

-POEMS

SAMPLE BOOK



MAUNING
DAY-
GASOLINE

In a world of self-pity, Maung Day's is a world of self-ridicule. Maung Day's unique technique of placing out-of-this-world-fauvist-morbid imagery at an illogical disjunction with benign visuals from his world produces an unsettling read. His poems are hard to the core –definitely not for the infirm. References from global pop culture [Bowie & the Cure] to the very local *nat* worship [the drinking and gambling god] cut across his work so often that you simply do not know what to expect of him from line to line. Surprise is a virtue in poetry. Either in Burmese or English, Maung Day never fails to leave you flabbergasted, pleasantly!

 ko ko thett, author of *The Burden of Being Burmese*

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Contents

1. The President of Snails 7
2. Fruit Cake 8
3. Skies over Yangon 9
4. This Morning 10
5. Paper Flowers 11
6. Death Metal 12
7. Salt from My Blood 13
8. Monkey Poem 14
9. Gasoline 15
10. Mysterious Octopus 16
11. Listening to an Old Ballad on a Hot Day 17
12. Zombie 18
13. Underwater Forests 19
14. Go Back Home and Sharpen Your Plowshares 20
15. Ghost Story 21
16. There Is a Village 22
17. Mercury 23
18. Radio Song 24
19. Piss 25
20. Beetle 26
21. Feng Shui 27
22. Starman 28
23. Someone Says EAT DEATH 29
24. Shin Saw Pu Hotel Blues 30

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The President of Snails

Land-grabbers drink to the health of the president of snails.
Snails' president, a land-grabber himself, scoops up soot
from his purple liver and builds from it a nation that goes by
various names: Myanmar League, Terror of Laiza, Hepatitis B.

Himalayan tigers walk behind me. What do you think they got
to remind me? Now it's raining in the middle of summer
and the rain tessellates People's Square with road kill.
Something's wrong if equestrian statues are still getting paid.

The flower-biting ogress, the first lady of snails,
puts a diamond-studded leash on her six-legged pit bull.
The dog eats looted gold. I wish it'd just explode,
its entrails shooting up against gravitational pull.

Every village is a shepherd, every villager a sheep.
Inside every sheep, a tombstone. Before you comb the hair
of one-hundred-year-old shadows, you'd better delouse them.
Would I want a house full of dead sparrows? No, I wouldn't.

Fruit Cake

I eat my own syndrome. Eat my own corrosion.
I rented a room, but its location is unknown.
Somewhere in the future
granite will beautifully collide with one another
and become new land. People will just call that *a fucking prison*.
I call every fruit rotten.
When I touch an electric current, carrier pigeons break
their own wings, jump off the trees and become humans.
People working sugarcane plantations die eating sugarcane.
I move the days with the smell of my sweat and breastfeed the months.
Children are still born where there are no midwives.
Rotten mangoes fall to the dusty ground, coconuts float in the drains.
I eat my own syndrome and that's what I do in the main.

Skies over Yangon

Pterosaurs fly over the city, the soiled desire of old perverts.
Your six-shooter is your coral prick which is my oyster.
Street vendors address you as *Sheitan*. I run into you in my placenta.
I have nothing to do with the fireworks
that burst inside the city's mausoleum.
On building sites, brides are hypnotized and grooms milk water buffalos.

Everything that ticks has stopped to go back in time.
Slums are otherworldly. They collect pennies in their astral bowels.
Sweatshops are swinging. Lightnings are singing.
Dust means to be mean and you fuck samsara in the morning.
You are a sickle that bitches and a hammer that snitches.
Maybe you are right. Maybe you are wrong.
But the halo hanging from your head has blinded the buffalos.

This Morning

The morning starts with the sight of street dogs
lying dead after eating poisoned meat.
A wind loiters about the town.
The town lost its virginity to the wind.
Now it's ready for sex in public.
I take my chair outside and sit on the porch.

Salmon spawn in a flooded karaoke lounge.
They drive prawns around the bend.
People in this town like two things: betel and money.
Their betel spit kills ancient trees. Flowers also die
and rise again as young widows on a shopping spree.
Things we depend on, they disappear.

