



## The Refugees from Rakhine

No one puts their children in a boat unless the water is safer than the land.

– Warsan Shire, “Home”

Monir wakes up to Razia’s wailing each day. Her weary toddler arms reaching out for her mother’s comfort. But this morning feels different. It hits different. Monir is four years old and this is his last day in their shabby mud house.

As he opens his eyes, a sharp stinging sensation immediately blurs his vision. Razia is lying next to him and his gaze falls upon the petite silhouette of their mother in the next bed, surrounded by bright light. His clouded vision prevents him from seeing her charred body. Monir loses consciousness.

He is woken up by a sudden jolt. Velma aunty, their neighbour, has Razia in her arms. She seems at peace. “How unusual for Razia,” Monir thinks to himself. Velma aunty looks like she just had a soot bath and Monir catches a tear roll down her face as she notices him moving.

They are in a boat. A boat larger than his house, larger than any boat he has seen before in his little village by the river.

“Where is amee [mom]?” Monir inquires. Velma points towards the rear of the boat and Monir sees a blazing fire consuming his little village in the Rakhine district of Myanmar.

“Where are you taking us aunty?” he asks in a shaky voice. “To the lesser devil,” says Velma, as their boat sets sail towards the tumultuous seas to Bangladesh.

by Abhinav Malhotra