

A Molly and Gracie sat silently on the horse, tears streaming down their cheeks as Constable Riggs turned the big bay stallion¹, and led the way back to the depot. A high pitched wail² broke out. The cries of agonised mothers and the women, and the deep sobs³ of grandfathers, uncles and cousins filled the air. Molly and Gracie looked back just once before they disappeared through the river gums⁴. Behind them, those remaining in the camp found strong sharp objects and gashed themselves and inflicted wounds to their heads and bodies as an expression of their sorrow.

The two frightened and miserable girls began to cry, silently at first, then uncontrollably.

1. étalon 2. gémissement
3. sanglots 4. gommiers (arbres)

B When they saw the camp site they almost ran but they didn't have the energy. They knew exactly where to find their aunt's camp as they had both been there before. Their aunt greeted them in the traditional manner by crying with them and for those who had passed away since their last meeting. "Where did you girls come from? Where have you been?" she asked. Their aunt and other relations couldn't believe what the girls told them. They were amazed and intrigued by their story. "You poor silly girls, you could have died in the bush somewhere and no one would have known." She began to cry loudly.

D As soon as the other girls left the dormitory, Molly beckoned the two sisters to come closer to her, then she whispered urgently. "We're not going to school, so grab your bags. We're not staying here." Daisy and Gracie were stunned and stood staring at her. "What did you say?" asked Gracie. "I said, we're not staying here at the settlement, because we're going home to Jilagong." Gracie and Daisy weren't sure they had heard correctly or not. "Move quickly," Molly ordered her sisters. She wanted to be miles away before their absence was discovered; time was of the essence.

Her two youngsters faced each other, both looking very scared and confused. Daisy turned to Molly and said nervously, "We're frightened, Dgudu. How are we going to find our way back home to Jilagong? It's a long way from home."

Molly leaned against the wall and said confidently. "I know it's a long way to go, but it's easy. We'll find the rabbit-proof fence¹ and follow that all the way home."

"We're gunna walk all the way?" asked Daisy. "Yeah," replied Molly, getting really impatient now. "So don't waste time."

1. a boundary between certain Australian States, marked by a fence through which rabbits are unable to pass

C Instead of a residential school, the Aboriginal children were placed in an overcrowded dormitory. The inmates¹, not students, slept on cyclone beds with government-issue blankets. There were no sheets or pillow slips² except on special occasions when there was an inspection by prominent officials. Then they were removed as soon as the visitors left the settlement and stored away until the next visit. On the windows there were no colourful curtains³, just wire⁴ screens and iron bars.

1. pensionnaires 2. ni draps, ni taies d'oreiller 3. rideaux 4. fil de fer

E One day about midday, when the sun was high in the azure sky, Daisy and Gracie heard an excited shriek¹ from Molly who, as usual, was walking ahead of them.

"Here it is. I've found it. Come and look," she yelled as she laughed and waved her arms.

"What is it?" asked Gracie. "What are you shouting for?"

"I've found the rabbit-proof fence. See," she said, pointing to the fence. "This will take us all the way home to Jilagong."

1. cri perçant