

Bucket of Fish

Maria Vouis

Through the neighbourhood, my sister and I haul
our bucket of fish, rattle our hand-held brass scale.

Small-town afternoon heat, treeless streets, scoria scintilla,
roads a brûlée of bitumen cook our school shoes.

Would you like to buy some fish?

Our voices blend in a singsong duet of schoolgirl English,
an a cappella melt of natural sibling harmonies; so pretty.

We zig-zag; the bucket drags full of boneless fish, pearly, silver slips,
father's faultless fillets, plastic bags slung high on the rusted hook.

Blind faces of locked screen doors, hallways exhale a miasma of lard and chops,
we dance the beggar's shuffle, foot to foot on blistered, red-painted steps.

Would you like to buy some fish?

Young 'New Australians', we walk, hedged by saltbush and red-dirt,
the BHP smelter smokes, a monolith behind us, small-change chinks.

We intersect our father's old road; a boy all ribs and begging-bowl eyes,
plunging through a squall of German bullets, blind in the blue Aegean,
breathless for a can of Spam in a sinking supply boat.

Would you like to buy some fish?

Maria Vouis is an emerging writer from CALD origins. Maria's poems champion the voices of animals, migrants, women and the 'other'. She won the Satura Prize for poetry for *Sepia apama* in 2021. Publications include: *Cordite*; *The Victorian Writer*, *Canberra Times*; *Newcastle Poetry Prize*; *Friendly Street Poets New Poets 19* and *SCUM Magazine*.