

Years 11 & 12
3rd Place: Vallancy Mewhor
Year 11, Dale Christian School

The Refugees Crossing

Swish bang.

The boat creaks and tremors like a bottle on the sea.
“Stay away from the side kid,” Uncle exclaims.
It is too late and the boat tips and I am sailing out. Falling, sinking into the watery depths. I scream, yet no one hears for the noise is deadened by the water. I look up and see the rugged hull of the boat bobbing up and down. I see the blue expanse of the ocean that was to carry me to a safe land. My eyes are shutting as the last bubbles of breath escape from within me. Then I see the water is parting in a splitting movement and a body comes slicing down toward me. The hands of this person latch about my frail limbs and pull me up. Ecstatic gasping for air fills my lungs and I thank God for life!

I am sputtering on the side of the boat while the men about me are whispering and praying. Wet-eyed and panicked, I comprehend their wondering faces – who else will fall out of this crowded place? Who else might not be as lucky as me? I am saturated and ice cold. The crashing waves collide onto the side of the boat and Uncle seizes me by my arm and pulls me into the mire of bodies.

Swish bang.

The sea lion roars and the sea engulfs our lifeless little boat.
“Eli! You look after him, okay. I am entrusting my boy to you – keep him safe . . . please?”
Mummy kneels. Her body is glass, thin, and breakable.
“I love you so much but I cannot leave this place. Go and grow up in a society that does not know hunger or war.”
The rain pours down and inundates my tears as Uncle leads me away from her.
“Remember me!!” she cries.

Swish bang.

I am saturated and ice cold and all I want to do is cuddle up to Mum – warm and protected. Instead, I am entwined in a net of tall men, who don’t care for me.
“Land!” Uncle calls, “land.”
There is a rush to see and I peer through all the tall tree trunks of men . . . Australia. Cold and grey with red all over it. This is what Mum said was to be our safe haven. A land drenched in a red stain, with beautiful towering white trees standing erect along its shore. How foreign it looks, yet how comforting its shores appear. I listen to the men discussing Australia as our new home.
“Why is it red?” they say. “I thought there was no war here?”
“Don’t be foolish, Abdol!” Uncle responds. “This is a good land, a fair land for all!”

A fair land, a new land, a red land. But I wonder if it is going to be my land? Uncle said it is where your heart is. My heart cries for its wonderful Mother, far away across this raging ocean, in a small shack nestled among a war-torn village.

I am jolted out of my dream as Uncle shakes me and I see we have reached the rocks. The sea tosses and turns like a child in bed and the rocks laugh at me with piercing teeth.

Some men jump while others climb over the edge of the boat. Uncle grabs me up to pass me over the side. I'm scared, the world spins, the water churns and swarms of bodies collide. I am dangling over it . . . the sea. This last gap between boat and land is the last step for me to get to Australia from my home. Days we have bobbed like containers on an undulating ocean and now we have succeeded in finally coming to our destination. I am placed on the rocks and watch the ocean we had just conquered.

Though we had overcome much. Australia did not accept us straight away. Life was hard, but I found peace.

I still watch the rolling tides of the ocean crash upon boats out at sea and I still hear the noise that followed us as we crossed to Australia.

Swish bang.