

RANGER *in* TIME

Race to the South Pole



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illustrated by
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Summary: Once again the mysterious box takes the golden retriever Ranger back in time, and he finds himself on Robert Falcon Scott’s ship, the *Terra Nova*, headed for Antarctica, where his mission is to save Jack Nin, a Chinese-Maori stowaway from New Zealand, from the blizzards, unstable ice, and the other hazards that lie ahead for the doomed expedition.

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Chapter 1



STOWAWAY!

November 29, 1910

Jack Nin packed the wooden crate with potatoes and cabbages. He loaded it into a cart and hitched up his horse, Whetu. Then they started up the path along the New Zealand coast.

“It’s a short journey to Port Chalmers. There, we will sell our goods to the polar explorers,” Jack said. “They will leave for the South Pole with Nin family vegetables in the ship’s hold!”

Whetu gave a whinny. Jack leaned forward and stroked the star-shaped patch between

the horse's eyes. The name Whetu meant "star" in Maori, the language of Jack's mother. But Jack and his brothers rarely spoke that language aloud. They didn't speak Chinese outside of the house, either. Jack's father had insisted on English. Being half Maori and half Chinese already brought enough trouble.

Jack's father had died a year ago. Now his mother struggled to run the family's market garden with her four boys. They sold their potatoes, cabbages, tomatoes, and onions to the Chinese greengrocers in Dunedin. But the Nins were struggling. Some people in New Zealand said that Chinese men like Jack's father had stolen their jobs. They urged their neighbors not to do business with Chinese market gardeners. Jack hoped the explorers would buy the vegetables he'd brought. Every little bit helped.

When Jack arrived at the harbor, a big ship was tied to the docks. Dogs yapped and howled. Men loaded sacks of coal and tugged ponies into stalls on the deck.

“Excuse me,” Jack called to a man carrying a sack over his shoulder. “Are you from the ship?”

“I am,” the man said. He had brown hair and a stubble of beard.

“Might you purchase goods for your journey? My family has the finest vegetables you’ll find in Dunedin.” Jack pulled a folded-up piece of paper from his pocket. He’d made a sign for the Nin market garden, with drawings to show all of the vegetables. Sketching felt like magic to Jack. He loved filling blank paper with objects that looked real enough to touch.

“Perhaps some potatoes or cabbages?” Jack said.



The man laughed. “We’re headed to Antarctica, my friend. It’s a five-week voyage to the continent, and who knows how many more before we reach the South Pole. Fresh vegetables won’t keep. We need our space for biscuits and pemmican – dried beef and fat that’ll last far longer than your cabbages.”

“Of course,” Jack said. How foolish he was not to realize that.

“But . . .” the man went on. His eyes had a lively sparkle as he shifted the sack to his other shoulder. “We may be interested in some of your goods for a feast before we depart. Wait here.” The man carried his load to the ship and returned with some money.

Jack unloaded his crate from the horse cart and accepted the coins. “Thank you,” he said. He knew he should start for home. There was work to be done. But he couldn’t stop staring at the tall-masted ship. It buzzed with

activity and adventure. “You think you’ll reach the pole?”

“I’m sure of it.” The man grinned. “You’ll see my name in the newspaper when we return. Apsley Cherry-Garrard, right along with the famous Captain Scott.”

Jack imagined what it would be like to travel to a place no one had ever seen. It made him think of his grandfather, who’d come to New Zealand to work in the Otago gold mines as a young man so he could send money to his family in China. Jack wished he could help his mother that way. But the mines had been cleared of their gold long ago.

Jack looked at the big ship and wondered if there might be another way to help. “Do you need more workers?” he asked.

The man shook his head. “Thousands came forward when Captain Scott put out his call for workers. I was lucky to be chosen myself.”

The man looked back at the ship. “When we depart, we’ll be a crew of sixty-five men, along with thirty-three dogs and nineteen ponies to pull the sleds.”

“I see. Thank you, then.” Jack turned back to his horse. He couldn’t stop thinking about his grandfather’s courage, setting off for a new land to help his family.

And he couldn’t stop thinking about his own whanau.

Whanau is “family” in Maori, but it was more than Jack’s mother and brothers. It was his extended family and the spirits of his ancestors. Jack had a responsibility to all of them.

What if he snuck onto the ship and hid until it was far from port? He could show Captain Scott and the others what a strong worker he was. Surely, they would accept him as a cabin boy. Then he could earn money for his family.

His brothers could manage the market garden without him for a time. And while he was gone, his mother would have one less mouth to feed. He would return home in a few weeks — or months, perhaps? Jack didn't know how long it might take to get to the South Pole after they reached land. But the longer he soaked up the excitement at the harbor, the more he wanted to go.

Jack searched the crowd until he spotted a familiar face.

“Pak Keung!” Jack called. The boy was a little younger than Jack, the son of one of the greengrocers who did business with the Nin family, so he and Jack had become friends. Jack took a coin from his pocket and held it up. “I have a job that I must do. Will you take Whetu home for me? Tell my mother I am going on a trip, to earn money that will help our family.”

The boy agreed, accepted the coin, and took Whetu's reins.

"Give these to my mother," Jack said, and handed the boy the rest of the coins. "Tell her there will be more when I return."

Then, Jack headed for the pile of coal sacks being loaded onto the boat. He hoisted one over his shoulder. It was heavy, but Jack was strong from hauling vegetables. He went straight to the boat, as if he'd been hired to carry coal like the other men. But when Jack tossed the sack onto the deck, he didn't return to shore. He slipped past the coal sacks to the pony stalls. When no one was watching, he ducked behind a crate of horse feed.

Jack crouched low and still. He waited for what must have been more than an hour. His legs cramped. Every time someone walked by, his heart jumped into his throat.

Finally, the ship's great horn gave a blast.

Jack peered out from behind the crate. The explorers kissed their wives good-bye and waved them back to shore. The band played. The crowd cheered. And the *Terra Nova* pulled away from the dock.