

Running away from home, running towards home

By Kage Dwyer

BANG, SMASH, THUMP!

Marley quickly jumped up from his bed and put on his ipod earphones. He knew the sound all too well and what it meant. Dad knocked over the bins again stumbling home drunk. As he sat in his room listening to Eminem's "I'm not afraid" on his silver ipod, he could hear his parents arguing. They always argued when Dad came home drunk. Marley lay down on his bed staring at his cracked white paint on the ceiling.

Even through the music in his ears, Marley heard a distinct "UGGHHH" of his mother in pain.

Marley sprung out of bed into the lounge room and saw his Dad punching his mother on the floor. He screamed "Dad! Stop, Stop!"

CRACK! Dad's fist backhanded Marley across the room. As Marley lay on the old grey carpet all he could think of was how his Dad's hand had reeked of alcohol and cigarettes. The room began to spin and Marley closed his eyes....

The sun woke Marley up and quickly he noticed how sore he felt from sleeping on the floor all night. He could still feel his cheek burning from the king hit last night. Laying on the floor Marley thought about how no one really cared for him, not even enough to carry him back to his bed.

"That's it", he thought to himself, "I'm outta here!"

Marley went into his room and packed some clothes and a sleeping bag into a backpack. He had a quick look around his room at the Aboriginal flag and his poster of Choc Mundine. "It's alright Choc", thought Marley "us Kooris know how to survive!" On the way out of the room Marley grabbed a photo of his Mum and Dad and himself when he was younger – a happier time.

As Marley walked the dark, cold streets of Redfern he could see his breath in the air and hear a dog barking. The smell of a BBQ lingered in the air.

Marley found a quiet spot and set up camp in the Botanic Gardens surrounded by a brown banksia, a red and yellow bottle brush and a red grevillea plant. For the next few weeks Marley spent his days busking at Circular Quay. His digeridoo performances were popular with the tourists and he was able to make enough money to buy food from Mc Donalds. At night he would snuggle up in his green sleeping bag surrounded by the colourful native flowers in his corner of the Botanic Gardens staring at the stars. It reminded him of when he

would go bush. He would swim in the River, go fishing. His Dad would show him how to track animals, his Mum would cook up the best yabbies and they'd tell stories under the stars.

As Marley lay there remembering, a sound crept into his mind. It was a scratchy, quiet sound. He sat up and looked around suspiciously wondering if the Police had found him. But instead it was a small, grey possum. Its big yellow eyes were shining in the moonlight. It approached Marley, it seemed friendly. Marley reached out his hand and surprisingly the possum came to his hand. Each night after that, the possum would appear after making that same scratchy, quiet sound. Marley knew that the possum must have been an ancestor spirit keeping him company in the Gardens.

After three weeks, Marley woke up with a huge yawn one day and suddenly realised that during the night he'd got a message from an ancestor in his dreams. It was time to go home. Maybe things would be different there. If not, he could get more of his stuff. Marley packed his gear up and gave a thought to the friendly possum that would be looking for him later during the night.

When Marley arrived out the front of his house he stopped for a moment when he saw the front door. Memories of that awful night flooded into his mind – his poor Mum on the floor, the stink of Dad's hand and his decision to leave. He listened for the sounds of the people inside the house, it all sounded quiet. Eminem's lyrics of "I'm not afraid" came to him and knew he was brave enough to go inside the house.

Marley heard the door to his room creak open and then before he knew it, Marley was in a soft hug from his Mum. Dad was there too, tears were running down his face.

"I'm sorry Marley. I was wrong to come home drunk and do those terrible things." said Dad, sitting beside Marley on the bed.

Marley was silent, sitting stiffly, he wasn't sure if he should believe what his Dad was saying.

"I have changed since you've been gone. I'm not drinking at all anymore. Losing you made me see how wrong I've been. Give me a sec, ok?"

Marley nodded. Dad went to his room and took down a painting from the wall. It was of fish and communities. It was beautiful and had been painted by Marley's grandfather when he was a boy.

Dad returned to Marley holding the painting. "This belonged to me, but now it belongs to you."