



*The
Girl who
Raced the
World*





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*For my parents, who always put the wind in my sails
For Jason, my compass, my north star, my home
And for all of you with adventure in your heart*

Author's Note

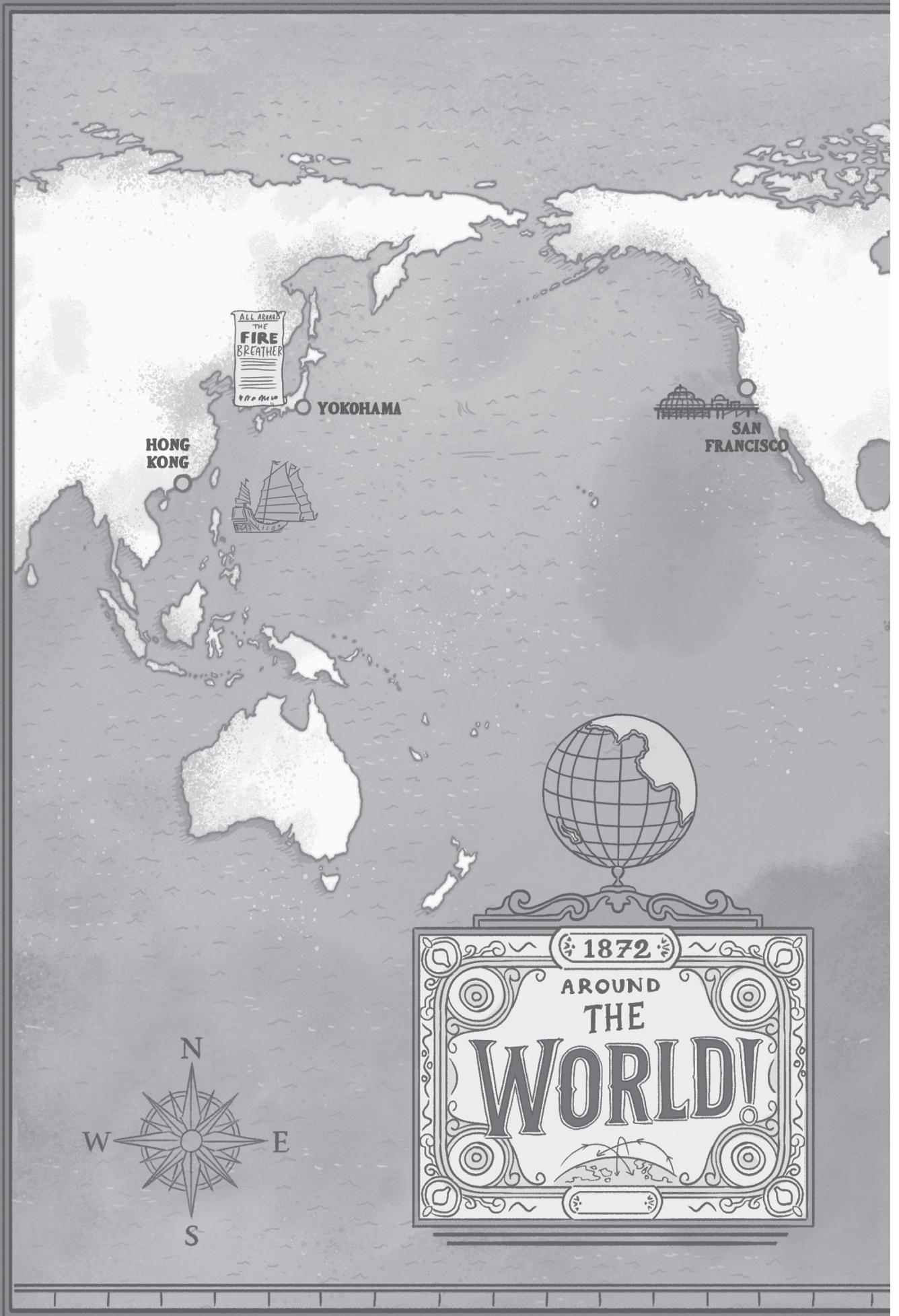
Around the World in Eighty Days was first published in 1872, in a world very different to the one we live in now. In reimagining the classic story, I wanted to create an adventure that would excite modern readers but stay true to the time in which the journey takes place. Some of the historical place names that Maggie experiences are different to those you'll find today. For example, Bombay is now the vibrant city of Mumbai, Calcutta is the cultural hub Kolkata, Allahabad, where the mighty Ganges and Yamuna rivers meet, is now Prayagraj.

