

The Grudge Of Time



Team name: Cobblebank Team 2

Cobblebank Team 2 would like to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which this book was created, the Wurundjeri People of the Kulin Nation and pay our respects to Elders past and present.

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[Amaira Dhawan, Adele Van Schalkwyk, Angel Sehgal, Allayna Batta, Sophia Huynh, Achol Biar, Sienna Petersen, Sean Jay Masaquel]

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The Grudge of Time

Authors: Amaira Dhawan, Adele Van Schalkwyk, Angel Sehgal, Allayna Batta, Sophia Huynh, Achol Biar and Sean Jay Masaquel

Illustrators: Sophia Huynh and Sienna Petersen

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Chapter 1: Memorable moments

“Valerie darling wake up for school!” scolded her mum. The ecstatic 15-year-old highschooler girl launched herself out of bed and bumped her toe straight into the side of her drawer. “Ouch!” She screamed. “Oh, flipper dippers! Why am I so clumsy” she questions herself in a light way. She sees the time [6:42am] the alarm’s white light flickers in the mellow room; school starts at 8:00 am she thinks to herself.

Valerie got ready, showered, brushed her teeth, and did her makeup. She came down to see a large, cooked meal that included eggs, bacon, sausages, and several warm side items. Her gaze shifted towards the clock [7:51]. " Oh, fiddle sticks! I'm late again! She quickly stuffed a piece of toast into her mouth and left for school.

On the other side her best friend Colbee got up at 6:00 am sharp. He made his bed, showered, brushed his teeth, and left the house at 7:30 am with a full stomach.

At school both were jolly, engaged and interactive with each other. They laughed, made pointless jokes, and were in all the same clubs. Each other’s smile lightened up the room for one another. If one had a chicken sandwich and the other had a PB&J they would end up having half a slice of each. It was like every day repeated itself but with increased delight each day.

Valerie was an out-going, popular carefree teenager. However, Colbee was a hardworking, shy quiet type of student. Despite these differences both were inseparable, like two peas in a pod.

But recently every now and then Colbee senses this uneasy feeling that other students don’t like him because of his aboriginal identity.

Colbee recalls this one-time during art class he was paired with some of the popular guys from class for a group project. He was little disappointed that he and Valerie didn’t get paired to, but he didn’t show any physical expressions of that feeling. As he begins to speak they all start to snicker and the blonde tall one starts to mock the hint of aboriginal accent in my way of speaking.

“Alright, guys I feel like we should assign ourselves some roles for the presentation so it’s easier to navigate within the group” said the boy in an overly dramatic aboriginal accent. This hurt Colbee a lot but at that time he just gave a tiny side smile and became quiet for the lesson.

But Colbee thought to himself that “This shouldn’t matter that much, right? “Right?”

Chapter 2: Woosh Away

The wind was **crisp** and delicate; leaves danced in the wind floating effortlessly. Kookaburras sang angelically from the heights of the gum trees. Flowers swayed with the wind releasing their pleasant aromas.

Valerie's heels softly clicked against the pavement as she walked towards her office building. The building towered over her, the light reflecting off the light tones that painted the building all over. Large glass windows adorned the building windows, allowing light to enter though the building illuminating rooms.

Her palms gripped the cold silver handle, her fingers curling along the handle. With a gentle pull, the glossy glass door opened, granting access to Valerie. A gust of icy air hit her face. Taken aback by the sudden change in temperature Valerie blinked rapidly before adjusting to her surroundings. The radiant lights sparkled, brightening the office; glistening against the polished surfaces.

Valerie walked in a smile planted on her face reaching from ear to ear. Her mind exploded millions of thoughts passing by every second. Her eyes crinkled as she fails to contain her enjoyment for her work trip. She sat down at her furnished desk everything organised while her computer screen glowed bright.

After Valerie had finished, she skipped down the hallway her bag in her hand; ready to head home and start packing. She hummed a K-pop tune playing Stay Kids on her phone with her headphones blasting the song Social Path. The walk home was joyful as Valerie danced to the sweet music that locked her in a trance.

The door opened with a soft click when Valerie inserted the bronze key into the lock. She stepped inside removing her shoes and rushing straight to her bedroom gathering her clothes from her wardrobe. She was just getting her favourite jumper when her hand felt a soft fuzzy object. She paused before reaching higher to get the object down; it was her kangaroo plush. Her hand gripped the fur tight. Before she placed the plush into the depths of her suitcase and continued to gather the rest of her outfits.

