

HOME

Mum grabs my hand and I grab Mungs and drag him behind me onto the boat. Mung is my brother, he's three years younger than me and was supposed to start school this year, if we could afford it. Mum makes us sit where the rest of our extended family are. I push through the crowd so I can see the poor beaches of Indonesia. I wave goodbye to my rundown home, to everything I ever knew, which wasn't much. Soon the free land will be our new home. No war there. A place for everyone, new creatures and large plains. The lucky country, Australia.

Water splashes the rotten wood of the side of the boat. Mum bites her nails with worry, "eighty people" she mutters to herself. We spend most of our time braiding each other's hair. Mum has the most beautiful hair. It's dark brown like our eyes and long like a horses mane. Nanna says I look just like her when she was younger, she always makes me feel special.

The sun is high in the sky. My mouth feels like sandpaper and my stomach is eating itself. I'm so hungry, even the seagulls look tasty. Everyone around me looks like bones in a bag. A tall skeleton with random tufts of hair on his chin and balding head takes my hand in his quivering one. "I'll see you again one day" he whispers, kissing me on the cheek. "Uncle wait!" He gives me a small sad smile, takes one graceful leap overboard and splashes into the sea. We throw him anything we can find to try to get him back on the boat, but he pushes all our attempts away with distaste. Before we know it, he has disappeared deep down in the cold depths of darkness.

Time passes slowly and it feels like we will never make it. Some people are humming and others are vomiting nothingness over the edge of the boat. I feel a small delicate hand grab mine. "Boat" Mung says with the biggest smile on his face. I stand up and look around, there coming toward us with large white men on board is a majestic ship that could fit all of Indonesia on board.

Beyond the ship I see a distant shore and feel relieved. We are so close to freedom.

A booming voice announces "TURN THE BOAT AROUND, SAIL BACK. THERE IS NO PLACE FOR YOU HERE!" When I finally understand what the man is saying, my heart sinks like a drowning rock plunging beneath the ocean.

Out at sea again, drifting to who knows where, a plank of rotting wood suddenly breaks beneath me. I scream a piercing scream as the wood slices my leg. Water rushes up around me and pours in from the sides.

Floating shadows pass me as water fills my burning lungs. I look up to see my final glimmering light.

"I'll see you sooner than you think Uncle. Sooner than you think."