

Shine Bright LLCE Cycle Terminal

Snapfile 10 Stolen

Sandy's story of the Mungee p. 121

A group of Aboriginal children living in the same orphanage are telling each other stories at night.

Sandy: Are you scared of the dark?

He asks the others. They nod.

Do you wanna hear the story of the big bad Mungee? My grandfather told me this. A long time ago there was no darkness.

The yurringa [local dialect for 'sun']—

Shirley: But you're not allowed to say that...~

Sandy: It's all right. The yurringa—that is the sun—shone all the time, day, and what we now call night. [...] One time it was so hot that there was no water and tucker¹ was scarce. The barra [making a gesture to describe a kangaroo] all bounded away and the birds flew off in such a big flock that it turned the sky permanently black. Nobody minded because it was cooler in the dark. Until the Mungee came along. The Mungee was an outcast from the mob² and he was mean and he was huge. [...] The Mungee got so hungry that he came and snuck into his people's camp and stole one of the children! Then he ate him up! Munch munch munch—

The children act out eating the child.

—and he was gone! The next day he did the same. Under the cover of darkness he snuck in and stole another baby and ate him up. The mob were frightened and upset and crying. They tried hiding the children but the Mungee always found them. [...] The elders thought about it and came up with a plan. They would cast a spell³ on him. The next day the elders waited for the Mungee, and when they sensed his presence

they threw magic powdered bone all over him. It stuck in his hair and on his skin and he couldn't scrub it off. The Mungee was turned into a pale skin and that was his punishment. He would never be able to sneak into the camp to steal the children because he would be seen. And the people would know. And the people would never forget.

Meanwhile all the other children had wandered off to their beds except Ruby.

Sandy picks up his trusty suitcase.

[To Ruby, very softly] So, Ruby, I gotta go or the matron will skin me, but remember, it's not the dark you need to be afraid of.

She nods and goes back to her bed.

Jane Harrison, *Stolen*, 1998

1. Australian slang for "food" **2.** a group of Aboriginal people **3.** *jeter un sort*

The Bringing Them Home report p. 122

Part 1 • Introduction

Grief¹ and loss are the predominant themes of this report. Tenacity and survival are also acknowledged². It is no ordinary report. [...]

The histories we trace are complex and pervasive³. Most significantly the actions of the past resonate in the present and will continue to do so in the future. The laws, policies and practices which separated Indigenous children from their families have contributed directly to the alienation⁴ of Indigenous societies today.

For individuals, their removal as children and the abuse they experienced at the hands of the authorities or their delegates have permanently scarred⁵ their lives. The harm continues in later generations, affecting their children and grandchildren.

Appendix 9 • Recommendations

Acknowledgment and apology - Parliaments and police forces

5a. That all Australian Parliaments

1. officially acknowledge the responsibility of their predecessors for the laws, policies and practices of forcible⁶ removal,
2. negotiate with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission a form of words for official apologies to Indigenous individuals, families and communities and extend those apologies with wide and culturally appropriate publicity, and
3. make appropriate reparation as detailed in the following recommendations.

1. *chagrin, douleur* 2. recognise 3. spreading widely 4. isolation from society
5. traumatise 6. *de force*

What do you do? p. 123

Jimmy and his Mother, Nancy (the actor playing Shirley), each speak alternatively, but without hearing the other. Sandy, Ruby and Anne are singing 'Happy Birthday To You' quietly.

Jimmy: What do you do when you meet your mother for the first time in twenty-six years? Shake her hand? Give her a hug? Do I show her me¹ footy trophies, and me school reports?

Jimmy's mother: Twenty-six years is a long time. Gees, what if I don't recognise him? What'll I say to him?

They pull out the twenty-six presents from the box and lay them slowly on the bed.

Jimmy: Do I say, 'Hi, Mum, what's new? How have you been? Where have you been all my life?' Do I give her twenty-six Christmas presents and twenty-six birthday presents? Bloody hell, I don't even know when her birthday is...

Jimmy's mother: Maybe we'll be like strangers. Maybe he'll be ashamed of me. He probably doesn't even know how much I've missed...

She breaks down². They both hang their heads, then stand up straight as if putting on a brave face.

Jimmy: [making a joke of it] Hey, when you meet your mother for the first time, do you put on your best gear³... or go casual?

Jimmy's mother: His foster mother's⁴ probably real smart looking.

They simultaneously indicate their simple gear.

Jimmy: What do I tell her? Good stuff? Or all the bad stuff?

Jimmy's mother: I know I'm gunna cry...

They start putting the presents back in the box.

Jimmy: Maybe she'll wanna come and live with me and bring all the rellies⁵.

Jimmy's mother: Maybe he'll be one of those flash blacks with a mobile phone.

Jimmy: God, I hope she's not real dirty or something.

Jimmy's mother: Will he like me?

Jimmy: She might not even like me.

Jimmy's mother: Will he love me?

The boxes go back under the bed. They stand there facing one another.

Jimmy: Will she feel like my mother...? [Pause.] I don't even know what having a mother feels like.

Jane Harrison, *Stolen*, 1998

1. my 2. cry 3. clothes 4. *mère adoptive* 5. relatives

Ruby's family come to visit p. 124

In the dark Ruby cries out.

Ruby: Where are you?

The lights rise on Ruby in the hospital bed. The chorus, representing her family, are crowded around her—they are excited to see her.

Len: Ruby. We're here. It's your dad Len. And your sister Joanie. We've come a long way.

Ruby: Don't want no trouble.

Len: Ruby, we finally tracked you down.

Ruby: Yeah... what happened to me?

They misunderstand, thinking she's talking about the past.

Len: Well... We was real young, Ruby. They made your mum sign a bit of paper.

Sister: She couldn't read or nothin'.

Len: They said that she'd signed you up for adoption.

Pause.

Ruby: What happened to me...?

She indicates the institution bed.

Len: Oh... you mean... love, you had a bit of a turn...

Ruby: [reverting to¹ the child, screaming] Where are you?

Len: We're here now, Ruby. Ruby, we wanna take you home.

Ruby: Don't live in no home any more. I work for the Hardwicks.

Sister: Sis, we've come to take you home.

Her Sister holds her hand, but Ruby pulls it away.

Ruby: Mmm. Don't need no trouble.

Her family stands there awkwardly² while Ruby rocks and mutters to herself.

Got enough to do.

The lights go down.

Jane Harrison, *Stolen*, 1998

1. regress 2. *maladroitement*