The radiant sunlight seeps through the curtains illuminating the entire room. Valerie's eyes fluttered open, adapting to the sudden **bright** light. She sneaked a quick glance towards her clock. She abruptly groaned, her eyes shut once more; pulling the blanket above her head, trapping the comforting warmth. Within minutes her phone started buzzing. Vibrating across the nightstand, dangerously getting closer toward the edge.

She got up her warm feet touching the cold wooden floor as she sauntered towards the bathroom to freshen up. She brushed her teeth and took a shower, washing her hair

thoroughly. Once she walked out, cold-water droplets dropped upon her neck and on the floor. She got dressed and walked in front of the mirror. She picked up her purple glide brush and brushed her **elastic** sleek shiny ginger hair.

The sun appears to shine particularly brightly as Valerie drags her suitcase outside towards the cab that is waiting for her. She opens the door and places her suitcase inside then gets inside herself.

The car ride was long to the airport, but the scenic view was worth it. After Valerie arrives at the airport, she grabs her suitcase and heads towards the entrance, soon enough she walks inside and suddenly sees a familiar face. It looked like Colbee but what would he be doing here?

The **event** was in a few days and Colbee was feeling pumped. Energy filled up his body, and his only motivation was the trip to Dubai. The whistle blew and Colbee jogged over the grassy field; the strong earthy notes made his nostrils flare. The grass stuck to his boots every time he stepped.

“Alright guys huddle up”

The coach demanded while everyone scrambled to get into a circle around him

“The trip is in a few days, and we need this deal, so we need to work hard and no mistakes got it?”

His voice boomed in a demanding tone

“Alright”

Everyone chorused before heading off and back home

The ride home was tiring with the sun setting and the sky becoming darker. Colbee got home and immediately started packing when he saw the kangaroo plush from the corner of his eye curious, he picked it up and tossed it straight into his suitcase not really caring.

Morning arrived and birds tweeted outside while Colbee got up and prepared himself for the airport. Once he was done, he walked toward the house’s exit and saw a coach waiting to pick him up. He got on and the journey started.

Colbee had just arrived when he felt hungry. He got up and was roaming around the airport looking for food when she saw her.

He saw Valerie.

Chapter 3: Time changes everything

Valerie froze as her eyes locked with the boy across the hall. She quickly looked away adjusting her grip on her suitcase, turning to leave. He looked like Colbee, but she doubted that to be true. The boy in front of her looked like a sports person rather than the nerdy, shy kid she'd grown up with.

Colbee kept looking long after she'd looked away. "*Valerie?*" he thought. No, she was retreating, Valerie didn't retreat, she was the kind of person who rather fight a tiger than run from it. But the resemblance was uncanny. Colbee wanted to go talk to her, but the hurt still lingered. He swallowed his pride and approached her.

"Hey, uh, Valerie?" He said from behind her. She turned around slowly, internally cringing. She looked at her feet, definitely Colbee then.

"Yep, that's me," she says looking up with a polite smile, tapping a nervous pattern against the handle of her suitcase. He was holding a suitcase as well, eyes

"So, uh, what brings you here?" He asked, "I mean you're going somewhere obviously, right? But like uh, never mind." She stared at him for a moment before replying.

"I'm going for a conference" she said. "*Was he always this awkward?*" Valerie thought. "In Dubai," she added. He nodded slowly realisation dawning on his face. He was going to be there too. There were coincidences and then there were circumstances that were just impossible. She's going to the same place as him? Believable. She's going the same day as him? Weird but coincidences happen. She's on the same flight as him!? Now that's just plain weird.

"I'm going there too," Colbee said.

"*Great, just what I needed*" she thought.

"You're quiet," he said, then instantly regretted it "not that that's bad or anything!" He amended. Valerie looked down, she got that a lot these days.

"Don't have a lot to say," she muttered, it came out a bit harsher than she'd meant it to. He stepped back, his smile flickering.

"Never did, right?" he said, and winced internally, gosh why did it sound like they were arguing? They both just stood there for a while. "*So still sour about that*" they both thought.

"I'm gonna go," she said quickly.

"Yeah, uh see ya," he said. They both ran off, the kangaroo plushies in their suitcases heavier than ever.



Chapter 4: Understand me

~flash back~

Colbee's alarm went off at 5am, three hours before his science test first period. He got up and scooped up the kangaroo plush, placing it upwards on his bed from the floor. Cockatoos screeched in the distance. He used his headphones to cancel out the raucous as he got ready for school. He isn't worried about his test because he spent most of last night preparing for it, he made sure to study so he can detain his perfect grades for the rest of this year's semester. As he was getting ready, he heard the TV playing in a distance. He assumed it was his dad, as he was always up watching TV. He was almost ready to depart for school; He collects his backpack and essential notes for school. Two and a half hours before he commences his science test. He leaves for school.

