

IAN C. SMITH

## **STREETKID REFUGEE**

In a whisper of wind, they embark, watch their campfire's cascading sparks reduce, clutching meagre possessions, no identification. Their own rags of courage burn fiercely into this night that becomes their significant memory, huddling on the damaged deck, fire fading to specks of disappearing light, no lifelines, no hum from a ship's funnel or horn hooting an emigrants' farewell over the Indian Ocean you could call melancholy, towards a chaos of fish flying through clefts between towering waves.

With no idea of compass bearings what do these thin dark-skinned expatriates expect beyond this slow throb? Peace? A drier heat? Pirates? Just the pull of waves? A sporting nation? Exile in a wise civilization? Or some miracle, some myth of a fair go arising from the fog of dubious hope hanging over their island-hopping trek like a judgment?

Landfall behind him, a damaged tear duct he calls his sad eye often weeps, especially when he recalls the scent of peeled cinnamon. He believes slave wages unconnected to slavery, opportunity emblazoning his thoughts, belongings in grey plastic bags, his ideal a three-bedroom house built from cream bricks, a palace, lights precious candles, primes his English reading discarded newspapers.

In the remembering time before sleep he forgets to snuff the candles. Flames flicker through his night, burn, bend, refuse to die. The darkness of sleep, what he loves, blesses him with a dream, the sound of creaking planks, its echoes. He swims through a blossoming sea, sky streaked, festooned with fireworks.