

Two Skulls

by Steve Kinnane

I prepared a bed of paper bark and gum leaves for you, separate from my sleeping sons. I didn't tell my boys of your visit. I left with you in the cold, dark of dawn, quietly smoking the house with Balga resin before our journey, keeping you with me.

The airport X-Ray revealed your tragic beauty; two skulls, an adult and child, perfectly clean lit luminous green. I held your tiny cardboard coffin more firmly, protectively. My fellow travellers.

Broome welcomed us with a warm breeze filled with the scent of pindan, mangroves and salt. As we drove, I talked. I described the rangelands, the Kite Hawks circling, the communities we passed – windows open, dry heat, dust and the sounds of the bush. I avoided everyone, passed crops of hitch-hikers - straight to Fitzroy Crossing.

The Cultural Bosses were waiting. Without fuss they lit the tin drum filled with Brearley and gum leaves. Together we were smoked good and proper - cleansed by the thick, liquid grey smoke of our Country. And then I let you go, gently, as you joined so many others who are gathered here, waiting.

Tomorrow, the Rangers are coming to carry you home to Country.



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