We also now understand much more about animal welfare. We know that while elephants like Kiouni are very strong and capable of carrying heavy loads, capturing wild elephants and forcing them to work for us is unforgivable. Nowadays there are wonderful organisations around the world helping to rescue, treat and care for elephants like Kiouni, as well as working to stop this shameful practice.

While the world has changed in the century and a half since Jules Verne created his story, I believe one thing remains true. Travel – to a different country, different town or even a different street – creates a special kind of magic. In fact, whenever you cast an explorer’s eye, even close to home, you may find a great many exciting adventures have been had by the people around you. No matter where we are in the world, when we experience new things, share stories and make friends, we keep adventure in our hearts.

*Put two ships in the open sea, without wind or tide,
and, at last, they will come together.*

—Jules Verne





Prologue

If you ever have the good fortune to visit the city of London – and I rather hope that you do – you will find a great many things to see there.

You might amble along to the Landseer Lions in Trafalgar Square, wind your way around the cobbled streets of Covent Garden, or marvel at the swans as they skid along the Serpentine in Hyde Park. As you hurry your way through the magnificent city, there's every chance you'll rush past a very important building without giving it so much as a second glance.

At 104 Pall Mall, just a brisk stroll from Buckingham Palace if you are in the right shoes, you'll find the Reform Club of London. The building, like its members, takes itself rather seriously. The white stone facade stands rigidly to attention. Dark windows peer down disapprovingly at passers-by, and the front door remains firmly shut to all but a select few.

It was in this very building, on a dreary day in 1872, that

something extraordinary happened. Somewhere between the wobbling chins, ironed newspapers and loud guffaws echoing down long corridors, sat a man named Phileas Fogg. By the end of the day, Mr Fogg would place a bet and gamble his fortune on the notion that he could travel around the world in eighty days. Being so sure of this fact, Mr Fogg set out that very evening to prove it.

Coincidentally, or perhaps not, on that very same Wednesday, the second of October, an orphan named Maggie was on her way to deliver a slightly crumpled letter to a mysterious stranger called Monsieur Passepartout.

This is her story.



In Which a Girl Almost Disappears

Maggie Appleton had lost track of how long she'd been shivering in the shadows opposite No. 7 Savile Row. She stared up at the red bricks and neat iron railings, desperate to catch a glimpse of the man inside.

She'd chased him all the way from Green Street that very afternoon. Even though he'd been laden with bags and, oddly, clutching a bright copper saucepan, he'd been too fast to catch. He'd disappeared inside No. 7 before she could even get close.

Maggie had watched and waited, eyes watering in the blustery autumn wind. But when he didn't reappear, she slid back into the shadows and searched for the courage to knock on the front door.

Remember, she told herself firmly, *not to rush in and make a mess of everything.*

Now that darkness had fallen, she hoped the man wouldn't notice her best woollen dress was missing a button or that her dark hair was tangled with knots.

Stuffing her frozen hands into her cloak pockets, Maggie reached for the belongings inside. Her soot-stained fingers found the neatly folded drawing first and the feel of it calmed her pounding heart. Even in the dim shadows, she could picture the bright brushstrokes Maman had painted, remembering every detail.

Next, she felt for the silver shilling and clutched it tightly in her fist. The image of their neighbour Mrs Copthorne slid into her mind. Her bony hand in their savings tin, swearing blind that Maman had not left a penny. Her lying face pressed against the window, steaming up the glass as the workhouse matron dragged Maggie away.

Swallowing down the memory, Maggie pulled out her most treasured possession, a soft white envelope. She traced a finger over the swirling letters Maman had written in jet-black ink:

Monsieur Jean Passepartout

27 Green Street

Mayfair

Maman's hoarse whisper echoed in Maggie's ears. 'My love, you must deliver this letter. Tell this man your name and that you are my daughter. He will help you.'

Maggie never had a chance to ask how the man would help, or why. The coughing had started again and this time it did not stop. Maman was gone by morning and the workhouse matron had come knocking that very same day.

Maggie's throat tightened. It had taken weeks to plan her escape from the workhouse, but it wouldn't take them long to find out she was missing. The matron would surely know by now that she'd run away. Maggie stared at the door, willing the man to come out so she could thrust the letter into his hand, letting Maman's words say all that was needed.

