Rabbit-Proof Fence

By Doris Pilkington Garimara
(WOMAN SINGS
IN ABORIGINAL LANGUAGE)

(Woman speaks
in Aboriginal language)

(HAUNTING MUSIC)

(BIRD CALLS)

(BIRD CALLS)

(CHILDREN LAUGH)

Grrr!

(Laughs)
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That's them.

:

Yeah.

:

Molly's the big one.

:

The little one's
her sister Daisy.

:

The middle one's
their cousin Gracie.

Well, what about the fathers?

Moved on.

(CHILDREN SHOUT EXCITEDLY)

WOMAN:

(CLOCK BELL CHIMES)

(KNOCK AT DOOR)

WOMAN:

Nothing out of the ordinary.

There's two applications for section exemptions.

Police reports are there.
William Harris is applying for permission to marry.

She's half-caste also.

And Mary Wilson's applying for permission to visit her child at Moore River.

She's quite agitated.

Oh, and Gladys Phillips has written for permission to buy some new shoes.

She had a new pair a year ago.

Er, now, this report from Constable Riggs about three little half-caste girls
at the Jigalong fence depot - Molly, Gracie and Daisy.

The youngest is of particular concern.

She is promised to a full-blood.

I'm authorising their removal.

They're to be taken to Moore River as soon as possible.

Oh, and Miss Thomas,

if you could check that the rate for police transportation is still, I believe, eight pence per mile.

Yes, Mr Neville. Thank you.
(Rings chime)

:

(EERIE SILENCE)

:

(DOGS BARK)

:

That country over there, that's Wongi country.

:

You can't go there.

:

You get big trouble.

:

Yeah, I know.

:

Where your country?

:

My country?

:

Down south.

:

Long way from here.

:
Our dad works there on the rabbit fence.

: 

Yeah?

:

How far does rabbit fence go to?

:

The rabbit-proof fence?

:

It goes all the way to the sea down that way.

:

Right to the top of Australia.

:

Longest fence in the world.

:

And all the way to the sea down that way.

:

miles long.

:

Keeps the rabbits on that side of the fence.
Keeps the farmland
on this side of the fence.

That Molly's
getting to be a big girl.

Mr Neville's been writing to me
about those girls, you know.

Frankie...

Come on, it's your turn.

Come and get your rations.

(ANIMAL BELLOWS)
Hurry up.

(CAR APPROACHES)

(CAMEL BELLOWS)

(DRAMATIC MUSIC)
(Women yell)

(WOMEN SHOUT)

Come for the three girls, Maude.

NO!

This is my kids! MINE!

It's the law, Maude.
(Screams) No!

Got no say in it.
No! Mine!

(AII yell)

Move one inch
and I'll lock your mother up!

Neville's their legal guardian.
MOLL Y:

No!

Daisy!

(Cries) Give me back my Daisy!

You sit up and you stay!

I've got the papers, Maude!
(Screams)

Don't take them! No!
You've got no say in it!

(Screams) No!

(Cries)

Hear this - don't move!
(WAILING)

Nothing you can do here, old girl!

(Speaks Aboriginal language)
Nothing you can do.

(Maude screams) Leave them!

(Wails)

(MUSIC INTENSIFIES)

(SILENCE)

(Women wail)

NEVILLE:
every Aborigine born in this State

comes under my control.
Notice, if you will, 
the half-caste child.

And there are 
ever-increasing numbers of them.

Now, what is to happen to them?

Are we to allow the creation 
of an unwanted third race?

Should coloureds be encouraged 
to go back to the black?

Or should they be advanced 
to white status

and be absorbed 
in the white population?

Now, time and again, 
I'm asked by some white man,

"If I marry 
this coloured person,
"will our children be black?"

And as Chief Protector of Aborigines,

it is my responsibility

to accept or reject those marriages.

Here is the answer.

Three generations.

Half-blood grandmother.

Quadroon daughter.

Octoroon grandson.

Now, as you can see, in the third generation,

or third cross,
no trace of native origin is apparent.

The continuing infiltration of white blood finally stamps out the black colour.

