

Changing the Village

This story was written by a young asylum seeker at the Sydney Story Factory.

“This is my story, and my name is ****. I come from **** in Sri Lanka.

“First the village was her home. It was surrounded by ocean, mountains and the beautiful fragrance of flowers and trees. There were many small houses and rice paddies. Her name was Shana. She was a confident, intelligent and pretty teenager. She studied in the village and enjoyed exploring the beach and the forest with her friends. Every day the people of the village worked hard to provide for their families. They worked in the rice paddies, used cows to make oils out of seeds and they cut big coconut, palm and mango trees to make furniture. They lived peacefully and happily.

One day all of the people heard screams and saw ashes fire and smoke. The soldiers had come to the village and they took orders from their leader. If the people did not listen, they were chased and killed. The soldiers came to take working people so then there was no one to work in the village. Shana and her friends could not study in the school because they were scared that the soldier would take them to work.

Shana’s family and neighbours made a decision to quickly flee. Shana’s father said, “We have to make a boat or find a boat. We cannot stay here”. Shana’s mother decided that they would leave in the night. Shana brought with her dresses, teddy bears, photos, and her mother brought documents to leave the village. Shana felt that she would miss her friends and house. She felt scared when they left in the night. It was 11:30 at night and they ran through the forest to the boat. As Shana walked to the beach, she was very wet and cold as it was raining. Then she saw the boat and the people in the distance.

Shana’s father helped the people go into the boat. The boat was congested and smelt bad like mould. The boat was swaying hard with the waves. Finally, they left the village. Shana watched it becoming small as they drifted away and they left their village behind.

There were ninety people in the small boat. There were pregnant women, kids, babies and old women in the boat. They travelled for eighteen days and in the last four there was no water and no food. Shana felt like she would faint and as it swayed she would vomit. She could not sleep. It was a terrible situation for everyone. Shana did not know where she was going and every time she would ask “Where are we going?” Her parents would say “we are nearly there, the Australian island”.

Finally, Shana’s family saw the Australian island. They arrived in Christmas Island. The Australian immigration came to help everyone. Shana’s father told them the problems in their village, and the situation travelling on the boat. After that the immigration gave food, water and clothes to the people. For two days the people stayed in a processing camp. Then for two

months they stayed in cement buildings. Shana's family waited for the immigration reply. Finally, the immigration took the details of all the people from the boat and they gave all the people citizenship. They felt happy and peaceful. Shana's family went to Sydney, and many other families went to other cities in Australia.

Shana studied happily and she made new friends. Her village in Sydney was made of many buildings, many people, many shops, traffic and trains. Shana thought about her old village, and she called her friends who were still there. She said to them: "I miss you all, and I miss my school, but my village now is different".