

2021 Lingnan University Creative Writing Contest

First Place Award for Poetry - Nigel Nayt Linn Aung (Global Liberal Arts Programme, Year 1)

A shot, in the dark

There was, this kid, clothed, in rags, and he was running, wild, cycling, on a bicycle, rickety, old, silver one, running wild, and wild, and wild, and do you know, the kid, was growing, old, and the kid, had, some news, to deliver, to somebody, and new roads, were built, in front, of him, and the dark seaside, besides, him, changed, to nothing, he could, recognize, and arms sagged, and eyes, withered, and longyi, so loosely, fitted, they don't, even, seem, to fit, no more, he had not a waist, he had, out, croppings, of bone, and then, he looked out, and he moaned, last, and he stopped, and he, did not, pedal, no more, and he was gone, the news, were, never, delivered...

Shouldering responsibility

I have never been rich. My father is a tractor driver whose income provides only daily meals. He never dares allow his family to spend money on anything more than the necessities. I had to do odd part-time jobs to earn pocket money. I have never felt ashamed about my family being poor. Any time a feeling of embarrassment appears, I remember what my mother always says: “Be adjustable in every situation.”

Despite these struggles, my family and I were satisfied with what we had until a day came when our house required urgent renovations. The house, which bore many generations of my family, had never been fixed and now it was very old and worn out; I could even see the sky through the thatched roof. Most of the columns were eaten by termites, and my mother always reminded me to be careful of every step I took. One time when I came back from my job to have lunch, I stepped on the floor a bit too fast as I ran towards the kitchen. Suddenly, the brittle floor gave way, and gravity pulled my leg through the boards. On top of it all, it was during the rainy season, which was a nightmare for our house that had a leaking roof. At that time, I saw fear in my parents’ eyes. I knew they worried about not having enough money and about how to renovate a house in the middle of the rainy season.

Building a house required a large sum of money. We needed to buy logs and nails. To pay for that, my mother planned to borrow money at five percent interest. When that news reached

my ears, I was shocked, thinking of the debts we might incur. We were a family that never had debts in our life, and debt is a kind of poison that could gradually kill us mentally and physically.

I sought ways to help my family avoid debt, and I figured out that my father's tractor could be a solution. I went to my father and explained to him how debt could follow us like a shadow. It could distress us if we could not afford to pay the principal and interest. He agreed with me, and we decided to sell our tractor. The money from the sale of the tractor went to repair the termite damage on my family's house.

Soon after, on a late June day in 2017, it was raining heavily. I proudly came back from my new job as an enumerator at the Advantage Development and Relief Agency, Myanmar (ADRA) with a huge smile and holding an enormous sum of money: 800,000 kyats (502.77 dollars). My happy thoughts were even louder than the sound of the pouring rain, and I was dreaming of buying a computer soon. I drove home on my motorbike, intent on telling my mother to go and purchase a computer the next day. But when I arrived home, my mother was frowning, and my father was sitting lifelessly as the rain came through the holes in the ceiling. These were signs of trouble. They did not have enough money for a new roof. I was stuck between fulfilling my wish and curing my parents' worries. However, my desire for my parents not to borrow money won out. I gave my mother all of my salary to pay for the roof.

I am studying at Lingnan University right now, and every time I contact my family back at my village and look at the new house, it always makes me smile. It is not an amazing house: it

is not large or grand, and it does not have many rooms, but looking at it always gives me a deep understanding about the meaning of my role as an elder brother in my family.