

# Crashing Thunder

Agrima Ghosh

I felt his rough palm in my hand as we walked across the ashen plains. The smell of the burning grass gave me a sense of familiarity and comfort, and the ash swirling around in the air tickled my skin. The golden fire danced around me as I walked through the fields with my grandfather. There was a twinkle in my grandfather's eyes and he gave me a smile filled with warmth and content.

"Djandak Wi has been a traditional method of clearing the fields for many years my boy, don't you forget it."

I nodded at my grandpa and reassured him,

"Don't worry Pop, I'll never forget, even when I'm old like you."

He swiped at my head playfully and chuckled, but I ducked just in time.

*A few days later...*

"You shouldn't trust them white fellas, they'll take advantage of you and they'll crush you like a boot squashing a fly."

My dad sighed, "I know, but we don't have a choice. We need to sort out this matter with these white fellows so that we can keep the mob safe,"

My grandpa scoffed and walked off, muttering something under his breath. The white settlers had sent our mob a message to meet them to settle a deal over the land. Grandpa had doubts about this, but this had filled me with hope, that we could reclaim our home and make peace with the white people. However, I was sorely mistaken.

Later that day, we met them in the area near their settlement, but I felt like I was in a completely different place. They had cleared the bush so all you could see were the stumps of gum trees and dusty plains. There were no kookaburras laughing or dingoes racing, they didn't have a home anymore. I know how that feels.

I quickly glanced at one of the white settlers, who looked back at me like I was the scum of

the earth. He looked menacing and his face was distorted in disgust. I looked closer and I saw long metal rifles in their arms. The realisation made me shrink back in horror. Why did they bring those killing machines, the ones that had murdered my people?

Suddenly, the white settlers started to shove us and ripped the children away from the parents. They put guns to our backs and said that if we looked back they would shoot our parents. My blood boiled and hot tears ran down my cheeks. They lied to us. \*Bang\* Shots were fired, but I couldn't run back to save my people. They lied to us.

We walked for hours before reaching these institutions, where we were taught to forget about our families, our past, our culture, everything. They tried to teach us to read and write, but I refused; I didn't want to learn how to be white, I just wanted to run back into my parents' arms and hold my grandpa's hand again. Most of the kids were like me, separated from their parents. Some of them were so young that they would forget who their parents were by the time they were my age.

I was cleaning the window when a girl my age with curly dark hair and hazel eyes, came over and asked, "Hey you, what's your name?"

I replied, "Caleb."

She made a face, "No, not your white name, your real name."

I blinked, "Oh, it's Coen."

The sunlight gave out glints of gold in her hair. "What does it mean?"

"It means 'thunder', 'cause I was born during a thunderstorm. What's your name?"

She looked me in the eye and said, "Kirra, it means 'dancing leaf'."

Kirra was like a bundle of energy; she talked to me continuously and asked questions all day. She became one of my closest friends, and she made me feel a little less lonely. One day, we were looking up at the stars, and she said,

"You know Coen, I wish I was living the white life."

I looked up at her in shock and retorted, "What in the bloody hell are you talking about?"

She didn't meet my eyes, "I'm not saying I want to be white, I'm saying that I wish I could live like them, then I could stay with my parents and not live in constant fear."

“Yeah, me too, I feel like we’re always being fenced off from the bigger world.”

She nodded and looked at me, “It’s like we’re roots of a plant stuck in a garden, never being able to escape.”

At that exact moment, Barbara, the white lady in charge, called out her name. I followed Kirra to see what was going on, and when I entered the room there were two white strangers wearing suspiciously large smiles.

Barbara grinned and said in a sickly-sweet voice, “Meet your new family dear.”

She left that night with her new family, and I felt that lingering feeling of loneliness again. I didn’t know if I would ever see her again; I’ve lost so many people already, why did she have to leave? She was my friend, and the only one that understood me and made me feel as though all was not wrong in this world

*A few years later...*

My baby girl was in my arms sleeping peacefully, and my heart swelled with love. I looked at her, marvelling at her beautiful dark skin and long sweeping eyelashes. I whispered to her, my voice breaking, “I hope that one day, you won’t have to suffer what your father, your grandfather and the people that came before you suffered.”

***Agrima Ghosh*** is a Year 10 student at Suzanne Cory High School in Hoppers Crossing. She enjoys reading mystery/crime and her favourite authors are Jhumpa Lahiri, Angie Thomas and Agatha Christie. Her aspiration is to study medicine, and to further pursue a career in oncology or paediatrics. She loves exploring and learning about different cultures and hopefully when the pandemic diminishes, she would love to travel around the world.