

SOULFOOD

SABRINA SAMREEN

Tonight...treat me to poetry,
 Some borrowed words and unsung melody.
 Few words would suffice, it doesn't have to rhyme.
 Let me hear your voice crack, your eyes light up as you say them.
 Poetry.
 About some lost bird, lone kite in the sky, an afternoon, hot and sultry,
 Some storm at sea, a stranded sailor, or migratory birds.
 About us, what we couldn't be, and the endless possibilities.
 About dreams, messages in bottles, sea weeds, fantasies.
 Some sweet words, carelessly strung, weaved in beautifully,
 Spun together, thrown around, makes sense and no sense at all,
 Say them out loud, intensely, as if in a trance, dreamily,
 Make me fall,
 In love with words, maybe, probably.
 Keep your hands in mine, your tired head put to rest.
 Staring at neon street lights through the half open window.
 I'd be staying in, not particularly bound by time.
 Slow indie music, pizza, coke or soda would do fine,
 You don't necessarily need words that rhyme.
 Something soothing, something subtly sweet,
 That awakens the souls, quenches the thirst and leaves me craving more,
 Words I can muse over, toss them, smile upon, adore.
 Poetry, then silence, deep conversation and poetry again.
 Summer breeze tickling at our hair, some poem, simple and plain.
 Some poetry to leave us smiling, contented,
 Nostalgic, thinking of good times, happy, worn out.
 Melancholy, thought provoking, rustic.
 Look me in the eye and I'd chime along,
 Some poem that stirs buried memories, lulls distant thoughts.
 Forgotten thoughts, confessions, no fights tonight.
 Woo me with words, some love, and that smile of yours,
 Treat me to poetry, poetry alone.



The Yellow Bulldozer

MYAT MOE KHAING

We didn't believe they were coming for our home until they did. We lived in a slum together. It wasn't the best place to live in, but definitely the best place to play *danguli*, *marble* and *wheel racing*. We friends were a gang.
 We didn't have a big open space to play, so we made one. We would clean the front yard every day and shout at whoever tried to dump trash in it. The sense of ownership grew. The mantra was simple—if there's no playground, create one and protect it. During winter, every morning we cleared the dry leaves. Often, we would garner airless balls from the nearby dustbins and make them function as footballs. The concept of cricket was new to us back then, and we were clueless about where to find a bat, a ball and stumps. But that didn't stop us. We would take a piece of wood and shape it to a long rectangular block. It was our bat. The stumps were usually bricks placed on top of each other. When we couldn't find a ball, we would buy one. Each of us would contribute as much as we could. Not always could we contribute equally, but that never bothered us. That was the spirit of our sense of belongingness.
 One day we got to know that we had to leave this place. People would be demolishing our home to build a huge complex. Our families seem to have accepted it and started packing, but our gang didn't. I called a meeting immediately.
 The day finally came when a huge yellow bulldozer, along with few men, made their way to our house. We had never seen a machine as big as that. We told ourselves "So that was going to destroy our home." The bulldozer started approaching our home slowly with its

blade held downwards. We didn't have much time. We quickly ran to the front yard before the bulldozer could reach it. When the driver saw us, he stopped the vehicle few steps before us.
 He looked at us, confused. I did something we planned, but wasn't sure if it would work. I stepped in the blade, and the rest of the gang followed me. There we were, our tiny selves fit in the blade of a bulldozer. We held the upper edge of the giant blade tightly. I peeped out and told the driver, "Up!"
 He looked confused just how a newly formed crowd did too. My heart started racing for his lack of response. He then smiled and drove the blade up, and there we were hung in the air. He drove the blade left and right, up and down. With it, we went swaying, screaming at the top of our lungs, with our hair blowing in the wind. Everyone stared at a bunch of kids rejoicing in, something no one could imagine, a bulldozer blade.
 The slum wasn't destroyed that day. We thought it would never be. Our attachment, clearly evident in our enthusiasm, was too hard to ignore which made the men in suits go back and rethink. Our courage, as we like to call it, saved it for

only a month. But the driver told me I was courageous and I believed it.
Myat Moe is an occasional philosopher whose favorite pastime is confusing people with her nationality. Reach her @145michelle@gmail.com

