

The Refugee

A tiny boat crammed with trembling people, waves crashing around me and dark clouds billowing in the harsh wind. Seagulls fly slowly above us; vultures waiting to pounce. I can taste salt in the air, like the tears of weary children. Meanwhile our parents look at each other fearfully; will we be accepted? The boat rocks from side to side as the sky darkens to a deep grey colour. People huddle together for warmth, looking for a crumb of comfort. My stomach turns and I wonder how much longer we will be on this boat. I shudder as I remember life back at home. Dust and debris covered the streets as people mourned lost relatives. Houses ripped apart by bombs and everything destroyed by smoke and ash.

But suddenly I see a small dot in the distance. It turns into a lump and then I realise, it's land! The sinking in my stomach dissipates and the waves seem to calm. Slowly, the sky lightens and people look curiously at their new home. As we get closer I see trees, heavy with fruit. Instead of citrus lemons and limes, there are heavy pears and rosy red apples hanging from the branches. The sun shines strongly, causing glints of gold on the saffron crops covering the fields. The boat reaches the land, bumping gently against the pier.

We walk slowly down the boat to the ground. Crowds part as we stumble past and they whisper to each other. Their eyes tell me they are asking, "Who are they? What are they doing here?" I myself don't even know the answer to that question. My few memories of my old home were full of blurs and the shouts of my childhood friends. I had left those friends behind when I was rushed onto the last boat to freedom. I had had no time to pack anything and so now I only had my old rag doll. My mama had made it when I was just a little toddler. Mama passed away just after that so it was one of the only memories I had of her. I live with Papa now and it is him holding my hand as we walk through the people, down the path towards the village hall.

Down by the markets, people are talking and laughing, wearing brightly coloured clothes. I glance down at my damp, dark rags; I look nothing like them! They speak in a strange language that I can't understand. Sweat slowly drips down my back as people turn to stare and point at these bedraggled foreigners. Will I ever fit in?