The Aboriginal has simply been bred out.

Now...

...we come to...

We come to the Moore River Native Settlement.

Ladies, most of you are familiar with our work here -

the training of domestic servants and farm labourers.
I would like to thank you for your continuing support.

Hundreds of half-caste children have been gathered up and brought here to be given the benefit of everything our culture has to offer.

For if we are to fit and train such children for the future, they cannot be left as they are. And, in spite of himself, the native must be helped.

(LOUD CLANGING)
(Women hum)

(TRAIN RATTLES)

(TRUCK RATTLES)

Hello, there.

(AII gasp)
(Whispers) A ghost!

(HAUNTING MUSIC)

Poor dears.

Such a long way.
You must be exhausted.

Come along - I'll take you straight to the dormitory.

Quickly. It's alright.
Come on.

:

Down you hop.

:

Come along.

:

Follow me.

:

Come along.

:

Follow me, please.

:

That's the way.

:

(HAUNTING MUSIC)

:

Come along.

:

There's some beds there.

:

The bucket's in the corner.
Hurry up.

:  

(WHISPERING)

:

Back to sleep, the rest of you.

:

No talking.

:

(SILENCE)

:

(CLANGING)

:

(KNOCKING)

:

(BELL RINGS)

:

(Girl shouts) Get up!

:

All of youse! Make your beds!

:

Hurry up!

:
Irene, Cheryl,
stop running around.

:

Get them blankets tidy.

:

What's your name?

:

Where you from?

:

(AII giggle)
You'll get used to it.

:

Tracker girl, get that bucket.
Take it out now!

:

What are you standing there
dreamin' about?

:

Hurry up!

:

Move!

:

Get out to breakfast now!

:
Come on!

Go, all of you!

Come on.

You coming?

Thank you, children.
Ready for our prayers.

Bow your heads.

Eyes closed.

ALL:
for the food we eat

Thank you
for the world so sweet

Thank you
for the birds that sing
Thank you, God, for everything.

There will be no talking.

(Speaks Aboriginal language)

(BANG!)
We'll have no wangka here!

You talk English!

Now eat!

EAT! Or I'll hold your nose and force it down you!

Here. Keep still.

We've got to scrub you.

Let me see.
Doesn't that feel better?

:

Yes, Miss Jessop.
Yes, Miss Jessop.

:

Thank you, Miss Jessop.
Thank you, Miss Jessop.

:

That is much better.

:

Here.

:

Take it.

:

Put these on.

:

Come on. Get dressed.

:

This is your new home.
We don't use that jabber here.

:

You speak English.

:

(Children sing) # Way down
upon the Swanee river

:

# Far, far away

:

# There's where my heart is turning ever

:

# There's where the old folks stay... #

:

(Whispers) What are they doing?

:

Singing Mr Devil's favourite song.

:

Who?

:

Singing Mr Devil's favourite song.

:

Who's that?

:

The one on the end, on the chair.
...Ionging
for the old plantation

:

And for the old folks
at home. #

:

Very good. Well done.

:

The following children
will come forward -

:

Tommy Grant.

:

This way, Tommy. Here.

:

Come on. Stand up straight.

:

Whoo, hold, boy.
Tommy.

:

What are they doing now?

:

They checkin'
for the fair ones.
Why?

They gotta take them to Sister Kate's.

They're more clever than us.

They can go to proper school.

Thank you. No.

Molly Craig.

That you.

Molly Craig!
Go on, get up.

Hurry up, they'll whip you.

Molly, come on, dear.
Get up.
Quick.
Come on, young lady.

:

They'll put you in the boob,
hurry up.

:

Come on.

:

Just Molly, please.

:

Where you goin'?
Come back here.

:

Sit down.
Hurry up.

:

(HAUNTING MUSIC)

:

Come along.

:

It's alright.

:

That's the way.
Don't be afraid.

:

Come along.

:

Come on,
I'm not going to hurt you.

:

See.

:

A bit further.

:

That's it.

:

It's Molly, isn't it?

:

I know it all feels
very strange,

:

but after a few days
you'll feel quite at home.

