectious diseases. The list includes HIV, CJD, Ebola and SARS, as well as the emergence of a new strain of flu that threatens to engulf us in a new pandemic. Just like smallpox in 1881, none of these diseases has a cure. And unlike smallpox, there are no vaccines.

With the added threat of bioterrorism, there's talk of an even deadlier strain of smallpox waiting in the wings. So who knows what the future holds? Some of us could live to see yet another smallpox epidemic in Sydney. How do we know how we will respond – let alone what our governments might do?

It's the human face of epidemics that helps us understand their impact, which brings me back to Michael Clune. When I first read the transcript of the Royal Commission, it was apparent that something awful took place. Yet no matter how much I searched for facts – and there were sufficient to fill several books - I still didn't find all that I needed in order to turn this into a story. It was only when I felt free to let go of my preoccupation with the facts and began to invent what was missing that the human story of the smallpox epidemic came to life.

Despite the fact that *Smallpox in Sydney* is considered to be a work of fiction, I think Michael Clune would agree that as a novel it's close to the truth – perhaps as close as we're likely to get.

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<sup>7</sup> Peter Curson, *Times of Crisis: Epidemics in Sydney 1788-1900*. Sydney University Press, 1985.