The stray cow—the one floating in space—used to be
a copper miner. It's got numerous teats, each the size
of Mount Meru. War veterans come back home
and buy prosthetics. The battleground breaks into bloom.
The stray cow turns out to be me.
Boys and girls, I finally found where I belong.

Paper Flowers

I have come here to suck on the rims of oil rigs

There are trenches and foxholes in the floor of Cyber cafes

I am a mass expanding gradually

and your malaria parasite

In an anthropological museum, there's a man

who breathes through the tip of his head

You live in the HTML format too

Infinites are the length of the Independence Monument

I have to get a new email address everyday

Snakehead is a deity fish

The temple choking in my throat is an illegitimate star elsewhere

We have thoroughly searched the place

The parking buses themselves are bad karma

Let us legally do what we must do in the dark

Though it's not time yet, the instrument tuner has arrived

On the inside he is bringing child soldiers

On the inside of the inside he is bringing paper flowers

Death Metal

Today everybody can play the guitar, everybody can buy a gun.
We expect a better future from ourselves.
When I don't have a friend, I make a friend of attachment.
I turn my eyes to heaven and see a flock of vultures flying eastward.
The senator, an infant, believes in capitalism.
His pee pee has turned blue from being touched so often.
The posters of death metal bands on my wall keep me up.
They growl all night. Barbarity is a mosquito net.
A bathroom without soap is a provincial town.

After a deer hunt, I came back home and realized
my knife was missing. I found it at the bottom of a ravine.
I saw my head rolling some meters down.
I washed myself in a public bathroom and stepped into my house.
Deicide was in my house, Death was in my house,
Morbid Angel was in my house, and Carcass was in my house.

Salt from My Blood

I was born in the floodwaters of Aquarius.
No mule is a virgin. A murderer is my friend.
A surprise the size of China comes with a pig's face.
I don't live in Gaza.

I make a rope from orphans' umbilical cords.
I am fact. I am or I am not
whatever you are not.
Hold on tight to Pol Pot's oar.

The Buddha has become furniture.
The new day is Dawn of the Dead pink,
and so is my ice-cream.
We have technology.

Fireflies come out of corpses.
The basket of a highland girl is full of cancer.
We don't need a picture of paddies on our national flag anymore.
Calamities will always bring us together.

Monkey Poem

I chained my monkey to the table,
fed him and made him write this poem.
This is going to be my last monkey poem.
This is going to be the last rocket launch by the Chinese.
I gaze upon Yangon down in the valley.
I can't see the tree, nor the forest.
But I can see its rotten beams and pillars.
I can see the killer whales taking it away
to where the ocean is darkest.
The valley is damned beautiful, but the bodies
they found in it have made everyone nervous.
You would go into the toilet and find a body.
You slip under the covers
and there would be another dying next to you.

I stand on the balcony and look at Yangon.
Yangon looks back at me like an animal in heat.
No, it looks back at me with the eyes of a child
sniffing his first glue in an alley.
This is going to be my last monkey poem.
This is going to be the last space travel of monkeys.

Gasoline

Where I come from everyone knows me.
My name was chanted like a Buddhist mantra
when twenty three people were immolated.
They say God is in everything we see.
I see Molotov cocktails and machetes.
At night my parrot becomes the goddess of fighting cocks.
She is a beauty! She moonlights as a prostitute
and sells crack on the inner-city streets.

Where I come from everyone knows me.
If it weren't for me, Irrawaddy dolphins would still be
in the Irrawaddy. Animosity is my currency.
I make friends with armadillos and fight for my desire.
I have the longest tongue on earth and drink from a creek on fire.

Every day I wake up inside a bull and reign over bulls.
I plant poppies in Shan State, I run casinos in Mandalay.
I can't remember the poems I wrote.
Can't remember how many people I have set fire to.

Mysterious Octopus

Today the government talks about a mysterious octopus
which attacked civilians boning their hookers in the bushes by a lake.
Pox-colored piranhas nest inside a stupa, they ordain deathless figs.
I am fed up with spastic devas.
There was another in my beans this morning.

I spend my day deleting vowels from my doctor's prescription.
A group of journalists line up to lick the gold off the city hall.
In a bar, a group of young tourists eat rhino balls from shot glasses.
The end of a year is not a string of pearls at all.

I download Depeche Mode and I download The Cure.
I download Rohingyas and the Battle of Marston Moor.
Failed crops glow in the dark. I talk on the periphery of sleep.