:

(Breathes heavily)

:
We're here to help,

and encourage you in this new world.

Duty, service, responsibility.

Those are our watchwords.

Molly, keep still. It's alright, it's alright.

It's alright.

No.

(BABY CRIES)

Over here. Sweep it over here.

To the door.

Come on, this way.
Push it towards me.

Eh, tracker's come back.

Eh, tracker girl.

Your dad's bringin' Olive back.

Caught her.

(DIDGERIDOO PLAYS)

Thank you, Moodoo.
Stand there, young lady.

Did you really think you'd get away with it?

(Whimpers)
Now stop that crying.

See what Miss Doyle has here?
Olive, look at me.

:

You see this here? The scissors?

:

Did she run away home?

:

She ran away to see her boyfriend.

:

(Dog yelps) Come on.

:

Let's see if those boys at New Norcia

:

find you so attractive now.

:

(Whimpers) Go.

:

(Dog yelps)

:

(Whips Olive repeatedly) Argh! Argh!
She broke out through here.

Usual story - off to see her boyfriend at New Norcia.

Mmm. The tracker brought her back.

Ah, yes, Moodoo.

Mr Neal tells me that your probation period is up,

and that you wish to return to the Kimberleys, is that right?

Of course, your daughter is here, isn't she?

There would be no question of her going.

She would have to stay here and continue her training.
I think for the time being,

it would be best
for all concerned

if you were to remain here,
Moodoo.

I'd be prepared to consider
your case in a year or so,

but, er, until then...

Now, about those little ones
from Kalgoorlie.

Those babies –
where their mothers?

They got no mothers.

Nobody here got any mothers.

I got mother.
Come on, they're lining up.
Let's go.

(BELL RINGS)

(Whimpers)

(Sobs and whimpers)

(HAUNTING MUSIC)

(Whispers) Bad place.

Make me sick.

These people.

Sick.

Make me sick.
(BELL RINGS)
Come on, make your beds!

:

Nice and tidy!

:

If you've already done it, get to the church now.

 :

Hurry up!

 :

Stop dawdling.

:

Molly, take the bucket out.

:

Now, the three of you, go up to the church.

 :

Come on, you kids, get up there, you're late!

 :

Hurry up!

:

Now! Now!
(BELL RINGS)

(THUNDER CRACKS
AND RUMBLES)

Come on, get your things.
We're going!

Where we going?

We're going home, to Mother.

How we gonna get there?

Walk.

We're not going. Are we, Daisy?

We like it here.

That tracker, he's gonna get us
and put us in that room.

They're not gonna get us.
We'll just keep walking.
The rain'll cover our tracks.

We gotta go now.

Come on. Quick.

Come on.

Come on, Gracie. Now.

Too far, Molly.
Hurry up.

(Children sing)
# He made their tiny wings

# All things bright
and beautiful

# All creatures great
and small... #
(DIDGERIDOO PLAYS)

:

(INTENSE MUSIC)

:

(KOOKABURRA CALLS)

:

Come on, let's go!

:

Irene Barton. Here.

:

Ellie Moodoo. Here.

:

Molly Craig.

:

Molly Craig?

:

Molly Craig?

:

Gracie Fields.

:

Daisy Kadibil.
Nina, have you seen the new girls?

Haven't seen 'em all day, miss.

(LAUGHTER)

(Men speak Aboriginal language)

(Puffing) Mr...Mr Neville says you better come real quick.

(Speaks Aboriginal language)

(THUNDER RUMBLES)

(THUNDER CRACKS)

(HORSE NEIGHS)

(Chuckles)
That's two days ago, Mr Neal.

:  

Yes, I understand, but I require to be kept fully informed.

:  

Thank you. Goodbye.

:  

Those three girls, they've run off.

:  

Oh, dear.

:  

Probably the older one.

:  

I wondered when I saw her.

:  

Too much of their mind...

:  

...unfathomable.

:  

The tracker's onto it.

:  

In the meantime, it must be
kept out of the papers.

:

No rain, tracker gonna get us.

