

Blood Ties

The children danced upon the earthen track, one caravan of divine upswept joy exclaimed in those catching grins and giggles. The laughter of the four, joyous children brought the playground colours to an ever more heartwarming hue. But the giggles soddened as footsteps echoed sharply around the earthen road, sounding overly loud in the girl's own ears, like the booming heartbeat of a condemned prisoner. 'Bridget! Jack! Stop playing with those black rascals! Come! Hurry!' hissed Mrs Taylor, the mother of Bridget and Jack.

Her overly done makeup plastered her face like the masks covering the faces of over confident actors. The sun dried her face mimicking the flakes of a burnt lifeless leaf. Her voice rang around the stunned silence, her hostile nature showing off at its proudest.

Mournfully, the now sobered children trailed along behind their mōm, giving silent waves to the Wunjurra children. They scowled behind their mother, despising her haughty, contemptuous manner. So often, those scathing moans emanated from her snarling mouth and joined with other white mouths, in this neighbourhood.

Home in the weather beaten Queenslander, Bridget and Jack's parents continued their racist tirade.

'They took our land in the first place...they have the audacity to keep livin' here?' 'I'm not havin' my kids playing with them dirty blackfellers,' Mrs Taylor's voice resounded through the kitchen door "... no right to be livin' here. Should be on one of them reserves...." .

Bridget curled up on the couch in that foetal position that she often adopted when the outbursts overwhelmed the home. She dared not tell them of her playground moments when Oodjurra and Windoni Wunjurra had shared their lunch with them; Windoni with her damper bread dipped in sweet honey and Bridget offering her tuna sandwiches and favourite yoghurt. Often, they played football and hopscotch on the dried grass and laughed in the sizzling sun. Bridget loved to tie tiny plaits in Windoni's frizzy hair, and Jack would play jumping games with Oodjurri. But none of this seemed to matter to the grown-ups.

But this was all to change.

On packing for the family holiday, Mr Taylor crammed cases into his well-used Holden Commodore. Piling kids, dog and wife into the remaining spaces, the car set off with its usual kangaroo hop, and chugged into the wide, open street. Grey plumes of smoke emitted from the exhaust, but the spluttering could not be heard over the radio blaring out Taylor Swift's "Shake It off". Then ... suddenly, from out of Jack's peripheral vision, a car, coming in the opposite direction, swerved. Its tyres skidded in a zig-zag dance and the body side swiped the Holden. The old car spun like a spinning top and came to an alarming halt against a gum tree. The next there were sonorous noises, acrid smells and pain.

Screaming, yelling, tortured cries could be heard. It was a cacophony of noises like an orchestra warming up before a performance but then falling into a disharmony of jarring sounds.

People ran from their houses, fearing some catastrophic event was descending upon them. Only a street away, the Wunjurra's had been preparing a family BBQ, savouring the scrumptious aroma of sizzling sausages and caramelised onions. The noise hit them like a siren going off. Mr Wunjurra fumbled with the switch and hurriedly dropped his tongs before scurrying towards the unknown source with the rest of his family. Their convulsing hearts filled with worry.

Before them, a scene of carnage emerged. The dented front of the Holden had crumpled like a brown paper bag and wrapped its fender around the mighty gum. Tilted up on one side, a tyre continued to spin into an air of cloud and smoke. A black ooze slid like a snake from the chassis, trickling down on the ground, now filled with glass shards. Coughing and spluttering, the Wunjurra's ploughed into the acrid smoke screen, covering their mouths with their sleeves. Mr Wunjarra's strong, brown arms pulled at Mr Taylor, unfastening the seatbelt, and dragging him to safety. More arms of rescue reached in to the metal cage, releasing Mrs Taylor, whose blooded forehead dripped droplets of scarlet on the now stained grass below. In an unconscious daze, she lay on the ground unaware of Bridget trapped against the rear passenger door, that had concaved inwards. Her breath was shallow, but she could respond to Windoni's comforting words. "Don't worry Bridget, we are here. help is on the way". The brown hand gripped the white one firmly, and held on in a kind embrace till the firemen, with their 'jaws of death', opened the door like the clip on a tin can, and freed Bridget from her metal prison.

Two hours later, the Taylor children woke up to the darkness of a ending evening and the touch of rough, welcoming hands of the Wunjurra's. The hospital room was filled with beholden faces.

Bridget lay on a stretcher, her breathing laboured but steady with Windoni holding her hand, her face anxious but hopeful. Jack sat propped on a bed his arm heavily bandaged as a x-ray picture filled the computer screen.

Mrs Taylor glanced at Mrs Wunjurra, who were currently breathing heavily squeezing a red stress ball while a Blood Transfusion bag, hanging over the metal stand shook slightly as the blood circulated in and beneath.

Giving Mrs Wunjurra a weak smile she felt the thin pipe slowly pump fresh blood into her arm.

Mr and Mrs Taylor smiled, with soft rejoicing faces as a surgical doctor bustling here and there assisted with the blood donation as it went.

Losing blood, was one thing, but receiving it from someone you thought had no likeness with you, was another. True blood ties.