Valerie woke up a bit earlier than Colbee. Valerie had a morning routine, that at least consisted of her messing something up, mainly because of her being quite clumsy. She completely blocked out the fact that she had a test first period and she hadn't prepared for the test. Two hours before the test commenced, she begun to exit her room and proceeded to leave for school, sharing her goodbyes to her Mum and Dad.

On the way to school, Colbee read one of his favorite novels for the fifth time this month on the bus. While Valerie's caught up with friends at the back of the bus, laughing and enjoying themselves. As they arrive in school, Colbees moved quickly to first period, so he'd have enough time to revise over notes before the test. Valerie spent most of her 10 minutes before class catching up with friends in the hallway. She didn't notice the time and was surprised to see that she's two minutes late, still not aware of the test commencing during this period. She rushed off to class before the teacher could close the door to her.

~End of flash back~

Chapter 5: Fate

Colbee pulled on his headphones, letting the music fill the silence of the hotel room. He picked up his bag from the floor and slung it over his shoulder, only to take it off again a second later.

He checked the time. It was still early. Good. He could wait.

He paced around the room, pretending he had something to do. His eyes kept drifting toward the clock, counting down the minutes until he had no choice but to leave.

The conference, the deal, the team, and Valerie. Valerie.

Even thinking her name made his stomach twist.

He hadn't seen her in years, yet somehow, the moment he saw her at the airport, every memory he'd buried came rushing back. He had spent years convincing himself that what happened was in the past. That he'd moved on.

Apparently, he hadn't.

Eventually, he forced himself out of the room.

By the time Colbee reached the conference building, the meeting was already minutes away from starting. Not exactly the impression a team captain should be making, especially when the team desperately needed this deal.

He hurried through the entrance, keeping his head down. He avoided the groups of people gathered around the lobby, ignored the irritated look from the front desk officer, and headed straight for the elevators.

He pressed the button. The doors opened.

Colbee stepped inside and leaned against the wall, finally allowing himself to breathe.

Then, without warning, a memory surfaced.

~Flashback~

"Wait, you're actually coming?" Colbee asked, as he looked up from his notebook.

Valerie stood beside his desk, one hand resting against the edge, her perfectly neat uniform making his battered rugby jersey look even worse by comparison.

"Was I not supposed to?" She responded.

“Well, I don’t know, I just thought you had plans or something...” He said, avoiding eye contact.

She laughed. “Really? That’s the best you could come up with?”

“Uh, sure.” He said, laughing a bit.

They'd been friends for months, though he still wasn't entirely sure how it had happened.

Valerie was Valerie. Everyone knew her. She was the girl people waved at in the hallways, the one teacher knew by name, the one who somehow always had someone waiting for her after class.

And then there was Colbee.

The rugby-playing geek who spent lunch periods arguing with teachers about assignments and fixing his teammates' homework between practices.

People noticed the difference. They always did.

~

They ended up sitting behind the sports building, sharing chips from a packet Valerie had stolen from her friends.

Colbee glanced at her. “You know people are going to ask why you're hanging out with me.”

She shrugged. “So?”

“They already think I'm weird.” He spoke.

“You are weird.”

He stared at her.

She burst out laughing.

“I'm kidding!”

“Sure, you are...”

“I am!” She exclaimed.

For a moment, neither of them said anything.

“Good thing I don't care what they think.” Colbee returned.

He wanted to believe he didn't. Back then, it was easy to forget the labels. For a little while, they were just Valerie and Colbee.

Nothing more complicated than that.

~End of flashback~

The elevator chimed. The doors opened.

Colbee stepped out and stopped. Valerie was walking down the hallway.

She didn't look back.

His chest tightened. He'd spent years telling himself he'd moved on. Seeing her proved otherwise.

His phone buzzed.

Where are you? We're starting.

Colbee stared at the message.

Then at Valerie.

He took a breath and walked toward the conference room.

Today was going to be a long day.

Chapter 6: Valerie

Valerie was a smart girl, she always was, now it was just more prevalent without the tag of popular girl following her everywhere. She also knew that what happened between her and Colbee wasn't easy to fix. It was a bad altercation, she'd been popular, but insecure of her own shortcomings and he'd brought them up amidst all their jokes. Valerie didn't consider herself weak or a coward but ever since the fight, she'd become more withdrawn and shy. She'd been battling cancer at the time, and the worry would just take over her, constant thoughts about the battle flooding her mind. Now an adult she'd adapted to her new personality, but she thought of the old times, getting sudden unwanted flashbacks.