:

Tracker's not gonna get us.

:

Come on.

:

We gotta keep going.
Come on, Gracie.

:

Daisy, give me your bag.

:

Give us your bag, quick.

:

Give us it!

:

Hurry up!
In the water, in the water.

:

We need to cover our tracks.

:

(DIDGERIDOO PLAYS)
Shh, shh, shh.

Shh. Shh.

Shh.

Whoa. Whoa, whoa.

I see...the emu?

No, that's not it.

I see the kangaroo.

Red one.
No.

I don't see nothing.
There's no food here.

I see...
We don't know this place.
How are we going to eat?
Shh!

(MEN'S VOICES)

Run!

Quick, hide. Come on.

Ask them, Molly.
Ask them for something to eat.

Hey, you from
that Moore River place, eh?

We're going home.

Where your country?

Jigalong.

Jigalong?
Proper long way.


Do you know what you're doing?


That tracker
from Moore River...


...he pretty good.


I heard he get them runaways
all the time.


You've got to be good
to beat him.


He'll take you back
to that place.


Here.


You watch out for him, eh?


You think you're so smart.
Where are we?

::

We're lost.

::

Jigalong that way.

::

North.

::

The tracker followed them to this riverbank

::

but lost their tracks in the water about a week ago.

::

There's been no sign of them since.

::

Three little half-castes.

::

We're talking quite a few man hours here.

::

Who's going to pay for it?

::
There's very little money in my departmental budget.

: 

I'm hoping your men can combine this with their regular duties.

: 

We'll be able to handle all the notifications,

: 

posting police stations, farms...

: 

We'll provide a description.

: 

But if my men make trips outside their duties,

: 

it's an impost on your department, Mr Neville.

: 

If your men are on other jobs, there is no extra expense.

: 

I see that, Mr Neville.

: 

Every one of your men has a role as local protector.
My men will do their jobs, Mr Neville.

Now, a week ago, you said. Yes.

Hey, Maude.
Your girls have gone.

What did you say?

They've run away from Moore River.

They're gone.

Everybody's looking for them.

And what do you think you might be up to?

Thieving my eggs, eh?
You come out here where I can see you.

:  

Come on. Stand up.

:  

Out you come.

:  

And get rid of that bread.

:  

It's filthy.

:  

You want something to eat, you ask for it.

:  

Come on.

:  

I'm not going to bite you.

:  

Are you on your own?

:  

Hmm?

:  

Got anyone with you?
There you are.

Where are you girls planning on going?

Cat got your tongue, eh?

(RADIO PLAYS SOFTLY)

Now get!

Go on.

And watch out for those boys further along.

They go out hunting rabbits along the fence.

That rabbit-proof fence?

Yes, the rabbit-proof fence.
Where that rabbit fence?

:

East.

:

(HAUNTING SOUNDSCAPE)

:

Which way now?

:

That way.

:

That fence.

:

Find that rabbit fence, we go home.

:

Then we see our mum.

:

(HAUNTING ABORIGINAL SINGING)

:

(Reads) "The Chief Protector of Aborigines, Mr A.O. Neville..."
ALL:

...is concerned about three native girls:

"ranging from eight to fourteen years of age:

"who a month ago:

"ran away from the Moore River Native Settlement."

(AII cheer)

"He would be grateful if any person...who saw them:

"would notify him...promptly."

""We have been searching high and low for the children:

""for a month past,' added Mr Neville."
"And all the trace we found of them was a dead rabbit."

(DESOLATE SOUNSCAPE)

(Whistles)

It's the fence! It's the fence!
She found it!

(EMOTIVE MUSIC)

Now, the latest sighting which is four days old is...

The man from the newspaper.
I have nothing more to say!

May I have a look?

Dalwallinu. Yes?

Bunnawarra.
Yalgoo.

Dalwallinu.

Bunnawarra. Yalgoo.

Dalwallinu, Bunnawarra, Yalgoo.

They're on the fence.

They're following the rabbit-proof fence.

Right.

Just because people use Neolithic tools, Inspector, does not mean they have Neolithic minds.

