

Alone Together

My body is burning from top to bottom and not just because of the heat. The day is thick and unpleasant enough without eyes pressing on me from every direction. Summer has been too oppressive this year and it isn't ending soon. I remember so vividly the lights. Red, blue. Red, blue. Red, blue. The cameras, the questions, the ladies asking if I was ok and that splash of water that seemed to drown my whole world before it, in seconds.

She and I are at the station now with nothing but backpacks. We are carrying our entire lives. It is all that is left. We don't talk we just walk. Whispers of teenagers, weak smiles of mothers who hold their children, stopping them from pointing. They recognise us. My hatred towards the media grows and my face boils, as black, angry clouds loom over my head. I can feel the man's eyes piercing through me as he hands me the ticket and without making eye contact I thank him and walk away. It is now that I wish we were far, far away.

As the one-way ticket to our new life approaches she and I stand there. Watching. We are its prisoners. We have no choice but to get on. As the bustle focuses on getting on the train, less eyes are on us. My bag feels lighter. I still haven't said a word to her as we look at our tickets. Carriage six. We walk up the platform and my feet are sticking to my thongs like I'm walking in thick mud. As we reach the doors it becomes so surreal. We might never be here again. We look at each other and take a deep breath before stepping inside.

A man is directing people to their seats. I look at her, anxious. I know it means we have to talk to him and we haven't done much of that since... She grips my hand. One step forward. 'Just the two of you?' he asks. She nods and shows him our tickets. As he is pointing to our seats he looks at my face and then back at hers. He knows who we are. She quickly grabs our tickets and starts walking before he can say anything. I follow her. As I look back his face is apologetic and he mouths, 'Sorry'. I try to smile but I can't. I am sorry too. We take our seats and I hear a young girl say, 'They're the people from the news'. Fighting waves of nausea, my skin prickles, blood pounding inside my ears. Harder. Harder. Until I'm sure I will explode. She and I still haven't spoken before an hour passes.

I freeze while chatter fills the carriage at the next station. We sit still, small in a crowd of giants scurrying to get on and off the train. I hope with everything in me no one sits across from us. As figures move past, my cheeks burn and my gaze is locked on my hands clenched on the table in front of me. Relieved, I turn to look at the familiar woman sitting next to me. Wondering if she'd finally say something to me. She doesn't. As time crawls by I still don't know what to say to her. So I don't say anything. I just watch the farms flash by, the suburbs, the city with its buildings dominating the skyline. I watch the ocean and the immense ships floating like iron giants on the water. I watch the houses growing smaller as we ascend over the hills and the planes flying past from other countries I can only dream of. Countries I'm always dreaming of. Countries that don't have summer like we do. Countries that don't have bushfires that burn down entire houses and lives.

My mum wakes up and looks at me. Finally, I overcome the booming sensation inside my chest and manage to force out, 'We are alone'. Immediately she assures me, 'We are alone together'. Although we have lost everything in this scorching summer, we still have each other.