

Ode to Pinakbet

You can not deny it.
Your aroma
crawls
in the afternoon,
or at noon,
even in the early morning
patient cooking pots
whiff,
impatient throats
and loving tummies
demand.
Scent of a bugguong.
Either a fusion
of a rare
bagnet,
red-eyed smoked fish,
or any thing
grilled or any assortment,
or even as solo,
the inherent
flavor
dominates. The beauty
of an eggplant
steeped
with fish paste juice
fermented just right
and intended to shrivel
the great
savor. A cure for longing
and craving.
A dream
of the lonely
tongue and belly
of the solitary
and/or starving
foot
in a foreign
residence
or in the place
of the buried placenta. Tang
of a crushed ginger.
It ignites
the desire of the gullet,
it provokes
warmth of blood. A tomato
which spreads

a genial soumess
and an amiable sweetness.
It rubs a weary
muscle. Scratches
an itchy mind.
Slippery
okra. It entices
a smooth burp.
It oils
calloused
feelings and heels.
Ampalaya in league. Heavenly
bitterness, national
flavor
of the saluyot-eaters
bitter-lovers. Bitter,
bitter but not bitter.
But oh, why is so
that in bitterness
you appreciate
sweetnes. And saltiness.
These are all ingredients
so you can relish
life. Even though
as they say is
just an amful. Spice it
up with enough garlic.
Of the Ilocos-kind garlic
which is a blessing of patience
and diligence. Interlaced
with onions or scallions.
Ay, a divine
scent. It swallows you
like a stomach
in delirium. It clips
your hunger,
it mixes
a lot of hopes.
Nothing, nothing
can be wished for
if you nourish
what you've eaten, the pinakbet
you've eaten.
Wrinkled.
Ambrosia.
A sacred
host.
Food

of both
god
and slave.
It equals, it equalizes.
A god of the tongue and the palate.
An idol of longing and desire.
Everybody
worships
the grace,
the redemption
the salvation
of the pinakbet.