This makes our task very much easier.
Look. There's a branch off here to the west, north of Yalgoo.

Now, you put your man out here on the fence and north of this junction.

He can start to come down it to meet them.

I'll have Moodoo come up from the south behind them.

(MENACING MUSIC)

We can't miss them.

Where Daisy?

Wait here.

My legs, Molly.
They hurt. I can't walk.

I'll carry you only once, alright?

Come on.

Come on.

Come on.

Don't think I'm carrying you all the way.

(HORSE SNORTS)

Camp, Molly.

Damn me.

Where are you girls headed?

Going to Mullewa?
Got family there?

Where Mullewa?

Mullewa?

West.

The way you're headed along the number two fence.

Are there two rabbit-proof fence?

My oath.

We've got three of them.

We're on the wrong fence.

Where the north fence?

North fence - back that way
where you come from.

:

You can cut across.

:

I'll show you.

:

Number one rabbit fence.

:

Here's the number two fence.

:

Now, you're here.

:

But you want to be here.

:

Now, if you cut across here...

:

...you save yourself
    mile or so.

:

It's not hard.

:

I'm going back.

:
I don't have the petrol.

(FAINT MUSIC)

(Whistles)

Hey, we're hungry.

Are youse that lot from Moore River?

Yeah.

What — you girls walk all that way?

Yeah.

miles?

I was there.

Too scared to run away, but.
Everyone was always caught, stuck in that boob.

Youse got the furtherest.

Where you heading?

Home.

WOMAN:

Stay here.

I'll come back and get you.

Sleep with me. I'll get you some food.

Just getting the washing, Mrs Evans!

(FOOTSTEPS)
Shh! What's that?

There's someone coming.

Quick, quick, into bed.

Hide under the blankets.

(LATCH CLATTERS)

(AII gasp)

Mavis.

Go away.
Don't worry about that!

Come on, quick. Get up.
Get up! Come on!

Shh, shh, shh.
(DOOR SHUTS)
Don't go, Molly.

Please don't go.

He come back if you go.

Don't go.

He won't say anything.

Please.

(CAR APPROACHES)

Hello, Evans.

MRS EVANS:
Mrs Evans.

Quick! Wake up. Wake up.
You got to go.
Let's have a look.

: 

Out that way. Just keep going.

: 

(TENSE MUSIC)

:

They were running out over there about an hour or so ago.

:

We'll pick up their tracks in the morning.

:

I'll make a cup of tea.

:

That's the tracker.

:

(DOGS BARK FEROCIOUSLY)

:

Yeah, that's him.

:

(TENSE MUSIC)

:

Hop on.
I do not expect you to understand what I am trying to do for these people.

But I'll not have my plans jeopardised.

The problem of half-castes is not simply going to go away.

If it is not dealt with now, it will fester for years to come.

These children are that problem.

Please explain exactly what happened.
I don't know how they did it, but we lost them.

: 

I had Larsen out there. Moodoo was with him.

: 

They're making right fools of us.

: 

They are indeed, Inspector.

: 

And the cost is more than to just our pride.

: 

This department's reputation is beginning to suffer.

: 

My men have better things to do

: 

than chase your charges all around the country.

: 

Now...

: 

...they're coming into very rough terrain.
Once they're much past Meekatharra,

I can't risk any of my men.

Yes, we must find them before they reach real desert country.

So this is what we're going to do.

You get your man up there. Moodoo can join him.

Well up the fence - around here.

Far enough up so we know we cannot possibly miss them.

And I want them to stay there.

They can set up camp and wait.
Costly.

Well, we'll just have to bear it.

Their lives may be at stake.

Inspector, I understand the mother of one of the girls has gone to Wiluna.

The children are headed into that country.

I want the word spread.

Let's see what that does.

You wouldn't get me out there.

She's pretty clever, that girl.

She wants to go home.
Good thing you kids ran into me.

A lot of people worried for you.

The police are up and down the country looking for youse.

It's in all the papers.

Which one of you is Gracie?

Are you Gracie?

I hear your mummy in Wiluna.

