

extract from **Goldengrove, by Jill Paton Walsh**

Macmillan, 1972

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Rhythmically, like a runner, the train gasps and pants as it pulls up the long rise. Hearing its heavy breathing, looking at azalea, and rhododendron, and gloriously improbable palm trees growing wild along the verges of the line, the passengers can tell that they are nearly there. Sitting near the end of the train, looking and looking through the window - it has made his nose dirty - for the moment when the line turns suddenly and you can see the sea, Paul knows it is nearly there. Madge is somewhere, looking for it too, Paul tells himself. Somewhere in the snake of carriages ahead, she is riding, looking for the sea. They get to the train in time, just in time, for Daddy to kiss me once on my left cheek, and for me to just leap into the last carriage as the train draws breath, and the platform starts to jerk sideways. They are so jumpy they can hardly bear to wait to slam the door on me. And it's always a non-corridor train, I suppose it has to be a thin train to fit through the tunnels or something, and so here we always are, together and apart, going there together, and meeting when we get there. Of course, my people don't want to meet her people, that's why it is, of course ...

"There is is!" he interrupts himself, for now the train is turning, and suddenly the sea is there, Oh, wider than you ever expect though of course, thinks Paul, I know it is, and a fantastic blue, like the ultra-marine in my paintbox when I first touch the brush over it and wet it, and all frisky with windy white horses galloping shorewards to smash and leap on the broken, black, rocky, petering-out-here edges of the land. So round we go now, running at the foot of the cliff, beneath Goldengrove, with white puffs of smoke ascending to signal in the garden to Gran that we are coming, and as we come, just here - yes, there it is! - we can see the lighthouse in the bay.

Getting up, Paul pulls his holdall down from the luggage rack, steadying his rocking body in the diddlidum swaying of the train.

Madge, looking through the window, leaning her head back into the crown of her straw hat, thinks about Paul. I suppose he's on the train somewhere. I suppose he nearly missed it again. He's awfully bad at catching things. Except fish. We'll see the lighthouse soon. She looks for it. There it is in the bay, standing on its rocky island. It is a cleft island, through which, when the ocean is angry, the white surf surges and boils, but today the sea is only playing. She looks at it, and names it to herself. Godrevy ... Godrevy ... a dream upon the waters ... no, that's Byron on Venice. No wonder I got through that exam. I've got a really English examination mind, through and through. And it's all very well being fussed over, and being hurried forwards, and being the youngest girl they've ever let take Matric, but I wonder if it marks you for life? I mean will I wake up when I'm married saying "Busy old fool, unruly sun (Donne) to myself? Will I always be quoting in my head, and telling myself where the line comes from? Oh, hell! I won't think school yet. it's still holiday for a while.

And we're nearly there.