The moment the handle moves, I'll run to the door, hand him the letter, and say –

'What are you up to, child?'

Maggie spun round so quickly, she almost toppled over. A man had appeared from nowhere, as if conjured from the shadows.

'I asked you a question.' The man's voice was as sharp as a shiver. 'What business do you have here?'

His face was thin and pale; he looked as if he'd never once smiled in his life. His jacket was the colour of a rainstorm and hung loosely from hunched shoulders. Yet it was his eyes that struck Maggie. They were watery grey, like a river in winter.

Maggie's mind screamed at her to run, but she couldn't risk losing sight of the man inside the house. She thrust out the envelope, and her chin for good measure.

'I'm delivering this letter to number seven Savile Row,' she said firmly.

The man eyed first the envelope, then Maggie suspiciously. 'This letter is addressed to Green Street not Savile Row.' His eyes narrowed. 'Tell the truth, child.'

Maggie's cheeks flushed. 'That is the truth. I was at Green Street, but the person I need to see came here and –'

The man reached out and plucked the letter from her fingers. It took all of Maggie's willpower not to snatch it back. She hadn't let it out of her grasp since Maman had pressed it into her hand.

'The man who resides here is Phileas Fogg, not a Mr . . .' He studied the name, but did not attempt to pronounce it.

'The letter is for my . . . relative.' Maggie stumbled on the lie. 'It's very important. I have to make sure –'

'What business does he have with Mr Fogg?' the man cut in, still staring at the letter.

'I don't know,' Maggie replied truthfully. 'The man inside is Maman's friend –'

'Friend?' His cold grey eyes returned to Maggie. 'You said relative. Which is it?'

When Maggie didn't reply, the man stepped closer. 'Perhaps I should introduce myself. I am Detective Fix of Scotland Yard.'

Maggie's heart stopped beating. Maman's terrified face flashed into her mind. 'You must stay away from the police,' she'd begged. 'They'll take you straight to the workhouse.'

Fix pulled out a notebook and flicked it open. 'I suggest the next words out of your mouth are the truth. What do you do for Phileas Fogg? Deliver messages? Run errands?'

Maggie's eyes darted to the door of No. 7. 'I don't know Mr Fogg. Maman said –'

'Does your mother know Fogg?' His eyes scanned the street. 'Is she here?'

Maggie shook her head, not daring to speak another word.

‘Very well. I shall keep hold of *this* –’ Fix tapped the letter – ‘until you decide to tell the truth.’

‘But it’s mine,’ Maggie croaked. Maman’s letter would explain everything.

Fix slid the letter inside his notebook. ‘Your mother can bring you to Scotland Yard and I’ll discuss it with her. Now go.’ He waved a hand as if shooing a fly.

‘No!’ Anger flared in Maggie’s chest. *I won’t break my promise to Maman.* ‘The letter belongs to me. Give it BACK.’

Fix grasped hold of her wrist. ‘Be quiet!’ he hissed. His eyes darted to No. 7, as if expecting someone to burst out the front door. ‘I will not have you interfering with my investigation.’

Panic surged through Maggie, hot and urgent. She tugged with all her strength, but Fix’s grip was too strong. He started forward, dragging her away from No. 7. Away from Monsieur Passepartout.

Desperate to free herself, Maggie lurched towards the detective and sank her teeth into his wrist.

With a strangled yelp, Fix released her and reeled backwards, tripping over his feet. A second later, he tumbled to the ground, sending his notebook skittering into the street.

Maggie darted forward, about to snatch it up, when a door slammed shut behind them.

Whipping around, she saw a man stride out of No. 7. But not the man she’d been waiting for. This one was tall

where the other was stout, and he wore a neat top hat rather than a well-worn bowler.

Monsieur Passepartout was still inside. She had to find him *NOW!*

Maggie snatched up the notebook and bolted towards No. 7, narrowly missing a thundering carriage. She skidded to a stop outside the front door, then wheeled round, sure the detective would be tearing after her.

But Fix still sat where he'd tumbled, his wide eyes locked on the man in the top hat who was now striding away. Then he scrambled to his feet and hurried after him without so much as a backward glance.

Fix was about to round the corner when Maggie noticed something clutched in his hand.

Something white.

Something that looked very much like Maman's letter.