You can catch a train there from Meeka.

Come on.

Let's go.
Wiluna - is she at Wiluna?

Yes.

Come on, Gracie.

Don't listen to him.

He's a liar.

Maybe she there, Molly.

Maybe he telling the truth.

Molly.

Let's go to Meeka, catch a train to Wiluna.

If they see us, they'll catch us.
We can't stop now.

:\n
We must keep going.

:\n
We're nearly there.

:\n
But, Molly, Mummy there.

:\n
She at Wiluna.

:\n
I want Mummy.

:\n
Come on.

:\n
Come on, Daisy.

:\n
Come on, Daisy.

:\n
You have to carry me, Molly.

:\n
Hop on.
She not coming.

:

Don't look back.
Don't look back. She'll come.

:

(TROUBLED MUSIC)

:

Higher.

:

You got them?

:

Three!

:

One for you, one for me
and one for both of us.

:

Mmm!

:

(PENSIVE MUSIC)

:

Come on, Dais.

:

We've got to go back for Gracie.
Go!

(Men laugh)

What are you going to do - sell the thing?

(Whistles)

I've got her!

I want to get the train to Mummy!

This is one of them. She thinks her mummy's there.

Gracie.

Oi! Grab her!

Hey!
Gotcha!

:  
You're not going anywhere. 
Now, get in that car now.

:  
Thanks, Jacky.

:  
There will be a shilling 
for you back at the station.

:  
I'm taking you back 
where you belong.

:  
(SAD MUSIC)

:  
She gone, Molly?

:  
She not coming back?

:  
Needle in a haystack.

:  
Well, that's it.
Pack your stuff.
We're getting out of here.

:

They're only paying us
for three weeks.

:

(CURLEWS CRY)

:

To Constable Riggs,
Police Station, Nullagine.

:

The two missing half-caste
girls, Molly and Daisy,

:

are returning to Jigalong
via the rabbit-proof fence,

:

our efforts to apprehend them
thus far having come to nought.

:

I therefore expect them
to arrive in Jigalong

:

in about a month's time.

:

In your capacity
as local protector,

: 

you are to proceed to Jigalong
to await their arrival

: 

and effect their recapture.

: 

Yours, etc.

: 

(SUBDUED MUSIC) 

: 

No fence.

: 

I want Mother.

: 

The fence will come back.

: 

(OTHER-WORLDLY MUSIC) 

: 

(BLEAK MUSIC) 

: 

(SOFT ABORIGINAL SINGING) 

:
(Sings)
:

(Sings)
:

(BIRD CAWS)
:

(SOARING MUSIC)
:

(HAUNTING MUSIC)
:

Home.
:

(Grunts)
:

WOMAN:
:

"Riggs arrived Jigalong."
:

"Awaits your instructions."
:

Yes, there will be a reply.
Please wait.
(Man reads) "Girl is to be sent south, via Meekatharra, "

"to be accompanied at all times."

"Awaiting notification."

(DISTANT SINGING)

What's all that about?

Just some women's business.

Been going on all day.

Hey, Molly. Yeah?

That tracker, he not going to get us now.

Nah, he's not going to get us.
I'm not going to stay here. I can feel it.

They're up to something.

I'm going to go take a look.

(Women sing)

(Man speaks Aboriginal language)

(Women sing)

(BIRD SQUAWKS)

(BIRD SQUAWKS)

(BIRD CAWS)

(Whistles bird call)
(Puffs, giggles)

(Sobs)

I lost one... (Sniffs)
...I lost one.

(Sobs)

(GENTLE MUSIC)

NEVILLE:

Police Station, Nullagine.

At present, we lack the funds
to pursue
the missing half-caste girls,

Molly and Daisy.
I would ask to be kept informed of their whereabouts, so that at some future date, they may indeed be...recovered.

We face an uphill battle with these people... especially the bush natives, who have to be protected against themselves.

If they would only understand what we are trying to do for them.

Yours, etc.

Thank you.
(HAUNTING MUSIC)

("NGANKARRPARNI"
BY PETER GABRIEL PLAYS