Poems

27 (She’s stuck on a Ferris wheel and will never be able to get off again)

I deny reality
I deny the principle of cosmic order
These are absolutely tedious

I don’t want to show my rational side to people anymore
I don’t want to put on faces
And no more blathering about how things should have been
And no more grumbling about human existence or the universe
After all, love, like everything, comes to be and then disintegrates
I don’t want to keep on living by banking on a hope
Don’t want to run back and forth between the real life and dreams
And no more blaming the city
Besides, I haven’t learnt the names of the presidents yet

I’ll stop wishing well on the younger generation
Don’t ask me what’s up with me
I’ll stop memorizing theories
I’ll stop documenting my everyday life
And no more debating with people about whether suicide is right

The line between two friends has been crossed
How was it breached? Where did it start?
I’ll stop answering the phone
You like to finish yourself off with your hand, I get it
And I’ll stop thinking about my old lovers

I won’t bad-mouth my relatives anymore
Believe me you won’t ever hear me say again
What an absolutely useless thing social dignity is
I won’t hurt you anymore, I’ll be careful
No promises we make follow us to the grave, I think

The first rains of May shake Cassia flowers off their trees
The whole street burning bright in yellow
You wouldn’t know all this if I didn’t tell you
I’ll stop wasting my time
On my-heart-is-with-you-but-I-can’t-be-there type of relationship
I don’t enjoy sleeping anymore
I’ll never have children
I’ll never stop smoking
I no more want to see myself in Kyi Aye’s woman characters

No more sitting in a chair in a Murakami novel
No more cameos in the Wong Kar-wai films
No more bumping into Meursault on the beach on a sunny day

If I’m getting so drunk and jump into the pool, stop me

So
Where do we go from here? Which pub?
Just tell me
Tell me
Tell me now

Translated from the Burmese by Maung Day
In the ballpark

you get girly-jealous/ you are a blabbermouth/ your shyness shuts your cute eyelashes/ to become a couple, you have the right to say “yes”/ you are an erratic driver/ everyone is born free and equal except when you are born short of decent karma/ you say your son is your Lord, your God your husband/ you have womanly tricks up your sleeve/ you cheat/ you slut/ all your life you are kept unmolested under the heavy thanaka grinding stone/ you deserve a bride price/ you are wed-&-fed to him/ you walk three steps down your house & you don’t manage to get back home/ you are a single-mother-to-be/ your given name follows your family name/ you are just a slave on his path to the Buddhahood/ your whole life is cooking in the kitchen/ you are busy fancying a reliable man/ a man shouldn’t grimace like a woman/ a wife has to dog her husband/ you are always at the lower end of the seesaw so the other end could stay high/ you are thin with intellect/ you act second sex/ to protect your pussy is always your first priority/ don’t rape me, please/ I am just an entertainment/ just a dependent/ I have no right to lead this household/ this poem writes this poet/. 

Translated from the Burmese by Ko Ko Thett
It’s Like You Avoid Eating Chicken When You Get a New Tattoo

It’s like you avoid eating chicken when you get a new tattoo
The map of excitement is underarm sweat
The two of us burn to ashes while screaming “peaceful love”
When I cry, you tear tissues from your body and give them to me
But we have to look up the word ‘body’ in the dictionary first
So that we spell it right
It just so happens that we have omitted some realities
From our memories of coincidences, for instance, our ex-lovers

In reality, nothing could finish me off
And in the end we went different ways
I go shopping and cook something
When the kitchen knife decides to attack, I get cut into pieces
Then there are wounds that heal in fire
When scabs peel off, the tattoo comes into view as a new scent of hunger

One’s ultimate right is the midnight, making love
In the kitchen or in the living room or on the verandah

Shortcomings are so tedious
Light rises from the mountains
Light looks down at me
Vines attempt to seduce me with their grapes

“How should we carry on?” I shout and shout
My voice doesn’t come forward, but goes backward and crawls on the ground
You messed me up and now I am little pieces scattered and destroyed
My hands go under the bed, but the feet don’t know what to do
The brain rolls and bumps into the dustbin standing in a corner
The scalp glows in the dark
A new door has found me at the age of twenty-five

This is the color blue going to the sea
Or the yellow of afternoon that constricts pupils
Or traffic lights in Yangon, that shows red light and green light simultaneously
Otherwise bullet-riddled bodies will come floating from the border
Otherwise Nwe and I will just be playing checkers
Or it may just be Ponyo swimming among whales in the city flooded at the doors
Or the year 2016, which I lived through by curling up in a luggage
Or please just take our watches and give time in return
Or I may just be sitting on two stools at the same time, sweetheart
Or Mae Yway may just be mumbling “nothing’s important in life” in her sleep

When did the sense of self-importance enter my body and from where?
Zeyar Lynn wrote a phrase “a fire engine catching fire” in one of his poems
Well I am that fire engine
It just so happens that I go into that poem and catch fire
It just so happens that you won’t sing a loud siren like that fire engine

*Translated from the Burmese by Maung Day*
We Are an Unmistakable Fusion

You and I are an unmistakable fusion
It’s like I crawled under your fence and entered you
At first I only wanted a small piece of your territory
Then my desire to make you my colony grew

A rose that blooms with childhood traumas
Drying leaves and smoldering pleasure
A happy family only in the frozen moment of a photograph

Problems, they found me and she did too
I put a wall between them
Then I don’t hear any more noise

Problems, they start to learn to talk
The child living in blood may stutter but his words have meanings
Sunglasses that I ordered came on the first day of rain

The numbers at the traffic lights go backward
The bridges crack on the day of their opening
A cracking relationship and I became twenty-five
They snipped my hemorrhoid with scissors

You may say she’s a stain that can’t be removed
Crazy, crazy rainbows
Their differences are colorful
Sex treats me like a sick patient

The needle penetrates my bone
It started with a skin-deep and now the length of the whole finger
They were still going on about other people even after you left
‘That’s the daughter-in-law of…” ‘She’s the mother of…” they say

My relationship with them is like a surface with curves
The kind of relationship that can dive underwater till it touches the bottom
Or it is a sea that ends at the arc of the horizon
I know I haven’t told you about the clouds pressing down

Translated from the Burmese by Maung Day