Chapter 7: Colbee

If there's one thing people assume about Colbee, it's that he isn't the social type.

Of course, they'd be right. He never has been the social type. Keeping to himself and hanging in solitude were his ideas of fun and partying.

That was, until he met Valerie.

She was a kind, beautiful and caring girl that seemed to bump into him every chance she got. She was irritatingly clumsy, but it was endearing.

"Oi, you finished the homework yet?"

Colbee suppressed the shiver that racked through his body. "Oh—um, sorry, I, I haven't finished it yet. I, err—was busy yesterday—"

"I literally don't care.", The guy mocked him, tongue dripping with condescension. "Just help a guy out, would you? God knows there isn't much else you can do." He sneered while his cronies all laughed beside him.

They shoved past his shoulder, pushing him into the brick wall in the process.

"Well, damn, I thought you were Aboriginal, 'ay?", he raised his eyebrow, "Guess there ain't much blood in you—If you're getting the wind knocked out of ya', just from a push."

Colbee froze before a retort could come out of his mouth. Cold sweat trickled down his spine, and his legs went numb, threatening to collapse right then and there.

The dude gave him one last glance. "Get a load of him, what a sissy—doesn't even have the guts to stand his own." He clicked his tongue. "*Your ancestors would be disappointed.*"

Trembles plagued Colbee's body, and tears threatened to spill from

He grinned, placing his shark-like canines on display. "Pathetic loser."

If there was another thing people knew about Colbee, it'd be that he's Aboriginal. Of course, he's never attempted to hide it. In fact, he's quite proud of his heritage and his ancestors' achievements.

But with that background comes a fact that many people didn't know about Colbee.

He's a child born to a victim of the Stolen Generations.

He'd like to think that he's truly Aboriginal, but oftentimes—especially on bad days—he can't muster the strength to call himself one. He's never experienced the traditions, or culture, or ways of living that Aboriginal people do. He's never played in the bush, nor has he sung the instruments that his ancestors have.

Often, he feels a gaping hole in his stomach—steadily gnawing its way up to his heart, and he aches to fill it with the part of himself that he lost; the version of himself that he could've been.

He knows there's obviously nothing he could've done. He's not dumb—but sometimes, he really wishes his blood *wasn't his*.

If only he could be the man everyone expects him to be. The strong, muscular, quick-witted hunter like his ancestors were, rather than the silent, nerdy, lonely loser that gets pushed around at school.

A lingering bitterness is left on his taste buds every time it dawns on him that there's a version of him out there in the universe that is *the man he's always wanted to be*.

It's not fair, he thinks.

Chapter 8: The fight

Autumn rain splattered along the glass panes, and the wind howled against the brick walls littered with graffiti.

Colbee briskly shuffled through the hallway, reaching his locker and packing his bag. His mind was still clouded with anger from his altercation with Valerie. He slammed it shut, and right as he spun around, a muscular body bumped into him, sending him knocking against the metal.

A mocking voice called out to him, "Out of the way, nerd"

Colbee didn't respond, just kept walking.

"So long as it's not labour, huh?" Valerie giggled later that day as they were sitting together.

Colbee stopped dead in his tracks. "What's that supposed to mean?"

Valerie looked back, confusion written all over her face. “Huh? Sorry, the joke was probably in bad taste—”

Colbee’s expression shifted into something comparable to biting into a raw lemon. “I’m a human too, you know?” he mumbled.

“What? Well—yeah, I mean, I never said you weren’t...”, she spoke, somewhat bewildered.

“Then why the hell do you keep saying stuff like that?!”

“I know that you’re British and all,” He scowled, “but just because your grandparents said crap like that doesn’t mean it’s fair for you to subject me to it.”

“I—what? What are you talking about?”

“

“What does our blood have to do with this?! So, what if I’m white? This argument has no substance; you’re not even a real Aboriginal!”

Thunder roared across the schoolyard the moment those words were uttered. The rain drenched the windows even further, while the wind cried louder against the building, almost as if it was the embodiment of the tears threatening to spill from Colbee’s eyes.

Valerie sucked in a breath. Panic set in her eyes as she realised what she had just said. “Wait—Colbee, I didn’t mean that—”

“No, you know what? I don’t think this friendship is working out.”, Colby spat out with a trembling breath. “Maybe this is a sign from our ancestors; we’re just not compatible.”

“No, Colbee, you don’t understand—”

“What don’t I understand, huh?! This was never going to work out; we’re in two completely different worlds!” Colbee yelled, with unshed tears glistening in his eyes. “You’re popular, outgoing and most importantly, *a girl*. I’m a loser with *no* friends. I’m the guy that gets called a *nerd* in the hallways and gets kicked just for *existing*!”

