

Chapter 1

The plan

‘Look at that view, Eliza!’ my grandmother said. ‘We live in the most beautiful city in the world, don’t we?’

Nanna and I were on a ferry on the last Saturday in September. I looked up from my phone. Sydney Harbour is beautiful but I see it every day. I take a ferry to and from school. Nanna doesn’t take one very often. She was excited that day because we were meeting her old friend Gwen for lunch. Gwen had moved to London when she finished school. She was visiting Sydney with her granddaughter, Sarah.

‘I know you and Sarah are going to be friends,’ Nanna said. ‘She’s your age, you know.’

I knew that. Nanna talked about Gwen and Sarah a lot. Nanna wanted me to be friends with Sarah because Nanna and Gwen had been friends when they were at school.

Nanna and I walked from the ferry to George Street. We were going to meet Gwen and Sarah at the museum.

‘Hurry up, Eliza, we’re late!’ Nanna said. ‘And please put your phone away.’ She walked ahead of me. Nanna walked fast. Nanna was old – she was seventy – but she was fit.

‘Gwen! Yoo hoo!’ Nanna called out, waving. An old woman and a tall girl with black hair were standing outside the museum.

Nanna and Gwen hugged each other. They were laughing and crying. Sarah and I stood and watched them.

‘Hi, Sarah,’ I said. ‘I’m Eliza.’

‘Hello,’ Sarah said.

We looked at each other. Neither of us spoke.

‘Come on, girls,’ Nanna said. ‘Let’s have lunch.’

Nanna led the way into the museum. We went up to the top floor and into the café.

‘Oh, look at that view!’ cried Gwen. ‘I love Sydney!’



'This café has the best view of the harbour!' Nanna said.

She was right. From our table we could see the Sydney Opera House and the Harbour Bridge. We could watch all the ferries coming and going too.

We sat and ate lunch. Nanna and Gwen talked a lot.

'Gwen, do you remember the terrible thunderstorm that day at Bondi Beach when we were girls?' Nanna asked.

'Oh, yes, Peggy!' Gwen turned to Sarah and me, and said, 'Girls, it was so scary! Peggy and I were swimming. We were a long way from the beach. Then a storm came up the coast from the south.'

Nanna said, 'The storm came so fast. One minute, it was a hot, sunny day. The next minute, the sky was black and – BOOM!'

Gwen laughed and said, 'Oh, it was terrible! You shouldn't be in the water in a thunderstorm. Not when there's lightning. It's very dangerous.'

I knew that, but Sarah said, 'Really? That's another dangerous thing to be careful of. Australia is full of scary and dangerous things.' She smiled when she said it but she sounded nervous.

Gwen laughed. 'Don't worry, darling,' she said to Sarah. 'Most Australians don't worry about snakes and spiders and sharks and storms.'

'But I'm English!' Sarah said.

We all laughed.

Gwen smiled, then she said to Sarah, 'Darling, you and I talked about this. You have nothing to worry about. You'll be safe on the bushwalk. And you'll love it.'

I thought, *Bushwalk?*

But before I could ask Gwen and Sarah about it, Nanna said, 'Eliza, I have an idea. You two girls don't want to sit here and listen to our stories, do you?'

She was right. I'd heard the stories before. Sarah looked at me. She was thinking the same thing.

Nanna said, 'Take Sarah for a walk across the bridge. Gwen and I will meet you here for afternoon tea at three o'clock. Okay?'

'That sounds great!' Sarah said.

'Okay,' I said. It was a lovely, warm afternoon and I always enjoy walking across the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

It took us about five minutes to walk up to the bridge.

'Wow!' Sarah said as we walked along the path onto the bridge and saw the harbour. 'You're lucky to live here in Sydney.'

I showed Sarah where the zoo was, and my school. Then I turned and looked west. 'Can you see the Blue Mountains?' I pointed to them.

Sarah looked. 'Are they mountains? Really?'

I nodded. 'Yes. They're not tall. But they're wonderful.'

'That's where we're going next weekend, isn't it?' Sarah asked. 'I'm really looking forward to our hike – our bushwalk. This week, Gran is going to take me shopping. I need boots and a backpack.'

'Does your grandmother still like bushwalking too?' I said. 'Nanna still goes bushwalking. I guess the four of us will go for a short bushwalk next weekend.'

The next weekend was a long weekend. I didn't have to go to school on the Monday. I was really looking forward to the weekend in the Blue Mountains. I wanted to have big breakfasts, to go shopping and to eat dinner in lovely restaurants.

Sarah laughed, 'No, silly – I need new boots for the big walk that you and I are going to do. The One Horse Track. When your grandmother told Gran about it, she was so happy! They walked that track when they were our age, you know.'

I stopped. I looked at Sarah. 'What are you talking about?'

Sarah looked surprised. 'I'm talking about the three-day walk you and I are doing next weekend. Gran says it will be a wonderful adventure.'

I was angry. Not angry with Sarah – angry with Nanna. She'd planned the walk but she hadn't told me.

'Let's talk about it later,' I told Sarah. 'Come on, let's keep walking.'

Later, when Sarah and I returned to the café, Nanna said, 'Hello, girls. Did you enjoy the walk?'

I said, 'Oh, yes. Sarah told me all about the plan for the bushwalk.'

Nanna looked embarrassed. Then she said to Sarah and me, 'You two are going to have a big adventure, aren't you!' She looked at her watch, 'Oh, look at the time! Our ferry leaves soon. We must get going, Eliza.'

On the ferry, I asked Nanna, 'Why didn't you tell me about the plan? I was looking forward to spending time with you. I don't want to take Sarah bushwalking for three days!'

Nanna sighed. 'Eliza, I'm sorry. I wanted to tell you. But I've been so upset about Gwen.'

'Why? What's wrong with Gwen?'

Nanna looked very sad. 'Oh, Eliza. It's terrible. Gwen is really sick. She hasn't told Sarah yet. Don't say anything to Sarah! But this will be Gwen's last trip to Sydney. I want to spend time with my best and oldest friend.'

I love Nanna. I was angry with her because she didn't tell me about the plan. But I wanted her to be happy, and I wanted her to have time with Gwen.

I sighed. 'Okay, Nanna. I'll do it.'