Listening to an Old Ballad on a Hot Day

"I am an altocumulus cloud drifting in a shopping mall."
Virgil didn't write that. Underage girls are unintended shantytowns.
A little prostitute lying in her bed is an underage ballad.
The coast cannot read the signs, and that's fair enough.
Where there's sugar, there's men. However much I keep
loving you like water, rain hasn't come yet.
And I couldn't be sure if Virgil was happy here.
And I couldn't care less about it. Somebody poured hot water
on an ant colony, which is the opposite of hallelujah.
I sit all day suffering from humidity and discomfort.
Out of my window, a car whooshes by
and drives into a guard rail of a bridge. The driver
is sucking on *Min Nandar* like Ecstasy.

Note : Min Nandar is the name of a prince from a Myanmar fairy tale. He travels to his girlfriend—whom his father prohibits him to see—inside the mouth of a large crocodile.

Zombie

The fruit bat which comes around your hostel every night crooning "A Wasteland Is Burning with My Love" is me. If you go past that, you will come to the National Zoological Garden where harbor seals lie wet and naked.

Everyone wants to be with their loved ones. But most people can't tell a biscuit from a cookie. They can't tell animal from human, and human from zombie.

How are we supposed to trust these people?

The rumor that the undead will rise and go berserk is true. Also, they are the ones who will enter the Kingdom of God. He will ask them simple questions the answers to which are mostly yeses and nos.

If you go further, you will see a bus terminal. These buses go in all directions, go everywhere on earth. Adults must have somewhere to go, something to do, right? Summers ago and before the time of zombies,

humans and animals fought each other for territory. Where you are standing now is also forbidden for humans. The guy who comes around your hostel every night singing "A Wasteland Is Burning with My Love" is a zombie.

Underwater Forests

When people sleep by a pile of gravel in a new town,
when people queue up in front of a music studio
to record screams in all languages,
and when underwater forests shake because the earth swells up,
we know that these are not new beginnings, not tender arrivals.
The terror of the earth is an imbecile running with a gun in his head.
Wood is an axe lost in a stream. Clouds are voiceless.
I sit astride the axis of the earth and eat fried crickets of underwater forests
before what is called time wears out and expires.
I sit on young grass between two angry mountain goats.
I hear somebody belch.
The smell of burnt undergrowth twirls up from his lips
and disperses in the air that roofs the earth like a steel dome.
Underwater forests dig up old cemeteries in people's consciousness.
Cornfields bite off birds' legs. I try to not doze off although I am
so tired after traveling. The number of people underwater is greater
than the number of people on earth.
In a killing field which is now a museum,
people light candles, skulls laugh themselves sick.

Go Back Home and Sharpen Your Plowshares

The Lightning Man tells me to forget about the girl from Jasmine Island.
To forget her once and for all, I walk on the seabed with crustaceans.
Bubbles run up to the surface of the sea like long distance runners.
Why is it that to prevent the crow-eating population from extinction
is the principal responsibility for crows?
Me and my brothers don't resent the people living on the island,
but a child appears in front of our house every morning and claims
he is our father. When the hunting season comes, me and my brothers
have to paint ourselves black and disguise ourselves as a road.
People say all kinds of stuff about us.
If you understand how water reflects light, you will know
who the Lightning Man, now sitting on the stairway to a temple, is.

Ghost Story

1.

I dreamed that my guts fell out of my body.
I dreamed that I piled them up at the door.
Everything flees from me en masse.
An unidentifiable matter, I am
sicker than I think I am.

2.

I dreamed that I killed a prison guard
and piled up his parts
at the prison gate. The healthcare system
is carrying Satan's child.
I am healthier than I think I am.

3.

I am all over the yard.
Taking lives, I go to one village after another.
Always me against the whole village.
But I am still thinking I am a doll.
I am ablaze all by myself among roses.
My body trying to inhabit every soul.

4.

The disease worsens outside the spectrum of seven colors.
Eating the original dirt, the fever intensifies.
My neighbors wore celestial costumes,
went into the woods and disappeared.
This reminds me of a leaking boat in a stream.
Admitting sins to each other doesn't work.
So we are just trying to forget about it.

5.

Actually I don't know anything about boats.