“Hold on—you’re getting bullied? Why didn’t you tell me—” Her ire morphed into something akin to concern.

He clenched his fists and gritted his teeth. “Would you have *cared*?”

Valerie blinked, flabbergasted. “What—Obviously! You’re my—”

“Don’t even start.” Colbee cut her off. His expression twisted into bitterness. “I *know* you never even liked me. I know this *thing* that we have was only built out of pity. Well, guess what? I *don’t need* your pity, Valerie.”

Eventually the autumn rain died down, and the cold wind settled—mourning the beginning of the end.

Chapter 9 Healing:

They met up again. Things were still rough between Colbee and Valerie, though there was the fight that happened between them both and never got to talk it out, now that they'd met, they were ready to talk it out and see what had happened back in high school. Both Colbee and Valerie got together to discuss what had happened, they took some time off together and in hopes that everything cooled down before everything exploded right back in again.

Valerie took a deep breath to talk to Colbee;

"Hey... Colbee I'm really sorry that I might have offended you because I shouldn't have made that joke. I realise that making fun of your nationality and your background as an Aboriginal isn't right, and I'm sorry to have made fun of you. Look, I wish I could turn time back and undo the things I said right in front of you, and I never meant to offend you in any sort of way. To be honest with you right now... I feel like things wouldn't go back to how it was before, what I have said wasn't right and that was my fault."

Valerie took another deep breath to calm herself down because unable to hold her tears back.

"I hope you know that you're still a friend to me and again I'm sorry for all the things I said to you"

Valerie let out a sigh of relief because she got all those words out of her chest. And now it's Colbee's turn, it's going to be painful watching Colbee. Colbee prepares himself to talk to Valerie;

"Hey Valerie, I just want you to know how grateful I am to have you to come up and actually apologise to me for that. There are some things I will say that you won't ever forget, I'm not doing this out of spite but because I'm embarrassed and ashamed of who I am"

Valerie cuts him off.

"Don't say that!"

Colbee talks again

"I know I shouldn't have said that, but don't you dare cut me off again. Anyways... all the things that you said to me hurt me, not even that but that got me embarrassed in front of the whole entire freaking school you know? I know you didn't mean to make all those statements, and the jokes offended me, but it just does, you don't know how much I have been through all my life to get made fun of! My life has been a LIVING HELL because I am an indigenous person, but that doesn't matter because I'm proud of who I am today. The truth is, you hurt me so much, it kills me, it feels like everything is falling apart like a falling corrupted bridge like I am."

Colbee takes small deep breaths just to make him calm down a bit. Valerie cries a bit, tears falling like she has just seen a ghost in front of her. Colbee talks again after calming down a bit;

"You know Valerie... I still have that Kangaroo Plushie that we got together, and I'm grateful that we both still have that plushie because it reminds me of our friendship. I miss our friendship to be honest but, it kills me how my own friend could say such things towards me, let alone actually say those things towards my face. Yeah, I get it, I am an Aboriginal person, so what?"

Valerie talks again but she whimpers a bit whilst talking;

"I'm sorry Colbee, I promise I really am! Look whatever I said to you I know it must've really hurt bad and I didn't mean to offend you, I freaking promise you Colbee!!! I don't know what went through my head, but I know it was stupid and that was my fault. Yeah, I'm blaming myself because I hurt you more than I ever meant to and you know I didn't mean. Just please Colbee! I want this issue to be resolved because I care about you, I care about you more then you could ever realise and that's fact!

Colbee and Valerie both resolved their issue that has never been fixed before back when they were both in high school, but now... It is safe to say that both accepted each other's apology and how they felt and now they both got along each other.

Chapter 10: Reconciliation

Years had passed since everything had fallen apart between them. Somehow, despite everything, Valerie had found her way back into his life.

They weren't the same people they had been in school. They had grown up, built careers, made mistakes, and learned how to live with the things they couldn't change. Yet their friendship had somehow found its way back to them.

Colbee still sometimes thought about the past. About the labels people had given them, the mistakes he'd made, and all the years he'd spent believing he'd lost her for good. But those thoughts didn't hurt as much anymore.

Now, they could sit together after work and complain about their jobs, laugh about things nobody else would understand, and pick up conversations as though no time had passed at all.

It was simple.

And Colbee was grateful for that.

He had spent so long thinking about everything he'd lost that he'd forgotten how lucky he was to have found something again.

His friend.

His oldest friend.

Valerie.

And this time, he wasn't going to take it for granted.

End of Book

**two friends, seperated by time and
misunderstanding; the journey to find identity
and reconcile broken bonds**

